

Rodeo

&

Juliet

By

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Cast of Characters

SHERIFF - oversees justice in town

Circus:

GREG - circus roustabout

SAM - runs concessions for the circus

TIM "THE BOLT" ALTMAN - hot-headed fire breather

LADY CAPP - Ring Madam, former trapeze star, and mother to Juliet

JULIET - trapeze artist, secretly wants to be a clown

ANNIE - lion tamer, friend and confidant to Juliet

PERRY - a great trapeze artist, pompous and arrogant

MADAME LAURENTZ - fortune teller

Rodeo:

ABE - calf roper

BART - calf roper

BENNY - a friend and confidant of Brody, older brother type

Ms. MONTFORD - rodeo announcer, mother to Brody

MURRAY - a friend and confidant of Brody, a trickster

BRODY - an aspiring bull rider, passionate and idealistic

NELSON - bull rider, dim

Time

A long time ago.

Scene

The county fairgrounds of a small mountain town.

PROLOGUE

SHERIFF

Two households, alike in prideful daring,
A small mountain town, where we lay our scene.
From ancient grudge, break to leers and glaring-
Where spectacle makes spectacle seem mean.
From forth the caravans of these two foes
A pair of trav'ling players become friends;
With tight ropes and a bucking bronc that throws
Will show their fam'lies how to make amends
Combining death-defying low trapeze,
And mutton busting chops of spastic sheep.
But do not worry, set your mind at ease,
(Don't count them - if you do you'll fall asleep),
Sit back, relax, and watch the tale unfold,
Of big tops, cowboys, and these our heroes bold.

SCENE 1

Outside at the fairgrounds, where the Capp Family Circus & Montford Rodeo are forced to share turf. SAM and GREG enter from the circus tent, having just set up for the Grand Opening. They see their rivals, the Montford Rodeo set up nearby and are less than pleased.

GREG

How many times must we compete with this dusty travesty?

SAM

I tell you Greg, I won't be a ticket taker to their grand show.

GREG

Agreed. I won't be satisfied until their ring lies empty, and our big top is tops.

SAM

Big talk for someone who cleans up after the elephants.

GREG

A big mess like that deserves a big talk if you ask me. All you do is make concessions for picky customers.

SAM

I concede that they've become more and more picky, and they've been choosing us less and less. I only made one batch of popcorn all week! That rodeo has been poaching our customers at every town.

GREG
I say we show the Montford Rodeo just how competitive we can be.

SAM
You mean spying?

GREG
Espionage!

SAM
Deceit?

GREG
Chicanery!

SAM
Plotting?

GREG
Subterfuge!

SAM
Huh?

GREG
Nevermind. We can't keep competing with these turf-eating saddle
stiffs.

SAM
You're right! We have to get rid of these guys once and for all.

GREG
Here comes two of them, as we speak.

SAM
If we take them now, I'll be popping corn all week.

*ABE and BART saunter in. They split around
SAM and GREG, bumping each of their
shoulders as they pass, then turn and tip
their hats.*

ABE & BART
(sarcastically) Pardon.

GREG
(to SAM) Did they just tip their hats at us? *(to ABE and BART)*
Did you just tip your hats at us?

ABE
We do tip our hats, Partner.

GREG

Did you tip your hats at us, Partner?

BART

If you're aiming for a quarrel, why then yes, Partner, I do tip my hat at you.

GREG

You know full well the quarrel I carry. Come here, and I'll give it to you.

BART

You clowns couldn't rope a two-legged goat, let alone stand toe to toe with the best calf ropers in the west. Take your quarrel and carry it back to your bearded mama.

GREG

How dare you!? She conditions regularly!

GREG shoves BART. BART shoves GREG. Beat as they stare each other down. They fight. BENNY runs in, tries to break them up.

BENNY

Whoa hey! Time out. Your eight seconds are up. (*BENNY breaks up the fight. To ABE & BART*) Your reckless tempers will put an end to the rodeo for good this time.

TIM "THE BOLT" ALTMAN enters.

THE BOLT

That's the best idea you bushwhackers have ever had. Go on and let those tempers flare a little longer, Benny.

BENNY

Look - I'm trying to help us both. Your fiery disposition could use a little dousing as well.

ABE

Yeah, Timmy!

THE BOLT

What did you just call me?

BART

You heard him...Timmy!

THE BOLT

I hate that name! I am Tim "The Bolt" Altman, Fire Breather Extraordinaire. Prepare to be burned at both ends.

TIM prepares himself for an impressive fire display. He is interrupted by Ms. MONTFORD

from one side, and LADY CAPP from the other.

LADY CAPP

Imagine my surprise to find rustlers in our midst. It seems you're not only satisfied to poach our patrons, but you insist on taxing my troupe as well, Ms. Montford.

Ms. MONTFORD

Well pardon me ma'am, but I don't see how the fault is ours. You and your little carnies shouldn't be surprised - if they mess with the bull, they'll get the horns.

LADY CAPP

You could stand to come down from your high horse! (*Jeers from the circus side*)

Ms. MONTFORD

Funny, coming from the great Maria Capp, who spends her time looking down on the world from a high wire!! (*Jeers from the rodeo side*)

Both sides are ready to fight - Capp and Montford at the helm. As both groups begin to collide, they are interrupted by the SHERIFF.

SHERIFF

Ladies and gents, now we'll have none of this!

MONTFORD

But sir, this fire-breathed brat -

SHERIFF

- Silence Montford!

This quiet town won't house all of your griefs.
You'll leave the spectacle where it belongs
And learn to keep the peace and co-exist.

LADY CAPP

But Sheriff, we play to less than half-sized crowds!
You can't expect -

SHERIFF

- Enough! Now listen well:

You'll share both grounds and customers alike.
And should I spy a bitter word or frown,
I'll run your squabbling troupes right out of town.

The crowd disperse, ALL exit except BENNY and MONTFORD.

SCENE 2

MONTFORD

Benny, do you know of my son's whereabouts?

BENNY

Brody? No ma'am, when I saw him last he was alone, looking as though he'd been hog-tied by his own mother.

MONTFORD

I'm afraid it was a knot of his own making.

BENNY

If I may, ma'am, it does seem harsh to make a youth of sixteen return to mutton-busting just to prove a point.

MONTFORD

The only thing bigger than that boy's talent is his impatience. He thinks he can hop on a bull without so much as a lesson. Mark me, he'll mutton bust until he proves he can give this sport the respect it deserves.

BENNY

You know bull riding is all he thinks about.

MONTFORD

He'd do better to keep his boots on the ground and his hat out of the clouds. If you see him, tell him of the Sheriff's warning. The last thing we need is this plague of carnies upon our house.
(begins to exit)

BENNY

You're the boss, boss.

Murray enters from town.

MURRAY

Howdy, Mr. M!

No response from MONTFORD as she exits.

BENNY

Don't mind her. Brody's put a burr under her saddle.

MURRAY

That burr is nothing compared to our friend's prickly mood.

BENNY

Have you seen him?

MURRAY

I spent all day with him. He'll be along in a minute. I scurried ahead to give my ears a rest from his complaining.

BENNY

Surely Murray, his mood can't be so sour?

MURRAY

As if he's eating lemons by the hour!
This morn he sat astride a mighty ewe,
Surveying the competition: they were few.
Kids five or six, just starting at the show
Were shocked to see their competition grow.
The "baas" and "bleats" sung by that sorry lamb,
Harmonious with jeers heard from the stands.
The bell was rung, it took a trembling bound
And just as quickly crumpled to the ground.
The only thing more wounded than his ride
Was certainly the victor's wounded pride.
And I with peanuts in the stands did weep
To see poor Brody on that tiny sheep.

BENNY

(laughing) A new world record! Does it count if the sheep is hospitalized?

MURRAY

Shhh. Here he comes now - a sorrier champeen you're never apt to find.

BRODY enters, looking miserable

BRODY

Hi.

MURRAY

Behold! Our champion! Congratulations are due.

BRODY

Hold your praise - as my mother holds my dreams.

BENNY

Surely, friend, you must be ecstatic?

BRODY

How can I be proud of medals won on sheep back? I'm pretty sure I blew out that ewe's MCL. I looked like a fool.

MURRAY

(teasing, in a baby voice) Aw, is my wittle mutton buster too biggy-wiggy for his sheeepy-weeepy? Or maybe just his britches.
(MURRAY and BENNY laugh)

BRODY

I've been in this rodeo my whole life, I was raised by the
bridle, and I'm tired of being treated like a novice. I'm ready
to ride the biggest, baddest, bull in the world. The one-

MURRAY & BENNY

(Gasp!)

BRODY

The only-

MURRAY & BENNY

NO!

BRODY

El toro Diablo!!!

*A cracking whip is heard, all three cross
themselves.*

BENNY

You can't just hop on the biggest, baddest bull in the world! You
know what happens if you get thrown by El Toro Diablo. *(whip
crack, they cross themselves)*

*Murray and Benny do a dramatic rendition of
being gored to death by a bull. It goes on
a little too long.*

BRODY

I get the idea! I'm not like other cowboys. I've never been
thrown before, and I don't intend to start now.

MURRAY

Don't worry, pal. You won't get thrown - now that you're destined
to spend your days as a world class sheep squisher.

BENNY

Maybe your mom is right and you should take your time. Work your
way up through the ranks, like everyone else.

BRODY

By the time I do that, El- *(MURRAY gestures, "No." they all cross
themselves to be safe)* - will be nothing but ground chuck. I have
to start now. I'd rather muck the horse's stalls than suffer this
humiliation one more day.

BENNY

You keep on like this, you might be doing just that.

*MURRAY notices an announcement posted on
the circus tent.*

MURRAY

This will cheer you up. *(Reads)* "Come one, come all! The Capp Family Circus Grand Opening Extravaganza!" It's tonight. We can sneak in - disguise ourselves as sword swallows, strong men, maybe clowns, and see what these circus freaks are up to.

BENNY

The sheriff promised not an hour ago to ship us out of town if he caught us making trouble.

MURRAY

Then we won't get caught! What's a little risk in defense of our friend's broken spirit? This man is at the end of his lasso.

BENNY

Fine, but I'm not dressing up.

MURRAY

That's the spirit. *(looks to BRODY)* Whaddya say, partner?

BRODY

I've already looked like a clown once today.

MURRAY

Perfect! Meet me behind the tent tonight. I'll find disguises.

BENNY

Let's hope this helps improve our friend's condition.

MURRAY

Comrades, now that we have our purpose set. We're sure to have a night we won't forget.

Exeunt

SCENE 3

Interior of the circus tent, later that night. Juliet is alone in her dressing room. She practices juggling, occasionally referring to a book on her dressing table - The Art of Clowning. Her best friend, ANNIE, enters and spots her. Juliet quickly drops the balls and tries to hide them.

ANNIE

Thinking of adding juggling to your trapeze act?

JULIET

No I was uh, carrying some of these balls for a friend, and they just all flew up into the air...clumsy me. *(laughs weakly)*.

ANNIE

(snatching her book from behind her) I suppose this also belongs to your friend?

JULIET

No! I mean yes. *(caught red handed, Annie plays keep-away with the book for a moment)* Please? *(Annie returns it)*

ANNIE

I'm just teasing. "The Art of Clowning?" What are you up to?

JULIET

Can you keep a secret?

ANNIE

Juliet, when have I ever spilled the beans?

JULIET

Handshake?

ANNIE

Of course.

They do the secret circus handshake. It ends in a high five.

JULIET

Ok, so trapeze is like this thing my mom thinks I'm destined to do...yadda yadda...my heritage...blah blah blah...but it's BOOOORING! So I was thinking: What if I incorporated some clown tricks to make it funnier?

ANNIE

I was just kidding about the juggling before.

JULIET

But I'm not. If I'm forced to "fly with the greatest of ease" for the rest of my life, I can at least try and make it interesting.

ANNIE

Good luck telling your mom about that. She's the Ring Madam now, and she's counting on you to take her place.

JULIET

I will be taking her place, but I'll be adding my own personal touch.

ANNIE

Maybe it's best to save that for a different night. You know, a night when they're not announcing your debut as the next in a long line of world famous trapeze artists. You should be excited about that.

JULIET

How can I be excited about the announcement that determines the course of my life from this night on? The one that seals my fate? The one that imprisons me to a life of leotards and chalk dust for the rest of eternity?!

ANNIE

Look on the bright side. You get to be partners with Perry, the most amazing, handsome, talented...

JULIET

....Conceited, arrogant, self-centered trapeze artist in history. Lucky me. Want to trade places?

ANNIE

Sorry, lion taming is more my speed.

JULIET

I think I'd rather be in the lion's den. At least my end would be quick.

ANNIE

But you've got a legacy with your name on it.

JULIET

It's not my legacy. I didn't do anything to deserve it. No one even asked me if I wanted their stupid legacy. I just want to make people laugh.

ANNIE

There's nothing wrong with that, but if you love clowning that much, you need to tell your mom.

JULIET

I will...I'm just not ready yet. With a little more practice, I can perfect these tricks. Then she'll see what a great clown I'll be, and she won't mind that I don't want to do trapeze.

ANNIE

Throwing last minute jokes into a trapeze act isn't the answer. Talk to her.

LADY CAPP

(Offstage) Juliet!!!!

ANNIE
Here's your chance.

JULIET
I don't know...

LADY CAPP
(Offstage) JULIET!!!!

ANNIE
I'll be right behind you.

Lady Capp bursts in. Annie spins Juliet around facing her toward her mother. Juliet is terrified.

LADY CAPP
Jul -! Oh there you are. You're not ready! Quickly my dear, it's your big night. All eyes will be on you!

ANNIE nudges Juliet.

JULIET
Actually, I've been thinking, and -

LADY CAPP
And you're nervous. Of course you are, it's only natural. Don't think I didn't have butterflies the first time your father and I were announced as a duo. All the more wings to fly with, dear.

Another nudge from ANNIE.

JULIET
I wanted to tell you, mother, that I've been practicing -

LADY CAPP
Your triple corkscrews? I'm so proud of you. My ambitious little Tumbleweed is finally embracing her destiny. Don't worry, dear, the double corkscrews will be just fine for tonight. Now chop chop! Let's all stop clowning around and get ready.

JULIET and ANNIE exchange a look.

JULIET
Clowning around?! Nobody's clowning! I don't see any big shoes or rubber nose here... (laughs awkwardly).

LADY CAPP
Darling, it's an expression. You really are nervous. (kisses JULIET'S forehead) Now hurry! The show starts in ten minutes!

LADY CAPP exits practicing her announcement patter, "Ladies and gentlemen...", "the Capp

*Family Circus welcomes you..." lip trills,
vocal warm ups, etc.*

ANNIE

Wow. Maybe you should join me in the lion cage. You're the biggest scaredy cat we've got.

JULIET

She just wouldn't understand. No Capp has ever been a clown. I'd be disgracing the family name.

ANNIE

Maybe it's for the best.

JULIET

I guess I have no choice. Here's hoping "Perry the Pompous" can put down his mirror long enough to catch me.

ANNIE

You'll be fine. I'll let you get ready. I've got cats to feed.

JULIET

I hear narcissistic trapeze artists are quite delicious.

ANNIE

Nah. Too much spandex. (*JULIET laughs*). Hey, there's a smile. Bump a nose! - but not a clown nose.

JULIET

Ha, ha. Thanks.

JULIET reluctantly begins to get ready. She takes her leotard and tights and exits.

SCENE 4

Lights up. Outside at the fairgrounds, night. BRODY and MURRAY wait in disguise. Their disguises are terrible. Floppy shoes, clown hair, rubber nose, etc. BRODY's costume and disposition slightly resemble a sad Harlequin.

MURRAY

I have to say we look the part. Hurry up, Benny! Show starts in ten minutes.

BENNY

(Offstage) No way. I look like a stupid cirky.

MURRAY

That's the point. Now get out here.

BENNY reluctantly enters, still wearing his cowboy hat.

MURRAY

You can't wear your cowboy hat. That's a dead giveaway. Wear this. *(Hands him a clown wig)*

BENNY

I draw the line at clown wigs. You can have my hat when you take it from my cold dead hands.

MURRAY

Fine, but you're wearing the nose. *(brief struggle as MURRAY places the nose on BENNY's face)* There. You look great. Doesn't he look great?

BRODY

(distracted) Uh huh...

BENNY

Hey, Brody! Still with us, pal?

BRODY

Yeah. Sure, sorry.

MURRAY

What is wrong with you? Snap out of it.

BRODY

But my mother has ruined my life.

MURRAY

You're hardly the first to face that strife.

BRODY

If what I want do is buck and ride
My mother shouldn't stop me with her pride.

MURRAY

All he wants is to slow your head of steam.

BRODY

And this is all I want. It is my dream!

MURRAY

A boy who wants to rest upon a cloud
Looks down on us atop his misty perch.
To go from ground to heaven in a snap -
A cheater's path to greatness he'd attain.
There's nothing in that cloud to hold him high

But misty air and icy fog. No more
The solid earth below his feet; nor has
He tether tied to halt the quick descent.
He falls! And down, and down, and down he goes
(His lack of preparation growing near).
Then SMASH! His dreams are shattered on the ground

BRODY

Murray, what are you getting at?

MURRAY

But there's a man who looks above and dreams
Of how he will attain celestial roost.
He sets his mind to task and hunkers down
To toil and work and strive towards his aim.
He lays a brick and sets the mortar, too.
And then another brick he stacks upon
The first. And then two more, and then another two.
His back, it aches. There's sweat upon his brow.
He wonders what it all is truly worth
But still he builds, and when he's finally through,
At last he's earned himself the right to climb.
He almost falls, but conquers fear and doubt.
At last; the final step. He has arrived!
This man atop his tower in the sky.
A place where lofty dreams will never die.

BRODY

I don't have time for your riddles and rhymes.

MURRAY

I speak of dreams, they're more your riddles than mine.

BENNY

He's right, Murray. I don't want to wear this getup any longer
than I have to.

MURRAY

Then let's exchange this talk of dreams for the nightmare we're
about to witness in that tent. Onward!

*The three exit sneakily through the back of
the circus tent.*

SCENE 5

*Inside the circus tent, backstage. Faint
sounds of the show from offstage. JULIET
enters, looks around to make sure no one is
watching, then takes out magician's props
and begins to rehearse tricks. MURRAY,
BENNY, & BRODY sneak by unnoticed by
JULIET. BRODY, who brings up the rear,*

spies her, and holds back to watch her clown tricks for a moment. She is good. After one particularly funny trick, BRODY laughs out loud, startling JULIET.

BRODY

Hey, that's pretty funny.

JULIET

Oh! I - I'm sorry. I thought I was alone.

BRODY

Don't let me interrupt.

JULIET

I was just messing around. Do you need to warm up? I can leave -

BRODY

Oh, no. I'm just here to watch the - er, I mean... I'm passing through on my way to do some...clown stuff.

JULIET

Are you new? I don't think I've seen you before.

BRODY

Uh...yes. This is my first day. Glad to meet someone who knows what they're doing.

JULIET

Me? No, I'm not a clown. I'm on trapeze.

BRODY

Really? Coulda fooled me.

JULIET

Can I ask you something?

BRODY

Shoot.

JULIET

How long did you train before you became a clown?

BRODY

Uh, you mean like practice? Well, that really isn't my -

JULIET

Coco the Clown was an apprentice for four years, and it took Griebing decades to be named the first Master Clown. And don't get me started on Pierrot. He was the most talented pantomimer of his day. But you probably already know that.

BRODY

Well, honestly, I -

JULIET

What's your take on the relationship between the Tramp and Auguste? I notice your makeup doesn't quite match either style. Do you subscribe to a specific style? Classic? Slapstick? Pagliacci?! MIME?!

BRODY

Well, I - I work more with animals.

JULIET

You use animals in your act? Wow! You mean like poodles?

BRODY

Yeah. Really big smelly poodles.

JULIET

Maybe you could give me some pointers sometime. I've been reading this book, "The Art of Clowning" and -

BRODY

Now hold on a tick. How come you're so interested in clowns? It almost sounds like you'd rather be a clown than fly on that...flying thingamajig.

JULIET

Trapeze. Tonight is my debut.

BRODY

You don't seem too thrilled about that.

JULIET

Can I tell you a secret?

BRODY

Sure.

JULIET

Handshake?

BRODY reaches his hand out to shake her hand.

JULIET

No, no. The secret handshake. I can't tell you without the secret circus handshake.

BRODY

Uh...right. Of course.

JULIET begins the handshake. BRODY follows along clumsily. The handshake ends with a high five. BRODY unsure of how to proceed, keeps his palm pressed into hers. JULIET giggles. They break away. After a beat.

BRODY

So...you're secret?

JULIET

Right! Ok, well here goes: I want to be a clown. And I'm good at it too. I've read tons of books and I practice every day -

BRODY

Then why are you going through with this trapeze act?

JULIET

My mother -

BRODY

Ah, let me guess. Your folks don't approve. There's one thing you want, and they won't let you do it no matter how much you beg?

JULIET

Exactly! ...Except for one tiny detail. I haven't told my mom.

BRODY

Why not?

JULIET

She wouldn't want the great Capp name tainted by greasepaint.

BRODY

Who's life are you living? Yours or your mother's?

JULIET

Mine, of course, but -

BRODY

Don't know about you, but I could never keep my dream a secret.

JULIET

What's your dream?

BRODY

To be the best bull rider in the history of Rodeo!!!!

JULIET

Wait, what?

BRODY

Uh -

JULIET

Wait a minute ...You're not a clown.

BRODY

(realizing he's been found out) Aw, dang it.

*They both stare at each other in shock.
Annie Enters.*

ANNIE

Juliet, you're on!

JULIET

Oh no! That's me. I have to go!

BRODY

Wait. Before you go - *(He tosses her his clown nose)* Don't give up.

JULIET

(Catching the nose, looks at it, smiles at BRODY) Thanks, uh -

BRODY

Brody.

JULIET

Thanks, Brody.

*JULIET exits toward the ring. BRODY hurries to catch up with his friends, exits.
Transition to circus ring.*

SCENE 6

During the following, we see various circus performers enter with a flourish, demonstrating teasers of their acts as the circus comes to life. A single (low-flying) trapeze is lowered center stage.

LADY CAPP

And now ladies and gentlemen, children of all ages, it's time for the announcement you've all been waiting for. I present to you, for the first time ever, a brand new trapeze act unlike any you've seen before-

BENNY, MURRAY, & BRODY enter from the house and awkwardly make their way through the aisles, trying to get to their seats.

BENNY, MURRAY, & BRODY
(ad libbing) Pardon me, miss. Sorry. 'Scuse me. Pardon me. etc.

THE BOLT notices the three imposters.

THE BOLT
Wait a minute, I'd know that hat anywhere. Looks like 10 gallons of horse manure just walked in.

MURRAY
(from the stands, antagonizing) Is that Timmy? Hey there, Timmy!!!

As THE BOLT starts to make his way toward them, LADY CAPP heads him off, taking him to the side.

LADY CAPP
Now is not the time or the place. You will leave them be.

THE BOLT
I'll not tolerate their sneaking into our show, spoiling Juliet's debut, and making a mockery of us.

LADY CAPP
You heard the sheriff. You will ruin us forever if you act.

THE BOLT

(aside) I'll hold my fiery tongue for now and wait
For a time when I can seal this rodeo's fate.

LADY CAPP

...making their way to the ring, the troubadour of tumbling, the
ace of acrobatics, the sultan of somersaults, Perry "The Prince"
Concello and his new partner, making her debut tonight, Juliet
Capp!!!!

*Perry strides on stage with Juliet
awkwardly. Full of pomp he bows and
blocks her everytime she tries to be seen.
Juliet and Perry hit their final pose to
tepid applause. Juliet looks unhappy. Lady
Capp returns to the center.*

LADY CAPP

(not pleased) There you have it ladies and gents, the most
impressive feats on the death defying low trapeze. Thank you for
joining us at the Capp Family Circus!!

*Lights shift. Applause is heard from the
audience, and the crowd and circus
performers disperse. JULIET and LADY CAPP
remain.*

SCENE 7

After the grand opening. JULIET and LADY CAPP remain in the empty ring. Unbeknownst to them, BRODY remains in the stands. JULIET starts to exit.

LADY CAPP

Stop right there, young lady. (*JULIET stops*) That was the most embarrassing opening in the long history of this circus! It's one thing to be nervous - nerves I can understand, but where was the showmanship? You know what I always say, "A great performance is -"

JULIET

"A great performance is ten percent talent and 90 percent panache." I know, you tell me that all the time.

LADY CAPP

So where was the panache? I saw you heading to the practice arena every day so I know you've been training enough. I demand an explanation.

JULIET turns to her mother, terrified.

LADY CAPP

You were practicing every day weren't you?

JULIET shakes her head no.

LADY CAPP

And why not?

JULIET

I was... I was practicing... (*trying to find the courage*)

LADY CAPP

But not hard enough. It's clear I've given you too much responsibility.

JULIET

No, mother, that's not -

LADY CAPP

First thing tomorrow morning, I will meet you in the ring, and we will rehearse until it's perfect.

JULIET

It's not about rehearsal. I'm trying to tell you that I'm -

LADY CAPP

I know, dear. You're sorry for letting me down. But it's not me you need to apologize to. It's your partner, Perry, for dragging

him to the extra rehearsal, since he's clearly not the one in need of it.

JULIET

(Remembering BRODY's advice, with sudden courage) Who's life am I living?!

LADY CAPP

Why, the life you're destined to lead, my darling Tumbleweed. I know you don't believe it now, but soon you'll realize that the blood of a great trapeze artist is in you, if only you'll allow it to reach it's full potential. Let Perry help you, dear. You are a team now. Just like your father and I were.

JULIET

But mother, I despise Perry. His pomposity, his arrogance, his greasy hair! It's not like you and Dad at all. There's nothing charming or likeable about him. How can you expect me to enjoy what I do when I have to put up with that boastful blowhard?

LADY CAPP

Ungrateful child, have you given a thought
About the pains I took to match you with
This master of trapeze? Why he performs
The feats of artists twice his age or more.
The blindfold double death drop he attained
While wearing diapers; I'll not tolerate
Your dreary mood, nor idly watch you spoil
My grand design. To bed, and think on what
You've done. Or else, sleep not, and practice all
The while. First thing, when morning lark does cry,
I'll expect to see you here prepared to learn.
Within this ring, a smile on your face
Will prove you can assume your rightful place.

LADY CAPP swings the trapeze toward JULIET, who catches it dejectedly. LADY CAPP exits.

*JULIET begins half-heartedly practicing.
BRODY emerges from the stands and steps into the ring, unseen by JULIET.*

BRODY

(aside, to himself)
My soul is troubled by this sad display
She's silent, yet her frown speaks loud and clear
Of misery one feels when forced to live
According to another's stubborn will.
The pressure's hers to bear - and witness how

It weighs like stone upon her. Cast it off!
And seize the day, for time is not our friend.
The act of hiding dreams for those you love
Is like keeping wild broncos in a pen.

JULIET

(JULIET, in a moment of despair, slumps down and sits upon her trapeze.) I hate this trap.

BRODY

Easy now, she laments.

She reaches in her pocket for the clown nose, puts it on. A moment of happiness, and then realization of the trouble she faces.

JULIET

O woe is me, these choices I must make:
Deny my mother and refuse my fame,
Or take my place at Perry's side at dawn.
To cast aside the thing that makes me whole
Will leave my smile hollow at its core.
And if I'm empty am I even me?
Yet still I'm stuffed with others' levied dreams.

*Juliet tosses the nose towards the stands.
It falls at BRODY's feet. He picks it up.*

BRODY

Excuse me, miss -

JULIET

(startled) Oh! You have to stop doing that!

BRODY

Sorry.

JULIET

What are you doing here? Have you been here the whole time?

BRODY

Yeah.

JULIET

That's kind of creepy, watching people when they don't know you're there.

BRODY

I was waiting to congratulate you on your debut, but then you and your mom were having a...conversation.

JULIET

Awkward.

BRODY

It's ok. Really. We're kinda in the same wagon, so to speak. My mom and I have arguments all the time about bull riding, so I understand.

JULIET

So you are from the rodeo.

BRODY

Yeah, I'm not too good at pretending to be something I'm not.

JULIET

Is that why you fight with your mom? She won't let you ride?

BRODY

Exactly. I'm a bull rider. It's what I was born to do. I don't have time to waste practicing on sheep, or steers. My mom doesn't think I can, but one day I will ride...El Toro Diablo (*Whip crack. He crosses himself*).

JULIET

That was weird.

BRODY

That's the power of...El toro diablo. (*Whip crack. They both cross themselves*) He's the biggest, baddest bull in the world.

JULIET

Isn't that dangerous?

BRODY

Of course it is. That's the whole point. I don't know how my mom can run a professional rodeo and be afraid of a little bull riding. Sure, everyone who rides him ends up with a broken leg -

JULIET

Really?

BRODY

Or a broken neck -

JULIET

Yikes.

BRODY

An extra hole or two -

JULIET

Oh my gosh!

BRODY

But that's what makes it so thrilling! Nothing in life is worth living unless there's a little risk involved. You gotta seize the bull by the horns!

JULIET

Literally. But how do you expect to do that without honing your skills first?

BRODY

Practice is for riders without natural talent. Bull riding's in my blood.

JULIET

That's a nice idea, and I'm sure you're right about your talent. But even the most talented people have to put in the time, do the work.

BRODY

Well, I figured I would just learn by doing.

JULIET

It doesn't work that way. What are the talents you need to have to be able to be a great bull rider?

BRODY

Well, you have to have balance, strength, and focus.

JULIET

All talents that you possess naturally, right?

BRODY

That's right!

JULIET

It sounds like bull riding and trapeze are a lot alike that way. You see, it takes the same talents to do this.

JULIET hops on the trapeze, does an impressive trick.

BRODY

Woah.

JULIET

Now, your turn.

JULIET swings the trapeze to him. BRODY catches it, hesitates.

BRODY

My turn?

JULIET

You said you have what it takes, didn't you?

BRODY

I guess... *(with false bravado)* I'll give it a try. Can't be too hard.

He awkwardly mounts the trapeze and does a failed attempt at replicating her trick. He ends up tangled in the ropes. JULIET approaches.

JULIET

I've had to practice most of my life to be able to "fly with the greatest of ease."

BRODY

I think I'm beginning to see your point.

She begins to untangle him.

JULIET

I bet you'll make an excellent bull rider, and if you put in the time and dedicate yourself to refining those natural abilities, you could be one of the greats.

He is untangled. She helps him down.

BRODY

You think so?

JULIET

Absolutely.

They exchange a smile.

BRODY

Thanks. But what about you? All the practice in the world won't help you be a clown if you don't stand up to your mom.

JULIET

I can't deny my birthright. It'd be an insult to the generations of trapeze artists that came before me.

BRODY

Wasn't the circus founded by people who ran away from what the rest of the world expected of them?

JULIET

I guess.

BRODY

So by making the choice to follow your dreams, wouldn't you be doing exactly what your ancestors did? They created their own destiny, why can't you?

JULIET

But how do we know if we're making the right decision? We can't predict the future.

He is stumped. He turns to notice a poster for "Madam Laurentz, Fortune Teller Extraordinaire." An idea dawns.

BRODY

Maybe we can't...but *she* can! I'm taking you to the fortune teller - first thing tomorrow. She'll set you straight. Prove to you that you can - and will - be the clown you've always wanted to be.

JULIET

But I'll miss my practice.

BRODY

Well, then you have a decision to make:
Perch in the air: a bird inside a cage?
Or fill the world with laughter from the stage?

He holds the clown nose out for her. She doesn't take it.

Who's life are you living? Either way you go, you have to live with yourself.

BRODY takes her hand and places the clown nose in it.

I'll be there at sunrise.

He exits. A beat. JULIET opens her hand, and looks at the clown nose, faced with her decision.

Scene 8

*Later that night. Perry's dressing room.
PERRY bursts in, followed by LADY CAPP.*

PERRY

This is an outrage Lady Capp. Perry Concello does not DO extra rehearsal. It interferes with my beauty regimen. *(He begins a tedious regimen of removing makeup, combing his hair, etc)*

LADY CAPP

I'm so sorry to disrupt your routine. I know how important it is to you -

PERRY

To ME?! Your show depends on this perfect face, this exquisitely coiffed hair, and this flawless figure.

LADY CAPP

Of course. We just need to work together to help Juliet be the worthy partner we know she can be.

PERRY

Your faith in her far exceeds mine. You brought me here with the promise of becoming the most dynamic duo this circus has ever

seen. I turned down offers from 10 other circus troupes to join your rag-tag affair, because of the weight that the Capp name carries. I'm starting to think that that moniker has tumbled from its lofty heights.

LADY CAPP

It hasn't. Let me prove it to you tomorrow morning. I spoke with Juliet. She won't let us down again. I'd stake my name on it.

PERRY

Perry Concello doesn't give second chances. But, in honor of the great Marcellus Benedictine Capp IV, I'll make an exception this time. But if your precious daughter doesn't pass muster, my fans will be watching me in Barnum's big top.

LADY CAPP

Understood. Thank you, Perry.

A beat.

PERRY

Dismissed!

LADY CAPP exits. PERRY continues primping as lights fade.

Scene 9

Outside the booth of MADAME LAURENTZ. BRODY waits impatiently. After a moment, JULIET enters carrying a full knapsack and a folder under her arm.

BRODY

I thought you weren't gonna show.

JULIET

Well, like you said, I have to live with my decisions.

BRODY

That's the spirit!

JULIET

I'm just not sure this is the right one.

BRODY

You'll find out soon enough.

JULIET

Wait. Before we go in -

JULIET swings the knapsack onto the ground. It lands with a thud at BRODY's feet.

BRODY

What in tarnation is all that?

JULIET

Research. For your bull riding training. I was up all night collecting materials for you.

BRODY

(taking out several books from the bag) Where did you - ? How did you - ?

JULIET

I also worked up a training regimen for you. We'll get you to ten thousand hours in no time.

She hands him the folder with the detailed schedule inside.

BRODY

Ten thousand hours!?

JULIET

Of course. It's the amount of time they say you need to practice before you can be an expert at something.

BRODY
But that'll take like a year!

JULIET
Five, actually.

BRODY
FIVE YEARS!?

JULIET
That's right.

BRODY
Oh no. No way I'm doing that.

He hands the folder back to her.

JULIET
Just promise me you'll think about it.

BRODY
Fine, I'll think about it. You ready to have your fortune told?
(*she nods*)

They approach the booth of MADAME LAURENTZ.

MADAME LAURENTZ
Who enters?

BRODY
Madame Laurentz, my name is Brody, and you know Juliet. We're here to have -

MADAME LAURENTZ
• Your fortunes told.

BRODY
Wow! (*Aside, to JULIET*) She's really good. This is gonna be great.

JULIET
(*giggles*) Ummm...sure.

MADAME LAURENTZ
Please, have a seat. (*gestures for them to sit*)

BRODY
(*sits*) Thank you ma'am. My friend Julie here has a problem, and we need you to shed some light on her sixes and sevens.

MADAME LAURENTZ
Her clown conundrum.

BRODY

Whaaaaat? (to JULIET) Did you tell her?

JULIET

No, no one knows but you and Annie. She's legit.

MADAME LAURENTZ

I've been waiting for you to come to me. What answers do you seek?

JULIET

(sits) Well Madame, I want to know if I'll ever be a world famous clown, who travels the world and makes people laugh. Like Bubbles, Blinky, or Bozo.

MADAME LAURENTZ

Let's see what's in the cards for you my dear... (She deals 3 tarot cards, face down onto the table with great flourish.)

The first of three will show me who you are,
The second takes us back to where you've been.
A final card will tell us what's to come.
But remember child, the answers lie within.

(She turns over the first card)

The siamese twin, it tells me that you're split
Between two hearts, your family's and your own.
And if you seek to mend this painful rift,
You have to make your goals and passions known.

(She turns over the second card)

A human cannonball you've been thus far
Trajectory was set for you since birth.
A prop to launch the show to greater heights,
No matter how it burns your sense of worth.

(MADAME LAURENTZ reveals the third and final card)

The ringmaster: the final of the three
Will guide you to become the very best.
You have to run the show that is your life,
And make yourself be heard above the rest.
Unless you stand to let your truth disclose
You'll never have the chance to wear the nose.

BRODY

See! What'd I tell ya?

JULIET

You're right. You both are. I can't keep this a secret anymore.
I'll always regret it if I do.

BRODY

Now we're talking. Let's get outta here and get to clownin!
Thanks a lot, Madame L.

BRODY and JULIET get up to leave. As JULIET heads toward the exit, BRODY reaches across the table to shake hands with MADAME LAURENTZ. A flash of light, and a gasp from MADAME LAURENTZ.

MADAME LAURENTZ

Stop young man!

BRODY

Holy Moses!

MADAME LAURENTZ

I have grave news. You have great ambition, and nothing will stop you from your task. But you lack the necessary effort to make it so. You know what they say about reaching your goals.

BRODY

Why sure, "If you can dream it, you can achieve it."

MADAME LAURENTZ

No! "Preparation prevents poor performance." Without the proper fortitude I fear you will not make it.

BRODY

You mean I'll never be a bull rider?

MADAME LAURENTZ

NO! On the contrary...I see you astride a mighty beast. With fiery breath and horns as sharp as swords. I see you perched atop the biggest, baddest, bull in the world. The one -

BRODY

Yes?

MADAME LAURENTZ

The only -

BRODY

I knew it!

BOTH

EL TORO DIABLO!

Sound of a whiplash, ALL THREE cross themselves

BRODY

Well yeehaw! That's all I needed to hear. Thank you, kindly. Well, I'll be on my way.

MADAME LAURENTZ

NO!!

To forge ahead, you surely can't afford.
For if you do you'll surely wind up gored.

THE BOLT enters looking for JULIET. When he hears them talking, he hides himself in the shadows and listens.

JULIET

Sounds like you could use that training schedule I made you.

BRODY

Yeah. Maybe.

JULIET

No maybes about it. Look, I can help make sure you stay in the saddle. Will you let me?

BRODY

Okay. And I'll help you practice telling your mom you're giving up trapeze to be a clown!

JULIET

You got it.

BRODY

Handshake?

They do the secret handshake. BRODY has clearly been practicing.

JULIET

It's a pact!

THE BOLT has heard enough. Enraged, he bursts in and interrupts.

THE BOLT

I've heard enough!!! Juliet, your mother's searching all over the grounds for you. She's furious that you've missed rehearsal.

JULIET

Tim, what are you -

THE BOLT

And wait until she hears who you were missing it for! Not only do you defy your heritage, but you defile our reputation by fraternizing with this rabble rouser!

JULIET

Brody, I'm sorry. I have to go.

BRODY

But, we just -

JULIET

Thanks again, Madame Laurentz.

JULIET exits in a hurry.

MADAME LAURENTZ

(calls after her) Remember your courage, child!

BRODY

Juliet, wait -

BRODY begins to run after her when he is stopped by THE BOLT.

THE BOLT

Hold on there mutton buster. I think you've done enough. The last thing Juliet needs is you confusing her anymore.

BRODY

I've got no quarrel with you, Sir, but Juliet is my friend, and I've gotta go help her.

THE BOLT

She's no concern of yours, unless you want to concern yourself with me.

BRODY

You should be concerned for her too.

BRODY starts to leave but he is stopped by THE BOLT.

THE BOLT

(stops him) I think it's time someone taught you a lesson.

BRODY

If you don't mind, I'll be on my way.

BRODY again tries to leave, and again THE BOLT blocks his way.

I don't want trouble.

THE BOLT

Oh, you'll get it whether you want it or not. As you cowpokes always say, if you mess with the heifer you'll get the milk!

BRODY

That's not even right.

THE BOLT

I mean - if you shear the sheep, you'll get the sweater!

BRODY

Nope.

THE BOLT

If you slop the hog, you'll get the bacon?

BRODY

Still no.

THE BOLT

Forget it! My point is, Brody from the rodeo, that I, Tim "The Bolt" Altman, do hereby challenge you to a TRICK OFF!!

During the following, we see various members of the circus and rodeo (SAM, GREG, ABE, & BART) popping into the scene, having heard the words "trick off," to join in the altercation.

GREG

Trick Off?

MURRAY

TRICK OFF!

ANNIE

Trick off!

BETTY

TRICK OFF, Y'ALL!

The rest of the two troupes converge including ANNIE, BENNY, and MURRAY.

BRODY

Let's all cool our heels. There's no need for a conflagration.

THE BOLT

Are you telling me you're going to refuse a trick off? (*scoffs*)
As if you vaqueros aren't pitiful enough.

MURRAY

(*taking BRODY aside*) Brody, you can't refuse a trick off. It's part of the cowboy code. Rule number 237, Article C: "Thou shalt not refuse to engage in a trick off."

BRODY

I've got to help Juliet. (*to THE BOLT*) I won't do it.

THE BOLT

And I thought you were part of a real rodeo. You sound more like a city slicker to me!

A collective gasp.

MURRAY

Now stop right there you nasty roustabout
I'll show you what a trick off's all about.

BENNY

I beg you stop, you put us all at risk!

MURRAY

Peace, my friend! This challenge I'll not resist.

BRODY

If you proceed, the choice can't be undone.

MURRAY

Since you won't stand, I'll have to be the one.

THE BOLT

Turn, you cowards. Look upon your shame!

The trick off ensues. Each side alternates different tricks one after the other, until MURRAY does his trick.

MURRAY

Come on now, Timmy. Your passado!

THE BOLT

MY NAME IS THE BOLT!

In his anger, THE BOLT swiftly begins his "fire" display. He is dangerously close to the crowd. The fire catches MURRAY and burns his hand accidentally.

MURRAY

I am burnt!
A flame on both my fingers. I am singed.

BENNY, BRODY, and the others from the rodeo side smother the fire and come to MURRAY's aid.

BENNY

Surely, it's only first degree.

MURRAY

No! It's hotter than a stove, and wider than a forest fire. It will serve. Ask for me tomorrow and you shall find me in the burn unit with gauze about my limbs.

THE BOLT

You're barely seared. A filet in rarest form, no more!

BRODY

If my friend says he's hurt, he's hurt. You've taken this trick off too far.

THE BOLT

What do you plan to do about it?

BRODY

Fetch me my lasso. (*ABE hands BRODY a lasso*) This loop's for you!

BRODY lassos THE BOLT and hog ties him, standing triumphantly over him. Cheers from the rodeo. THE BOLT whimpers on the ground.

THE SHERIFF, LADY CAPP, PERRY, and Ms. MONTFORD rush in.

SHERIFF

Break it up, break it up! It's all over folks. Who started this mess?

THE BOLT

This cowpuncher! He attacked me and trussed me up like this. I was trying to find Juliet! Lady Capp, she's planning to defy you and become a clown! I was trying to stop them.

The circus people help untie THE BOLT.

LADY CAPP

(*To MONTFORD*) It's your wrangling whippersnapper who's made this mess! I suppose I shouldn't be surprised that he's corrupted my daughter.

BRODY

Juliet and I are friends!

MONTFORD

(to BRODY) Now hold on just one dad gum minute. (to LADY CAPP)
We've got one of my rodeo hands lying here, burned by *your* man!

THE BOLT

I was defending myself. They ganged up on me!

BRODY

That's not true. This was all Tim's idea!

MONTFORD

Do. Not. Speak. You've done enough!

SHERIFF

And I've *heard* enough! I warned you both. After tonight's show I want both of your outfits out of this town for good. You are banished from the town limits from hereafter.

SHERIFF exits.

BRODY

Mom, I -

MONTFORD

(Turning on Brody) You see what ruin your petulance has made? I've been patient long enough. Your days as a rider are through. YOU ARE GROUNDED! You will bale hay, you will shoe horses, you will even muck the stalls before you ever step foot in that arena as a bull rider! Now out of my sight, for I can hardly look upon you.

Blackout

SCENE 10

JULIET's dressing room. JULIET is pacing nervously, practicing what she'll say to her mother.

JULIET

"Mother, if it's ok with you, I'd really like to -" *(starts over)*
"Mother, with your permission, I'd like to ask that you maybe consider the possibility of -" *(starts again)* "Mother, I appreciate your guidance, but it's always been my dream to -"
...Brody, where are you?

ANNIE rushes in, relieved to find JULIET

ANNIE

Juliet, your mother is looking for you. I came to warn you -

JULIET

I know. She's angry that I missed rehearsal this morning.

ANNIE

No! It's worse than that. Tim confronted Brody about you being friends, and there was...a trick off.

JULIET

(gasp) Not a trick off?

ANNIE

Yes. Tim burned Murray, and Brody hog-tied Tim. Now the circus and the rodeo have to leave town after tonight's show.

JULIET

Oh no!

ANNIE

It's worse. Tim told your mother what he overheard about you wanting to be a clown. She's furious, and she's on the war-path.

LADY CAPP

(Offstage) Juliet!!!

JULIET

Here she comes. What am I going to do?

LADY CAPP enters.

LADY CAPP

Here I find you, disappointing child. Stand and face me.

JULIET

Mother I...I'm -

LADY CAPP

Let not another word escape your lips. Your deception has cost us all.

JULIET

But mother, I want to -

LADY CAPP

To be a clown?! (she notices the clown nose and JULIET's clowning book on her dressing table, and throws them in a garbage can next to the dressing table) Your petty interests end now. What have you to say?

JULIET

Forgive me, Mother. I never meant to harm you or your show.

LADY CAPP

Your empty apologies are worthless. If you wish to remain a daughter in my eyes you will listen carefully. Take the stage and perform as if your life depended on it, or mark my words you will depart this circus at the next town!

LADY CAPP exits. JULIET, weeping, takes the clown nose from the floor, and holds it in her hand. ANNIE comforts her.

JULIET

Annie, what am I going to do? I'm trapped.

ANNIE

I have an idea. You get ready, I'll be back soon.

ANNIE exits. JULIET pockets the clown nose.

JULIET

It seems the only way to keep the peace
Is take my rightful place on the trapeze.
For when the light has fallen on the ring,
I'll find myself with Perry on a swing.

Blackout

SCENE 11

BRODY is brooding outside the rodeo grounds. BENNY is there with him.

BENNY

Now calm down.

BRODY

Grounded! What could be worse than being *grounded*!

BENNY

Well a lot of things actually -

BRODY

I might as well just die. My mother would rejoice.

BENNY

Whoa. Hey now, don't say that. It's not the end of the world.

BRODY

There is no world outside the rodeo's fence!

BENNY

Well now you're just being dramatic.

ANNIE rushes in.

ANNIE

Brody! Brody! Juliet needs your help.

BRODY

I'm no help to anyone anymore. I am grounded!

BENNY

(aside to ANNIE) He's in a mood.

ANNIE

(to BENNY) You should see Juliet. *(to BRODY)* Please, it's urgent. Her mother is forcing her to do trapeze and has forbidden her from ever clowning again. She is about to cash in her dreams, and hitch herself to Perry's star.

BRODY

She can't do that!

ANNIE

You have to talk her out of it. You're the only one who inspires her to have courage.

BRODY

(gets an idea) I'll do you one better, and it will work out for both of us.

ANNIE

Well, you better hurry. Curtain is in ten minutes.

Annie exits.

BRODY

Benny, I need you to deliver a message to Juliet for me.

BENNY

Okay...shoot.

BRODY

Tonight, I'll prove to her that you can't give up on yourself. I'm going to sneak into the rodeo and ride the biggest, baddest BULL!

BENNY

Oh no. Not that.

BRODY

Oh yes. That. I'm going to ride the one -

BENNY

Oh boy.

BRODY

The only -

BENNY

You can't!

BRODY

EL TORO DIABLO!!

Whiplash, they cross themselves.

BENNY

But that's suicide! You'll end up trampled, gored or worse...you'll be as dead as a can of corned beef!

BRODY

When Juliet hears of my impressive feat of bravery, she'll be inspired. She'll quit the trapeze and become the clown she always wanted to be. It's fool proof!

BENNY

Foolhardy! You're grounded remember? You can't set foot in that arena.

BRODY

I'll figure it out. You just deliver the message.

Brody exits.

BENNY

I'll tell you what, if that boy's brains were dynamite, there wouldn't be enough to blow his nose.

Lights fade.

SCENE 12

In the circus arena. mid performance. ALL circus performers have taken their place in the ring. JULIET and PERRY begin their act. It is not going well. PERRY seems more concerned with posing dramatically and soaking up attention than being a good partner to JULIET, literally leaving her hanging at some points.

After a few moments, BENNY enters in a panic and interrupts the show.

BENNY

Stop the show. Stop! Hold on!

LADY CAPP

How dare you interrupt my show you little straphanger?

BENNY

Pardon me, ma'am, but this is important. Juliet, you gotta stop Brody.

JULIET

(from the trapeze) I'm sorry, things are a little up in the air right now.

BENNY

You don't get it. He's about to ride the biggest baddest bull in an attempt to impress you, so that you'll be inspired to be a clown.

JULIET

He'll kill himself!

LADY CAPP

(aside, to JULIET) What are you doing darling? Everyone is watching...

BENNY

He won't listen to me. You have to hurry.

LADY CAPP

Juliet, you're embarrassing me...

BENNY

Please, before it's too late!

LADY CAPP

(Forgetting her composure) Juliet, you're ruining the show!

JULIET

That's it! Mother, I need you to listen to me and listen good, because I'm only going to say this once. All my life, all I've ever wanted was to gain your approval. But I can't do that by lying to myself. I want to be a clown, and if you can't support me, then I'll just have to find a circus family that will.

Taking the clown nose from her pocket, she dons it in defiance, and dismounts, leaving PERRY alone on the trapeze and in shock.

Now, I've got to go save my friend who accepts me - nose and all!

JULIET exits. The circus is left dumbfounded. Lights out.

SCENE 13

Inside the rodeo arena. ALL rodeo performers are present, either on the sidelines preparing to compete, or in the audience. Ms. MONTFORD is announcing the current event, bull riding. There is a bull rider waiting on the sidelines, getting ready to ride EL TORO DIABLO.

MONTFORD

...And the contestant finishes with a time of 7.32 seconds. Close but no cigar. Up next, the biggest baddest bull will be tested once again! The next victim, Nelson "No-Sense" Cowperthwaite.

BRODY sneaks in, unnoticed by MONTFORD, and spots NELSON, who is making his way to the stables. NELSON is a little dim, to put it nicely.

BRODY

Thank goodness I found you.

NELSON

Well, hey there. I reckon you been lookin for me - and here I was!

BRODY

Uh, right. *(improvising)* Look, I came to tell you. Uh - Your prize cow is giving birth to kittens.

NELSON

I didn't know I had a prize cow.

BRODY

You're a cowboy aren't you?

NELSON

I guess I am. I'll be! Kittens from a cow. That don't seem right...

BRODY

Think about it. What to kittens love to drink more than anything?

NELSON

MILK!

BRODY

Exactly. Get on home now, those kittens are coming whether you like it or not.

NELSON

Thankee, mister. I'm on my way!

BRODY

Wait. You can't deliver cow kittens looking like that. Here you take this... and I'll take this. *(BRODY and NELSON switch clothing)* And give me these... and you take these. Alright. Now get outta here!

NELSON

Hold on cow kittens! I'm a comin'!!

Nelson exits.

BRODY

That man couldn't hit the ground with his hat in three throws.

During the following announcement, BRODY makes his way to the stables.

MONTFORD

And now ladies and gents. It's the moment you've all been waiting for. Spawned from the depths of hell by the devil himself, the meanest cuss on four hooves. A bull that no man has ever ridden and walked away from under his own power. The decapitator of drovers, the gorer of gauchos...The one...

ALL

(Gasp)

MONTFORD

The only...

ALL

NO!

MONTFORD

EL TORO DIABLO!!!!!!

Whip crack. Everyone crosses themselves. MONTFORD gestures to the stables, where the "bull" is about to be released. (Note: EL TORO DIABLO is created by 2-3 actors, moving in tandem) JULIET rushes in.

JULIET

Brody, stop! You don't have to do this!

MONTFORD

(turns to notice BRODY atop EL TORO DIABLO) Wait a minute. That's not Nelson "No Sense" Cowperthwaite. That's my boy! STOP!!!

Perusal Copy

DING! The bull is out of the gate. The clock starts. The "audience" counts the seconds out loud.

Yeehaw!
BRODY

One...
ALL

Stop that bull!!!
MONTFORD

Two...
ALL

Hold on lil' buddy!
BENNY

Three...
ALL

Pretend it's a sheep!!!
MURRAY

Four...
ALL

I'm losing my grip.
BRODY

BRODY starts to slip to one side.

Five...
ALL

I can't watch!
BART

Six...
ALL

He's a goner for sure!!!
ABE

Seven...
ALL

BRODY can't hold on any longer. He loses his grip and is thrown violently from the bull. A gasp is heard from the crowd.

MONTFORD

Son!

JULIET

Brody, I'm coming!

JULIET runs toward BRODY, unaware that she has placed herself between the bull and his target. EL TORO DIABLO prepares to charge.

MONTFORD

Stop, miss! That beast will kill ya!

JULIET

(turning to the bull) Easy there big fella... Easy.

LADY CAPP, with the SHERIFF, PERRY, THE BOLT and the rest of the circus people rush in.

LADY CAPP

You get back here, young lady -

THE BOLT

Lady C, look! *(he points to the ring, where JULIET is about to be trampled)*

LADY CAPP

Oh no! My baby girl!

The bull charges. Before he can reach her, JULIET tries to move out of the way but instead she trips, catches herself, and turns it into a perfect somersault. The bull seems distracted by this.

JULIET

Do you think that's funny? What about this?

JULIET tries another pratfall. The bull is impressed.

And this?

Juliet tries several different clown tricks. With each bit, the bull is distracted further. By the end, it's holding it's sides with laughter. ALL breathe a collective sigh of relief.

MONTFORD and LADY CAPP rush in to their kids.

BENNY

You ok, pal? Juliet here saved your hide.

BRODY

You're telling me. Thanks, Julie. I'd be a goner if it weren't for you.

BENNY

That stunt almost got you killed.

BRODY

Guess I need to take on some good old fashioned practice before I start taking on bulls.

MONTFORD

Glad to hear it, son.

ANNIE

Julie, you did it. And you were brilliant.

JULIET

Well, I never would have shown up if Brody hadn't shown me how to stand up for myself.

PERRY steps into the ring.

PERRY

(to JULIET) Too bad you just clowned your way out of this circus. It looks as though Perry Concello is the headliner now. Capp, be sure that TWO stars are affixed to my trailer.

LADY CAPP

How dare you, Concello. My daughter has more courage in that nose than you do in your entire body. Find yourself a new circus! (to Juliet) Oh my darling. I'm so sorry. I was so busy trying to do what I was thought was best for you, I couldn't see where your true talents lie.

MONTFORD

Speaking of talents... Lil' lady I'm indebted to you. We could use someone with your skills. We've never been able to get the bull rider out safely. Lady Capp, how about we bury this hatchet and merge our two shows together. Your daughter could help keep us all safe.

LADY CAPP

So she would be your what? Rodeo clown?

MONTFORD

Rodeo clown! Holy toledo, I like the sound of that! It sits square with me if you're partial.

LADY CAPP

We have an accord.

They shake hands. The SHERIFF steps forward, having witnessed everything.

SHERIFF

Well folks, if you've put your feud behind you I'm willing to lift the ban. These two exhibited bravery and courage that I've never seen before. They honor both of your families with their character.

BRODY

It just goes to show that hard work and being true to yourself will always keep you in the saddle.

JULIET

And that's no bull!

ALL laugh, including EL TORO DIABLO.

SHERIFF

And there that night the rodeo clown was born;
A partnership that lasted through their days.
Heed lessons from our heroes, once forlorn:
Speak up, and know that hard work always pays.
For here, our story begets friend from foe
The tale of Juliet and her rodeo.

Blackout