

Clown Car

A play in two acts

by
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CLOWN CAR

(Previously entitled *Suffer Fools Gladly*)

Play Synopsis

Dozens of circus clowns pile out of a car. One doesn't. Thus begins the new murder mystery comedy by Mark Aloysius Kenneally. Artie and Nick are two detectives who thought they had seen it all. But they find out that when you're interrogating suspects like Chuckles, Pozo, and Backwards Bobo... clowns can turn out to not only be funny, but also... downright evil. Who killed Bubbles? And why? Join Artie, Nick and Doctor Amy Harris-Talmun, the police psychiatrist, as they try desperately to solve the most bizarre, challenging, surprising and humorous murder mystery they've ever investigated.

Character Breakdown

Characters:

Artie Peterson: A seasoned veteran police detective in his fifties.

Nick Winters: Artie's partner in his thirties.

Dr. Amy Harris-Talmun: A smart police psychiatrist in her thirties.

Actor: Any age: To play male clown roles.

Actress: Any age: To play female clown roles.

The Clowns

Chuckles: Male

Dahlia: Female

Backwards Bobo: Female

Pozo: Male

Cecilia Carol – A.K.A. - C.C.: Female

Saccharine: Female

****Production Note:** The roles of the clowns have been written with the intention that they all be played by one Actor and one Actress with minimal costume and wig changes to heighten the confusion and frustration as it builds throughout the play. However, it is recognized that individual producers, such as school and community theatre groups may wish to expand the cast size by having these roles be played by different actors and actresses, or have some of the roles played by actresses rather than actors or vice versa. This decision is entirely permitted by the author and is left up to the individual producers.

Setting: Various different rooms at a police station in any "small town U.S.A." and at the big top circus. The sets should be suggested with as simple set pieces as possible. Many of the locales can simply be suggested with lighting changes and/or with as little as a table and a few chairs as set pieces.

Time: This afternoon.

Clown Car

ACT ONE/SCENE ONE

(At rise, lights are focused on the small interrogation room. This is where ARTIE PETERSON, a gritty, worn detective in his late '50's is interrogating CHUCKLES, one of several suspects in an unsolved murder. CHUCKLES also just happens to be a circus clown, dressed appropriately. CHUCKLES is to be played by the ACTOR. At the moment he sits at the small table and ARTIE paces back and forth, frustrated at the lack of cooperation he seems to be receiving. CHUCKLES looks reserved and speaks with an English accent.)

ARTIE

When did you see the victim's body?

CHUCKLES

Bubbles.

ARTIE

Excuse me?

CHUCKLES

That was his name, Bubbles.

ARTIE

Well, I have him listed in my report as James Malfoy, but you call him whatever floats—

CHUCKLES

I'm calling him by his *name*... Bubbles would have wanted—

ARTIE

Look, to me, he's just a murder victim. But out of respect, I'm calling him James. I'm not gonna call him... that other name...

CHUCKLES

But if he were still alive he wouldn't want you to call him—

ARTIE

Well then, lucky for me, he's not still alive!

CHUCKLES

I can't believe you said that. Have you no compassion for the dead?

ARTIE

You're right, I take it back. I'm sorry I said it. It was wrong, hurtful and insensitive. Let's take a moment of reverent silence to honor this brave slain clown.

CHUCKLES

Really?

ARTIE

No. *(A beat)* Now tell me when you—

CHUCKLES

Very well. At last night's performance... I saw Bubbles' body at the same time as everyone else... when he didn't get out of the car with the rest of us.

ARTIE

Was James supposed to come out last?

CHUCKLES

Bubbles.

ARTIE

James.

CHUCKLES

Bubbles.

ARTIE

JAMES!!!!!!!

CHUCKLES

No. After Bubbles comes Minky, Blinky and Blue.

ARTIE *(Sighs)*

And when did they come out instead?

CHUCKLES

They didn't come out at all.

ARTIE

Why not?

CHUCKLES

Well, Minky and Blinky were home with the flu and Blue's wife just had a baby so he was at the hospital.

ARTIE

So you're saying they didn't show up for work and James filled in for them?

CHUCKLES

No. But Bubbles was supposed to be the last because—

ARTIE

Right. They weren't there. When did you get out of the car?

CHUCKLES

I'm always the first clown out of the car.

ARTIE

Isn't that cute? *(A beat)* Then who's next?

CHUCKLES

Then comes Dahlia, Backwards Bobo, C.C., Pozo, Saccharine, Emit and... do you really want me to keep going? We were in a clown car. *(A beat. CHUCKLES sighs.)* You see, the point of a clown—

ARTIE

Alright, alright, alright. I get it. I'm not stupid, you know.

(A beat. CHUCKLES opens his mouth to retort, but then changes his mind and remains silent. ARTIE just glares at him, knowingly.)

ARTIE *(Cont'd)*

Fine, we'll get to the rest of them later. Let's just stick with a few at a time. And we'll end with Emmett... for now.

CHUCKLES

Emit.

ARTIE

I thought his name was Emmett?

CHUCKLES

Well, technically it is, but he doesn't like the associations that usually draws forth so we just call him Emit.

ARTIE

What associations?

CHUCKLES

You're joking.

ARTIE

Do I look like I'm joking?

CHUCKLES

You look like a—

ARTIE

Just tell me why he doesn't go by Emmett!

CHUCKLES

You've heard of Emmett Kelly, right?

ARTIE

I'm afraid not.

CHUCKLES (*Scoffs*)

And you call yourself a detective.

ARTIE

I beg your pardon?

CHUCKLES

Emmett Kelly was the most famous clown who ever lived!

ARTIE

I thought Bozo was.

CHUCKLES (*Scoffs*)

That hack! He wasn't even a real circus clown! He was just a marketing tool the American television industry created to—

ARTIE

Alright, alright, just calm down! But hey, didn't Bozo die?

CHUCKLES

What's your point?

ARTIE

Well, what's with all that moment of silence crap? Along with James, shouldn't we also have one for Bozo since—

CHUCKLES

THAT HACK! HE WASN'T EVEN—

ARTIE

Alright! Alright! ... ALL RIGHT! (*A beat*) Let's not get off point any more than we already have. So when did you all notice James wasn't exiting the car like he was supposed to?

CHUCKLES

Not right away. We all thought Bubbles was like... sleeping...

ARTIE

Sleeping?

CHUCKLES

Well, you know, resting or something. *(A beat)* He had a bit of a drinking problem. *(A beat)* But we never could have imagined he was... well, you know.

ARTIE

Dead.

CHUCKLES

Yes.

ARTIE

So David, did you know James well? I mean, outside of the workplace. *(A beat)* If you can call the circus a workplace.

(CHUCKLES starts looking around the room in boredom and seems intent on ignoring ARTIE.)

ARTIE *(Cont'd)*

David? *(A beat)* I can only assume the two of you were not friends, otherwise I can't believe you have nothing to say on his behalf. *(A beat)* In that case, did you have anything against this clown? *(A beat)* So... do I take it you have nothing else to say to me AT ALL, David? *(A beat. Silence.)* No? Alright then, I'll just leave you alone to think about—

CHUCKLES

I refuse to answer any more of your questions detective... if you insist on calling me David.

ARTIE

What?

CHUCKLES

My name is Chuckles. And his name was Bubbles. We're Chuckles and Bubbles, not James and David. I am Chuckles the Clown!

ARTIE

You were ignoring me 'cause I was calling you David?

CHUCKLES

Of course.

ARTIE

You didn't have anything against James?

CHUCKLES

Absolutely not. Bubbles was a good friend. I loved him like a brother.

(A long pause.)

ARTIE *(Laughs)*

I'm sorry, but I can't get over the fact that you were ignoring me this whole time because I didn't call you Chuckles!

CHUCKLES

Look Detective Peterson, I know this clown business we're in might not mean a lot to you, but it does to me. It does to any honest clown. I believe in the profession I've dedicated my life to, and I'm proud of the business and proud to be a part of it. And nothing makes me feel better than when a child hollers out in pure joy for Chuckles the Clown!

(A long pause.)

ARTIE

So, how do you feel about all the people in the world who have an intense and very real fear of clowns?

CHUCKLES

Coulrophobia.

ARTIE

What's that?

CHUCKLES

Clown fear.

ARTIE

Oh. Yeah, fine, whatever, if that's its technical name.

CHUCKLES

Clinical name.

ARTIE

Clinical, technical, whatever! Just answer my question!

CHUCKLES

Fine. What was your question?

ARTIE

Clown fear!

CHUCKLES

Coulropho--

ARTIE

Say that word again and I will shoot you in the face!

CHUCKLES

Well, I think... *IT* is a serious issue and I truly feel bad for all of those people who have that fear. But honestly, detective, do you really think you'll find a person with that disease... at the circus!

ARTIE

Listen, smart guy... how 'bout I just charge you with this crime and be done with it. It's just another sad tale of an angry clown trying to get back at his mommy and daddy... who never loved him.

CHUCKLES

You can't charge me with this. I didn't do anything. And I had a great childhood. And I'm still very close to my folks and they're very proud of me. I came over to this country with their blessings, because they wanted me to follow my dreams. And they come all the way over here from Essex to see me perform twice a year. I didn't just run off and join the circus, if that's what you're implying.

ARTIE

Did they encourage you to kill?

CHUCKLES

No. And I didn't kill Bubbles... as I said, I still can't believe he is... you know...

ARTIE

Dead?

CHUCKLES

Yes.

ARTIE

You seem to have a tough time with that word.

CHUCKLES

Well, at a time like this, isn't that sort of understandable?

ARTIE

I don't see why, unless you have something to hide or if you think that's how you're supposed to act. But the fact is, James is dead. Murdered, if not by you, then by one of the other village idiots that piled out of that car last night. He is kaput. And I think it is quite interesting that you have struggled with the word on more than one occasion.

CHUCKLES

What? Kaput?

ARTIE

Dead!

CHUCKLES

Are you trying to get me to incriminate myself?

ARTIE

Well... YEAH!

CHUCKLES

Then you can stop it. I could never hurt a clown. Especially not one like Bubbles. Bubbles was a great clown. An honest clown. Most clowns are honest hardworking professionals. We are not, as you so vulgarly put it... village idiots. This clown business is honest work and the circus IS a valid, respectable workplace. I went to school to learn how to do what I do.

(A beat. CHUCKLES steps forward away from ARTIE and into his own solo spot.)

CHUCKLES *(Cont'd, off in his own world now.)*

Clowns are the best people in the world. We make the world a better place. Without clowns, children would never have a good birthday party! Clowns bring the world laughter. Clowns are the path and the glory of entertainment. We are the performers that deserve more credit that we get. We share. We touch. We enlighten. We entertain. And by God... WE SHINE. We are the—

ARTIE

SHUT UP! SHUT UP! JUST... SHUT... UP! I can't deal with you! I'm gonna lose my mind! You're impossible!

(CHUCKLES stares at ARTIE unsympathetically.)

CHUCKLES

No, I'm Chuckles the Clown.

ARTIE *(Exploding)*

HOW'D YOU LIKE TO BE CHUCKLES THE DEAD CLOWN!

CHUCKLES

You can't hurt me and you know it. (*CHUCKLES mock shakes and quivers*) Oooowww, I'm really shaking in my boots. (*A beat. CHUCKLES holds his shoes up for ARTIE to see.*) Size Thirty-Six.

(Quick blackout. After ARTIE and CHUCKLES have exited the stage, the lights rise on NICK WINTERS, a young detective in his early '30's, who is trying to interrogate another clown rather unsuccessfully in a different interrogation room. The same set should be used. The female clown/mime, to be played by the ACTRESS, is named DAHLIA and she does not speak. She has a horn which she beeps once for yes and twice for no and this seems to be starting to drive NICK up the same wall CHUCKLES just sent his partner, ARTIE up. DAHLIA is sitting at the table and NICK is pacing in a similar fashion ARTIE just was in the previous scene.)

NICK

So when did you see the body?

(DAHLIA stares at him, not knowing how to respond.)

NICK (*Cont'd*)

Sorry, right, I forgot... I'll rephrase that, you prefer yes or no questions don't you?

(DAHLIA smiles, nods her head and honks her horn once for yes.)

NICK (*Cont'd*)

Right. (*Sighs*) Did you see the body before the other clowns did?

(DAHLIA frowns and honks her horn twice for no.)

NICK (*Cont'd*)

After the others?

(DAHLIA frowns and honks her horn twice for no. A beat.)

NICK (*Cont'd*)

What the... if you didn't see the body after or—did you see him at the same time as the others?

(DAHLIA nods and honks her horn once for yes.)

NICK (*Cont'd. Sighs*)

God! This is like trying to talk to a stick! (*DAHLIA frowns and pantomimes crying*) I'm sorry, don't cry... (*DAHLIA continues to mimic tears.*) No, listen, I'm sorry, just don't—wait a minute, you're not even crying!

(This sends DAHLIA into an instant mock hysterical crying tantrum.)

NICK *(Cont'd)*

Okay, please stop it... no, look I didn't mean it... I'm sorry... I really, really, am... all right... I mean it, I'm sorry... can't we still be friends?

(Instantly DAHLIA snaps out of it and smiles at the detective and honks her horn once for yes. NICK collapses in the chair opposite her in sheer exhaustion.)

NICK *(Cont'd)*

That's good. Okay... so, did you come out of the clown car first?

(DAHLIA frowns and honks her horn twice for no.)

NICK *(Cont'd)*

Did you come out last?

(DAHLIA frowns and honks her horn twice for no.)

NICK *(Cont'd. Sighs)*

Second to last?

(DAHLIA frowns and honks her horn twice for no.)

NICK *(Cont'd)*

Third from last?

(DAHLIA frowns and honks her horn twice for no.)

NICK *(Exploding)*

JUST TELL ME WHEN YOU CAME OUT OF STINKIN' CAR!!!!!!

(Again, DAHLIA bursts into a mock hysterical crying fit. Instantly, NICK calms down.)

NICK *(Cont'd)*

I am so sorry, Ma'am. It's not like me to lose my cool like that and I promise you it won't happen again. For a minute there, I was starting to turn into my partner. *(A beat)* How 'bout I bring you a nice, hot cup of coffee to make you feel better.

(DAHLIA frowns and honks her horn twice for no.)

NICK *(Cont'd)*

Tea?

(DAHLIA frowns and honks her horn twice for no.)

NICK *(Sighs. Then, cont'd through clenched teeth)*
Fruit punch?

(Immediately, DAHLIA smiles and honks her horn once for yes. Frustrated, but determined to keep his cool this time, NICK jumps out of his chair and exits the stage. Quick blackout. The lights come back on a different bare area of the stage, unobstructed by the chairs and table, and sans the clowns. After a few moments of silence, ARTIE enters the stage from one direction and NICK from the other. Both NICK and ARTIE look at each other at wit's end.)

NICK AND ARTIE
I CAN'T TAKE IT IN THERE!!

(A long silence. Both men start to calm down.)

NICK
What's yours doing?

ARTIE
Oh, it's agony. He keeps going on and on about the pride and righteousness of the professional clown business and how I'm offending the sacred honor and memory of the murder victim all because I refuse to call him by his name!

NICK
James Malfoy?

ARTIE
No, his stupid "Circus name!"

NICK
I don't have that in my notes. What is it?

ARTIE
Got a stick of gum? I'll show you.

NICK
You're kidding me.

ARTIE
No, I'm not! Bubbles!

NICK *(Chuckles)*
That's nothing. I got Marcel Marceau's evil twin in my room.

ARTIE

Who?

NICK

You're joking.

ARTIE

No. But let me guess, another famous clown, right?

NICK

No. A famous mime. Probably the most famous mime in the—what do you mean another?

ARTIE

You ever heard of Emmett Kelly?

NICK

Of course I have.

ARTIE

You're such a nerd.

NICK *(Scoffs)*

You wanna switch rooms?

ARTIE

For a mime? Not on your life. I'll stick with Bozo Hoffa in there. I just need a little break.

NICK

Me too.

(A beat. Then DR. AMY TALMUN, a police psychiatrist in her early 30's, enters the stage and starts to approach the two men. She is strikingly attractive and NICK takes notice of her immediately. ARTIE does as well.)

AMY

Um, excuse me?

NICK

Can we help you?

AMY

I certainly hope so. My name is Dr. Amy Harris-Talmun. I'm the new police department psychiatrist. I was brought on board to—

NICK

Oh, thank God. Where's a couch? Me first.

ARTIE

Not on your life. I got dibs on her.

NICK

Says who?

ARTIE

Says me. I'm older, I got seniority on you!

NICK

Just because you're older, doesn't mean you have seniority. You're the one who never got promoted above detect—

ARTIE

Don't start in on that again. Every time—

AMY

Uh, excuse me, guys, but I'm not here for you, I'm here for them.

ARTIE

Them who?

AMY

The clowns.

ARTIE

What do they need you for, they're the reason WE need you!

AMY

But I was told they're all a little shaken up and may need to share their feelings with—

ARTIE

They're fine. We're the ones that ain't! They're driving us both nuts!

NICK

Yeah, not to mention the fact that one of them has got to be the actual killer in this little scenario.

ARTIE

Yeah, that too.

AMY

I'm sorry gentlemen, but your chief told me they're the ones I should try to help.

ARTIE
What a bunch of—

NICK
Artie!

ARTIE
Sorry, ma'am. But—

AMY
That's alright. I'm sorry they're getting under your skin... but I have to do as I'm told... so... is there another room available that neither one of you are using?

NICK
End of the hall is free.

AMY
Thank you. And I'll be happy to talk to the both of you after I have interviewed all the witnesses.

ARTIE
Suspects.

AMY
I'm sorry?

ARTIE
They're all suspects at the moment, not witnesses.

AMY
Please don't take this the wrong way but maybe that's part of your problem detectives...

NICK
Meaning?

AMY
You might get a lot further with them if you stop treating them as suspects and actually—

ARTIE
But one of them had to have killed him, though.

AMY
I understand that, but I think the rest of them are probably innocent and if you treat them that way, you might be able to sniff out the guilty party a lot easier.

NICK

I think you got a good point there, Dr. Harris-Talmun.

AMY

Please, call me Amy.

NICK

I'm Nick. This is my partner, Artie.

AMY

Nice to meet you both, now if you wouldn't mind...

NICK

Not at all, Amy. Last door on your left.

AMY

Thank you, Nick. Artie...

ARTIE

Ma'am.

(AMY starts to exit upstage towards an unseen, unoccupied interrogation room.)

ARTIE *(Cont'd)*

Don't worry. In no time we'll be done with our questions and then we'll... *(Deadpan)*
send in the clowns.

(AMY turns around, nods and smiles before exiting offstage, presumably into the last remaining unseen room. NICK turns to ARTIE.)

NICK

You are so immature.

ARTIE

Me? What about you?

NICK

What about me?

ARTIE

You were hitting on her.

NICK

Give me a break. I was not.

ARTIE

You were all over her!

NICK

You say that about every woman that comes in here.

ARTIE

That's because you hit on every woman that comes in here.

NICK

Oh, I do not.

ARTIE

Yes you do.

NICK

Name one time.

ARTIE

Becky Roe.

NICK

Well, yeah, but she was different. She was just a crime scene photographer, and we only dated twice. *(A beat)* Then I found out she had cats. Lots and lots of cats.

ARTIE

You want more? How about Sally Peterson?

NICK

Yeah, but—

ARTIE

Megan Duncan. Jordan Jefferies. Kelly Mackenzie. Beth—

NICK

Alright, you've made your point. But I'll show you one I'd never hit on if my life depended on it.

(NICK leads ARTIE towards the wings. ARTIE leans his head offstage to peek into the other room the offstage DAHLIA is still in. ARTIE comes back onstage and shudders once.)

ARTIE

Thanks a lot. That's gonna give me nightmares tonight.

NICK

You think I'm gonna sleep well? I'm the one who's been in there all morning with that mute beast.

ARTIE

Okay, you win. Yours is worse.

NICK

That's because mine are always the worst. Always!

ARTIE *(Laughs)*

Yeah, well... have fun with Raquel Marsupial's brother, nonetheless.

NICK

Marcel Marceau.

ARTIE

Him too. I've got to go back and deal with Emit Kelly.

NICK

Emmett.

ARTIE

No, he goes by... *(ARTIE shrugs and waves NICK away.)* I can't believe we got others after them too.

NICK

Well, they were all in a clo—

ARTIE

A CLOWN CAR! I GOT IT!

(ARTIE and NICK start to exit offstage in opposite directions as the lights slowly fade. End of Act One/Scene One.)

ACT ONE/SCENE TWO

(The lights slowly rise on ARTIE back in the interrogation room where he is now interrogating BACKWARDS BOBO, with about as much success as he had previously with CHUCKLES. ACTRESS now plays the role of BOBO.)

ARTIE

Okay, so tell me when you noticed the body.

BOBO

Others the as time same the at.

ARTIE

WHAT?!

BOBO

Others... the... as... time... same... the... at...

(ARTIE grabs his clipboard from the table and flips a few pages until he sees something that upsets and terrifies him.)

ARTIE

Oh, no... by any chance, do you go by the name... Backwards Bobo?

BOBO

Do I yes.

ARTIE

Do I yes... yes I do... shoot! *(A beat)* Okay, say it again but slower...

BOBO

Do... I... Y—

ARTIE

NOT THAT! THAT MUCH I GOT! *(A beat. ARTIE takes a deep breath.)* Just tell me when you saw the dead body.

BOBO

Others... the... as... time... same... the... at...

(ARTIE writes down what BOBO says and then looks at it.)

ARTIE

At... the same time... as the others... okay, did you see anything that looked out of the ordinary when you arrived at the circus?

BOBO *(Fast again)*

Room dressing the by parked van a saw I...

(A long silence. Then ARTIE reaches across the table to try and strangle BOBO, but she jumps up in terror and runs towards the door and begins banging furiously on it.)

BOBO *(Cont'd)*

ME HELP! ME HELP! ME HELP SOMEBODY!

(After a beat, NICK opens the door and enters the room. BOBO begins jumping up and down until NICK calms her down by placing his hands on her shoulders.)

NICK

Ma'am, just calm down. Everything's all right. Just tell me what happened from the beginning.

BOBO

Me attack to tried he when questions his answering was I!

(A long silence. Then NICK begins to choke BOBO until ARTIE runs over and takes NICK off of her.)

ARTIE

Calm down, buddy. You get used to it eventually. It just takes a while.

BOBO

Crazy both are you! Crazy both are you! Brutality police! Brutality police!

ARTIE

SHUT UP AND SIT DOWN!

(BOBO sheepishly returns to the table and sits down. ARTIE pulls NICK aside.)

ARTIE *(Cont'd)*

You all right? *(A beat. ARTIE snaps his fingers in front of NICK'S dazed eyes.)* Nick?!

NICK *(Snapping out of it)*

Huh, what?!

ARTIE

You okay, buddy? Lost you there for a second. I think you've been hanging around me so long you're starting to lose your cool a lot easier than you used to...

(NICK looks down at his hands as he speaks.)

NICK

I almost didn't even realize what I was doing...

ARTIE

That's never good.

NICK

It... it, wasn't... it wasn't even her I was trying to... I mean... it was the clown that I'm with... but then I came in here to help you out and... I don't know... I just kind of took it out on—ma'am, I'm so sorry, are you all right? It was an accident... well, not an accident, per se, but I didn't mean to—

BOBO

Suing am I! Suing am I! Insane both are you! Lawsuit—

ARTIE

She's fine. It's you I'm worried about, buddy. Is your new one really that bad?

NICK

She... she won't stop repeating everything I say... it's driving me—

BOBO (*Laughs*)

C.C. her call we why is that!

NICK (*To ARTIE*)

What'd she just say?

ARTIE

I don't know.

NICK

What d'you mean you don't know? You've been in here this whole time and you don't know what she said?

ARTIE

That's right. And on top of that, I could care less what she—

BOBO

Said, I. (*A beat*) C. C. ... her... call... we... why... is... that!

(*A beat*)

NICK

That is why...

ARTIE

... We call her C.C.

NICK

C.C.?

BOBO (*Nodding*)

Cat Copy!

NICK

Copy cat...

ARTIE

Oh, boy. Tell you what, help me with Yoda here and I'll help you with Pete Repeat.

NICK

Deal.

(Both NICK and ARTIE sit down across from BOBO. ARTIE takes the clipboard and pen.)

ARTIE

Okay, now tell me again if you saw anything out of the ordinary when you showed up at the circus. *(A beat)* Slowly...

BOBO

Room... dressing... the... by... parked... van... a... saw... I...

(ARTIE writes down every word BOBO says. And then ARTIE looks at it with NICK.)

ARTIE

I saw a van parked...

NICK

By the dressing room. *(A beat)* What sort of van?

BOBO

One suspicious a.

NICK

Suspicious in what way?

BOBO

Van a drive dare would clown no and. Before there it seen never I've because guess I.

(Again, ARTIE writes down every word BOBO says.)

ARTIE

I guess because I've never seen it there before...

NICK

... And no clown would dare drive a van. *(A beat)* Why not?

BOBO

It doesn't car clown the of purpose the defeats?

NICK

I guess you're right. It does defeat the purpose of the clown car. *(A beat. NICK realizes he just understood BOBO.)* Oh, my God! I'm starting to understand Yoda!

ARTIE

If that's true, then you're becoming a freak too!

(BOBO claps her hands in joy at the fact that NICK is starting to understand her.)

BOBO

Officer him to listen don't. Me understand to starting you're that great it's think I. Point whole the that's!

ARTIE *(To NICK)*

What'd she say?

NICK

Don't listen to him, officer. I think it's great that you're starting to understand me. That's the whole point! *(To BOBO)* Right?

BOBO

Right absolutely!

NICK

Absolutely right.

ARTIE

Okay there Nick, now you're starting to scare me.

NICK

Myself scare to starting I'm—CRAP! I mean, I'm starting to scare myself! *(A beat)* I gotta get outta here!

(NICK jumps up from the table and bolts towards the door. ARTIE jumps up and gives chase. At the door, ARTIE grabs onto NICK'S arm and spins him around.)

ARTIE

Wait a second, Nick. If you understand her, maybe you should be the one to stay. It would be better for us on the whole.

BOBO

Friends be to starting just were we, yeah!

NICK

Well I don't want to be your friend!

(BOBO mimics crying. NICK notices but ARTIE doesn't.)

NICK *(Cont'd)*

Look Artie! Look! That's the same garbage the other one tried to pull on me!

(BOBO stops mock crying just as ARTIE turns around to face her.)

ARTIE

What? What's she doing?

NICK

She stopped. Do it again! Show him!

(BOBO shrugs and feigns innocence.)

NICK *(Exploding)*

YOU PSYCHO NAZI CLOWN! I'LL KILL YA!

(NICK charges at BOBO but is stopped by ARTIE at the last second.)

ARTIE

Whoa! Calm down there, buddy.

NICK

But I thought—

ARTIE

I know. But you can't.

NICK

Even if it were just a—

ARTIE

No.

NICK

Or maybe if I could even just—

ARTIE

Sorry, buddy. But this time I can't let you do it.

BOBO

Time this?

ARTIE

Shut up! *(A beat. To NICK)* Look, buddy. I'm right there with you on this one, but well... come outside with me for a second.

NICK

But I really want to hurt her first!

ARTIE

I know you do.

NICK

I hate her!

ARTIE

I know!

NICK

So then why won't you just—

ARTIE

Would you trust me?

(BOTH men start to leave the room when at the last second...)

BOBO

Nut wing psycho.

(NICK and ARTIE both stop dead in their tracks. NICK turns to ARTIE.)

NICK

Oh, I got to now...

ARTIE

Alright, but make it quick.

(NICK turns to face BOBO.)

NICK

Dead so are you!

BOBO

AGGGGGGGHHHHHHHHHHHH!

(NICK starts to approach BOBO as ARTIE exits the stage and the lights slowly fade. End of Act One/Scene Two.)

ACT ONE/SCENE THREE

(DR. TALMUN is now sitting onstage with the ACTOR still dressed as CHUCKLES. Though they are in an interrogation room and the same set should be used, the air is different, calmer and more intimate. DR. TALMUN and CHUCKLES sit close to each other, in a make-shift therapy session.)

AMY

I'd like to try something with you if you wouldn't mind. You might have seen these before.

(AMY reaches into her nearby briefcase and pulls out a series of papers. She holds the first one up for CHUCKLES and the audience to see. It is a rather large Rorschach inkblot.)

AMY *(Cont'd)*

Have you seen these before?

CHUCKLES

There's a smudge on your paper there, doc?

AMY

No, see, this is what's called the Rorschach.

CHUCKLES

I don't speak French.

AMY

Rorschach was German.

CHUCKLES

I don't speak German either.

AMY

You don't have to. Just tell me what you see.

CHUCKLES

Is this a trick question?

AMY

No.

CHUCKLES

I see an inkblot.

AMY

That's good, because that's what it is.

CHUCKLES

So I passed?

AMY (*Through clenched teeth*)

This isn't a pass/fail situation. (*A beat*) Look beyond the inkblot and tell me what you see.

CHUCKLES

Paper.

AMY (*Sighs*)

The point of this test is to see what you see in the ink.

(*A long pause*)

CHUCKLES

Are you sure I don't need to be able to speak German for this test?

AMY

Of course not. Here, let me see if I can help you.

(*AMY looks closely at the inkblot.*)

AMY (*Cont'd*)

You wanna know what I see when I look at this?

CHUCKLES

More than anything else in the world.

AMY

I see a beautiful, ornate coat of arms.

CHUCKLES

So you speak German?

AMY

GET OFF THE GERMAN!

(*A beat*)

AMY (*Cont'd*)

I'm sorry. No, I don't speak German, but that's not the point. That's not the point at all. See, when I looked at this inkblot, I looked beyond the ink and beyond the paper and envisioned a coat of arms in the ink itself. I let the ink create an image within my mind and the image it created was a coat of arms. See here.

(AMY begins pointing out the details of her coat of arms.)

AMY *(Cont'd)*

Here's the crest. And here's the shield. And here's the family wreath.

CHUCKLES

You saw all of that in a splotch of ink?

AMY

I did. It's amazing what your mind is capable of when you set your imagination free. Would you like to try to see your own image? Whatever pops into your head when you look at a simple splotch of ink.

CHUCKLES

Okay, I'll give it a shot.

AMY

Great.

(AMY removes the first inkblot and shows the second to CHUCKLES and the audience.)

AMY *(Cont'd)*

Now then... tell me what you see.

CHUCKLES

I see a coat of arms.

AMY

OH, YOU DO NOT!

CHUCKLES

I thought that was what I was supposed to see!

AMY

No, the point is to see whatever you see. Not to see what I saw.

CHUCKLES

But I just see a splotch of ink.

AMY

Very well.

(AMY begins scribbling some notes on a legal pad of paper.)

AMY *(Cont'd. Under her breath)*

I guess you just have no imagination.

CHUCKLES

What was that?

AMY

I said I guess you just have no imagination.

CHUCKLES

Please, doc. I'm a circus clown. If there's one thing I have... it's an imagination.

AMY

And yet all you could see when you looked at this was the inkblot. I find that very interesting indeed.

(AMY returns to scribbling some more notes. CHUCKLES grabs hold of the inkblot and begins concentrating on it. AMY watches out of the corner of her eye.)

CHUCKLES

Wait a minute.

AMY

I'm sorry?

CHUCKLES

I see it.

AMY

See what?

CHUCKLES

I see... I see a clown.

AMY

Go on.

CHUCKLES

I see a clown at the circus. He's performing for all the kids and having a grand time. He's got all the little kiddies in the palm of his hand. They can't get enough of the clown. He's really on fire.

AMY
Tell me about this clown.

(A beat)

CHUCKLES
I thought I just did.

AMY
What color's his hair?

CHUCKLES
Orange.

AMY
And what color's his outfit?

CHUCKLES
Purple with bright white polka dots all over it.

AMY
That's really great, Chuckles. That's a—

CHUCKLES
Thank you.

AMY
For what?

CHUCKLES
For calling me Chuckles.

AMY
Well, that's your name isn't it?

CHUCKLES
Yes it is.

(CHUCKLES beams. AMY takes the inkblot away from CHUCKLES.)

AMY
I'm really proud of you on that one, Chuckles. That's really a great thing to see with the inkblot. Now then...

(AMY hands CHUCKLES another inkblot.)

AMY (*Cont'd*)

What do you see with this one?

(CHUCKLES looks at the new inkblot.)

CHUCKLES

A clown.

AMY

The same clown?

CHUCKLES

No. This one's a sad clown. He's really sad. And he's got a blue hat on and he's wearing a green—

(AMY quickly takes the inkblot away and hands him a new one.)

AMY

What about this one?

CHUCKLES

Don't you wanna hear about the clown's outfit?

AMY

WHAT ABOUT THIS ONE?!

CHUCKLES

It's a clown too. This one's a girl clown. She's got yellow ha—

(AMY takes the inkblot away and hands him a new one.)

AMY

And this one?

CHUCKLES

A clown.

(AMY takes the inkblot away and hands him a new one.)

AMY

And this one?

CHUCKLES

A bird.

AMY

Really?!

CHUCKLES

Nah. It's a clown.

AMY

You seem to be obsessed with clowns.

CHUCKLES

Does that surprise you?

AMY

Nope.

(AMY scribbles some more notes.)

AMY *(Cont'd, as she writes)*

Tell me about Bubbles.

CHUCKLES

He was the best clown in the whole world.

AMY

Better than you?

CHUCKLES

Oh, without a doubt. I would have *killed* to be as good as Bubbles was.

AMY

Interesting.

(AMY scribbles some more notes.)

AMY *(As she writes)*

Tell me the best thing about being a clown, Chuckles.

CHUCKLES

Everything.

AMY

Everything, huh? *(A beat)* Do you think you could be a little more specific?

CHUCKLES

Well, doc, you see, the thing is...

(CHUCKLES stands up and immediately steps forward into his own solo spot again.)

CHUCKLES *(Cont'd, off in his own world again.)*

Clowns are the best people in the world. We make the world a better place. Without clowns, children would never have a good birthday party! Clowns... clowns make the world go round... without clowns, there would be no joy!

(Unbeknownst to CHUCKLES, AMY stands up and immediately steps forward behind CHUCKLES and pantomimes winding up with an inkblot paper as if it were a baseball bat.)

CHUCKLES *(Cont'd)*

Clowns bring the world laughter. Clowns are the path and the glory of entertainment. Clowns are the reason for all the...

(CHUCKLES trails off as AMY swings in the air just behind the back of his head. Quick blackout. There should be a long pause during the darkness, and then the lights rise again and AMY and DAHLIA are now sitting together in the same positions that CHUCKLES and AMY were just in at the beginning of the scene. DAHLIA has her trusty horn with her once again.)

AMY

Now then Dahlia... I was wondering if you might want to play a little game with me today... would you like that?

(DAHILA horns her horn once for yes.)

AMY *(Cont'd)*

Very good.

(AMY reaches into her bag and removes a small piece of paper and a pencil. AMY hands the pencil and the paper to DAHLIA.)

AMY *(Cont'd)*

Dahlia. This game is called "The Things I See." I want you to draw a picture of whatever you want to talk about and then on the back of the page I would like you to write me a story about your drawing. Can you do that for me?

(DAHILA honks her horn once for yes and then immediately twice for no.)

AMY *(Cont'd)*

I'm afraid I didn't understand your answer. Was that a yes or was that a no?

(DAHILA horns her horn once for yes.)

AMY (Cont'd)

Oh good. Yes you can.

(DAHILA horns her horn twice for no.)

AMY (Cont'd)

No you can't.

(DAHILA horns her horn once for yes.)

AMY (Cont'd)

Yes you can.

(DAHILA horns her horn twice for no.)

AMY (Cont'd)

WHICH IS IT?!

(DAHILA erupts in another mock crying fit.)

AMY (Cont'd)

Oh, please, spare me. You're not even crying.

(This sends DAHLIA into another instant mock hysterical crying tantrum.)

AMY (Cont'd)

I'm not fazed little girl. You're still not crying. *(A beat. DAHLIA continues crying.)* You are a big baby.

(Instantly DAHLIA stops crying and points at AMY.)

AMY (Cont'd)

Me?

(DAHILA horns her horn once for yes.)

AMY (Cont'd)

I'm what?

(DAHILIA imitates the antics of a "big" "baby".)

AMY (Cont'd)

I'm a big baby? Is that what you're saying?

(DAHILIA tilts her head to the side at the suggestion that she spoke.)

AMY (*Cont'd*)

Oh, you know what I mean!

(DAHLIA sighs, then grabs hold of the blank sheet of paper and holds it up for AMY to see.)

AMY (*Cont'd*)

Oh, forget about the game. I get it that you don't want to play it. But you didn't have to be a real meanie about it by callin' me a—

(DAHLIA starts pointing to the first side of the paper. Then she grabs her horn and honks it once for yes.)

AMY (*Cont'd*)

I said forget about the—

(DAHLIA repeats the process.)

AMY (*Cont'd*)

Okay, yes, you'll draw a picture.

(DAHLIA honks her horn once for yes.)

AMY (*Cont'd*)

Okay, fine.

(DAHLIA flips the paper over and begins shaking her head. Then she honks her horn twice for no.)

AMY (*Cont'd*)

But you won't write a story about it. Why not?

(DAHLIA drops the paper, sits down and buries her head in her hands and begins crying.)

AMY (*Cont'd*)

Stop it, Dahlia. I already told you I'm not gonna fall for that fake tears stuff. That may have worked on the detectives but it won't work on—

(DAHLIA holds her head up for AMY to see. Her eyes are swollen and puffy and it is obvious she has really been crying.)

AMY (*Cont'd*)

Oh, no. You weren't faking at all, were you?

(DAHLIA honks her horn twice for no.)

AMY (*Cont'd*)

Why were you cr— oh, my, God, you're illiterate.

(DAHLIA immediately starts crying again. AMY tries to console her.)

AMY (*Cont'd*)

Oh, my God... I'm so sorry, Dahlia. I had no idea.

(A long, long silence as DAHLIA finally finishes her tear fest.)

AMY (*Cont'd*)

You know what, Dahlia?

(DAHLIA shakes her head no.)

AMY (*Cont'd*)

You were right about me. I am a big—

(DAHLIA honks her horn twice for no.)

AMY (*Cont'd*)

But it's true. I'm a great big ba—

(DAHLIA honks her horn twice for no.)

AMY (*Cont'd*)

And you were right to call me a big ba—

(DAHLIA honks her horn twice for no.)

AMY (*Cont'd*)

'Cause that's what I am. A great big ba—

(DAHLIA honks her horn twice for no.)

AMY (*Cont'd*)

Baby.

(DAHLIA honks her horn twice for no.)

AMY (*Cont'd*)

You don't have to say that. You were right about me. The fact that I wasn't bright enough to figure that out on my own means I'm the one to blame.

(DAHLIA honks her horn twice for no then imitates the act of blowing a bubble.)

AMY (Cont'd)

I'm sorry, I don't understand what you're tryin' to say.

(DAHLIA repeats the action. This time she makes it bigger. She looks at AMY. AMY shakes her head. Frustrated, DAHLIA sits down in front of the paper and begins to draw. AMY stands over her should and watches her. As DAHLIA finishes her drawing, AMY lets out a very audible gasp.)

AMY (Cont'd)

Really? Bubbles is the one to—

(DAHLIA honks her horn once for yes and AMY begins to jot down some notes as the lights slowly fade. There should be a long pause during the darkness, and then the lights rise again and AMY and BACKWARDS BOBO are now sitting together in the same positions that DAHLIA and AMY were just in. BOBO'S right index finger should be standing up on its own due to her scene with NICK and ARTIE. AMY should not notice this right away.)

AMY

Alright, Bobo. Here's the thing. We're gonna try a little thing called "Incomplete Sentences." I'll start a sentence and you finish it. Alright? Alright? Good. So here we go. "Bubbles and I had been dating for...

BOBO

Months six for dating been—

AMY

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Six months. I got it. You don't have to finish the whole sentence backwards, just—

BOBO

Do I yes.

AMY

No you don't.

BOBO

Do I yes.

AMY

I'm telling you now, you don't. I'm the—

BOBO

DO I YES! DO I YES! DO I YES!

(A long pause. AMY scribbles some notes.)

AMY
Interesting.

BOBO
Is what?

AMY
Oh, nothing. Don't worry about it. These are just a few mental notes for my sake, you don't have to—

BOBO
They are what?

AMY
Like I said, just some notes for my—

(BOBO shakes her head.)

BOBO
They are what not. They... are... what... but?

AMY
What?

BOBO *(Sighs)*
They are what... NOT. *(A beat)* They... are... what... BUT?

AMY
Oh, I see. *(A beat.)* They... are... some... notes... for... my—

BOBO
DOCTOR, NO!

AMY
James Bond?

BOBO
NO!

AMY
I was kidding.

BOBO
Funny wasn't it.

AMY

Thanks. I thought so too.

BOBO

Understand don't you. NO!

AMY

Sure I do.

BOBO

Don't! You! No!

AMY

Don't I know what?

BOBO

IT STOP! IT STOP! IT STOP!

(A long silence)

AMY

It can be frustrating when people don't understand you, huh?

(Another long pause)

BOBO

Understand I.

AMY

That's good. I was just illustrating my point. Even though I did understand you. You were saying you knew they were notes, but you wanted to know what the notes were... right?

BOBO *(Nods)*

Right absolutely.

AMY

Well, all I wrote was that you seemed to have a heightened sense of anger either because I brought up Bubbles' name again or because you thought I didn't understand you.

BOBO

Both.

AMY

Both? Really?

BOBO (*Nods*)

It about talk to want don't I.

AMY

You don't want to talk about it? Which part?

BOBO

It of all.

AMY

Okay. Then should we just finish our—what happened to your finger?

BOBO

Brutality police.

(A beat. Then quick blackout. End of Act One/Scene Three.)

ACT ONE/SCENE FOUR

(At rise, NICK and ARTIE are now back in the interrogation room trying, rather unsuccessfully yet again, to interrogate C.C. ACTRESS now plays the role of C.C. And she seems determined to stick with her repetition bit.)

NICK

What is your name?

C.C.

What is your name?

NICK (*To ARTIE*)

That's exactly what I was telling you about.

C.C.

That's exactly what I was telling you about.

ARTIE

Shut up!

C.C.

Shut up!

NICK (*To ARTIE*)

She'll even repeat a confession.

ARTIE

So what's the problem? Let's go ahead and turn this nightmare over to the District Attorney and then head straight to the nearest bar.

NICK

Well, there's a problem there.

ARTIE

What problem?

NICK

I'll show you. *(To C.C.)* I killed Bubbles the clown.

C.C.

You killed Bubbles the Clown?

NICK

No you did.

C.C.

No you did.

NICK

No I did.

C.C.

No you did.

NICK *(To ARTIE)*

You see?

C.C.

You see?

ARTIE

Yeah.

C.C.

Yeah.

ARTIE

Stop it.

C.C.

Stop it.

ARTIE

Shut up!

C.C.

Shut up!

ARTIE

No, you shut up!

C.C.

No, you shut up!

ARTIE

NO YOU SHUT UP!

(After a few tense moments, ARTIE finally turns his attention back to NICK.)

ARTIE *(Cont'd)*

Okay, so now I see what she was doing to you, but how exactly do you expect me to help?

NICK

I don't know. But you have to think of something because I'm going out of my mind.

C.C. *(Under her breath)*

You are going out of your mind.

NICK

I HEARD THAT! *(A beat. C.C. remains silent. To ARTIE)* Look, I helped you with yours so you gotta help me with this one.

ARTIE

You helped me? That's rich.

NICK

What?

ARTIE

You broke her finger! That's not exactly help!

C.C.

You broke her finger?

NICK

Well, you let me!

ARTIE

I didn't have much of a choice, did I?

C.C.
You broke her finger?

ARTIE
That's a good idea. Break hers too.

NICK
You think?

ARTIE
I won't look. Sure, knock yourself out.

NICK
Sweet. Thanks.

(A long moment as NICK starts to approach C.C.)

C.C.
WAIT!

NICK and ARTIE
What?

(NICK and ARTIE look at each other. Then suddenly, AMY bursts into the room, obviously upset.)

AMY
I need to speak with you detectives immediately!

ARTIE
Yeah, in a second. *(Back to C.C.)* Now what did you just say? Wait? *(To NICK)* Was it wait?

NICK
Yeah. Wait.

AMY
NOW!

(A long pause. Sensing she's serious, ARTIE approaches C.C. and then leads her out of the room and offstage. He reenters the room after a few moments and then the three of them all sit down at the table.)

NICK

What's up, doc?

AMY

Did one of you physically hurt one of these clowns?

NICK

I didn't.

ARTIE

Me neither.

AMY

I have just spoken to a clown by the name of Backwards Bobo who says you tried to break her finger.

NICK

She said that?

AMY

Yes.

ARTIE

She's cute.

NICK

Adorable.

AMY

Well, she wants to file charges against you.

ARTIE

Against Nick?

AMY

Against the both of you.

NICK

Let her.

ARTIE

Yeah. Let her if it'll make her feel better.

AMY

You're both fine with her charging you with police brutality?

NICK

No problem.

ARTIE

None whatsoever.

(A beat)

AMY

Why are you both acting so calm about this? You guys could get in a lot of trouble. You know that don't you?

NICK

No.

ARTIE

There will be no trouble.

AMY

How can you be so sure?

ARTIE

Did you look at her finger?

AMY

Yes.

NICK

And did it appear to be broken?

AMY

Yes!

ARTIE

We tried to tell you but you wouldn't listen.

NICK

That's true. We did.

AMY

What are you talking about?

ARTIE

We told you we needed your help.

NICK

That's true. We did make a plea. You just didn't want to help.

ARTIE

Too busy.

NICK

Couldn't have cared less about us.

ARTIE

We're nobodies.

NICK

Nobodies and of no importance.

ARTIE

Absolutely none. *(A beat)* So anyway, we figure, since you couldn't be bothered by helping us... there really shouldn't be that much of a problem with that whining little clown and her poor, poor, bent finger.

NICK

Not in the least.

(A long silence. AMY turns and silently exits the interrogation room. After a few moments of silence, she returns with C.C. in tow. Both women sit down at the table next to each other and face the detectives.)

AMY

Detectives? Please take it from where you left off with your investigation.

NICK

Thanks you, Doctor Talmun. Now then... where were we?

ARTIE

You were about to break her finger too.

NICK

Oh, yeah. That's right. And I started to approach her...

AMY

WHAT?!

NICK

Don't jump to any more rash conclusions, Doc... because before I approached, right, Artie? It was before I approached?

ARTIE

It was as you were approaching... and as she saw you coming at her, for the first time she dropped the stupid repeating thing and said... wait.

NICK

Right. She said wait. And so I can only assume that she does have the ability to talk like a normal human being, huh?

ARTIE

That's correct.

NICK

And then I was thinking that maybe these clowns all got together and devised a way to commit a group murder, perhaps.

ARTIE

Well, to be fair, before we make that assumption we should speak with the remaining clowns and see how far they can all drive us both up the wall. Don't you think?

NICK

You're right. Let's do that now. Dr. Talmun?

AMY

Yes?

NICK

We're done interviewing this susp—err, witness at the moment. We'll want to follow up with all the ones we've seen so far later on, but for right now. C.C. is all yours.

(A long moment)

ARTIE

You're still fine in that other interrogation room at the end of the hall, correct?

AMY

Yes.

(AMY stands, helps C.C. to her feet and then AMY struts offstage and C.C. copies her walk as she exits as well. Immediately, NICK and ARTIE begin to both perform individual and group celebratory dances.)

NICK

That was so awesome.

ARTIE

It was like you were reading my mind.

NICK

I thought the same thing. Like the Jedi Mind trick and everything.

ARTIE

What's that?

NICK

You're joking... you've never seen *Star Wars*?

ARTIE

I don't like military movies.

NICK

It's not a... wait a minute, if you haven't seen it, how'd you know about Yoda?

ARTIE

Everybody knows about Yoda.

NICK

Good point. *(A beat)* But, anyway, I gotta tell you, I've never felt so glad to be your partner. In the three years we've been working with each other, today was the first time I felt like...

ARTIE

I know.

NICK

You know?

ARTIE

The rush. The buzz.

NICK

Yeah. The inspiration of the thing. *(A beat)* Hey, I got an idea. You want do the last two together?

ARTIE *(In awe)*

Oh, my God.

NICK

What?

ARTIE

I was just about to ask you the exact same question.

NICK

Really?

ARTIE

Nah, not really. *(A beat)* But it would have been creepy if I did.

NICK

Oh, yeah, totally. *(A beat)* So who's the next one?

(ARTIE grabs the clipboard and looks it over.)

ARTIE

Harry Cole.

NICK

Better known as...

ARTIE

Bozo. No, wait... Pozo.

NICK

Pozo or Bozo?

ARTIE

Pozo. With a P.

NICK

Whoa, now that's original.

ARTIE

Hey, as long as it's not Backwards, Repeating or Upside Down Pozo, I'm fine with it.

NICK

Good point.

(NICK quickly exits the room/stage and returns after a few moments with the ACTOR, now dressed as POZO the Clown.)

NICK

Take a seat.

POZO

Sweet.

(NICK sits POZO down at the table and then goes to join ARTIE on the other side. Immediately, POZO falls over backwards in his chair, crashing to the ground.)

ARTIE

Whoa!

NICK

Oh my God! Are you alright?

(POZO jumps to his feet.)

POZO

What a sight!

ARTIE

That looked like it really hurt.

POZO

Not at all. I fell on my shirt.

NICK

It looked like you fell on your behind.

POZO

No, I'm fine, I'm fine. Sometimes I'm just a little—

(Immediately, he slips and falls again.)

ARTIE

Clumsy?

(POZO jumps to his feet again.)

POZO

Clumsy. Exactly. Sometimes I get—

NICK

Shut up and sit back down before you fall again!

POZO

Oh, yeah. Good idea, my friend.

(POZO sits down finally. He slides his chair forward and places his hands firmly on the table so he can maintain his balance.)

NICK
Are you alright now?

POZO
And how! I just get a little clumsy when I'm scared.

ARTIE
Why would you be scared?

POZO
Being interrogated makes me feel bared.

NICK
This isn't an interrogation.

POZO
It feels like an interrogation.

NICK
We just want to ask you a few questions since you were there last night.

POZO
Quite right.

NICK
Saw the whole thing?

POZO
That's because the car is in the center ring.

ARTIE
Shall we begin then?

POZO
Just say when.

ARTIE
I just did. (*A beat*) When did you first notice that James did not exit the car?

POZO
Right after I jumped over my first bar.

NICK
What bar are you referring to?

POZO

Part of my act involves jumping over a series of bars as soon as I exit the car and scream BOO!

ARTIE

Why do you scream that?

POZO

You gotta hook the kids right off the bat.

NICK

So you scare them?

POZO

It's all in haw and hem.

ARTIE

What?

POZO

Teasing, joshing. Sometimes to play the fool in a joke, you must become the butt.

NICK

What's the first thing you did after you noticed James was still in the car?

POZO

I fell over the last bar.

ARTIE

Okay, can you cut that out?

POZO

Cut what out?

ARTIE

The rhyming thing.

POZO

Did a phone just ring?

ARTIE

No.

POZO

Oh.

ARTIE

See, that's exactly what I'm referring to.

POZO

Ah-choo!

ARTIE

Stop it.

POZO

Don't have a fit.

ARTIE

Stop rhyming and I won't. Keep rhyming and I'm liable to shoot you.

POZO (*To NICK*)

Cows say moo.

ARTIE

That's it, it's time to pull out my gun.

POZO

That sounds like fun.

NICK (*To ARTIE*)

Artie, what exactly is he doing that's bothering you so much?

ARTIE (*To NICK*)

Are you kidding me? All his answers to my questions have been in the form of a rhyme. (*A beat.*) I'm not going crazy, you heard him too, right?

NICK

What am I deaf?

ARTIE

Well, why didn't you say anything?

NICK

Are you kidding me? After the day we've had, you think I'm gonna mind answers in the form of a rhyme?

POZO

Do either of you have the time?

NICK

It's four-thirty. *(To ARTIE)* See, that's nothing.

ARTIE

Well, it bothers the heck out of me.

NICK

Fine. *(A beat. To POZO)* Stop the rhymes, okay?

POZO

Today?

NICK

Yeah, right now. *(A beat)* Orange.

(A beat. POZO looks puzzled. So does Artie.)

ARTIE

Orange?

NICK

Yeah, he rhymes the last word you say, so just end every question with the word orange.

ARTIE

You just think of that?

NICK

Yeah.

ARTIE

Not bad.

POZO

You should be glad.

NICK

I am. Orange.

(A beat)

ARTIE

Let me try.

POZO

Do you want me to cry?

NICK

Go for it. Orange.

ARTIE
So you noticed him while you were performing? Orange.

POZO (*At a loss*)
Yes.

ARTIE (*To NICK*)
You're a genius! Orange.

NICK
That's a first. Orange.

ARTIE
What is? Orange.

NICK
Giving me a compliment. Orange.

ARTIE
Oh, stop it. Orange.

NICK
I'm telling the truth. Orange.

ARTIE
I've given you compliments dozens of times. Orange.

NICK
Not once. Orange.

ARTIE
Lots. Orange.

NICK
Name one time. Orange.

ARTIE
That time you brought in that lost dog. Orange.

NICK
You said nice collar! Orange.

ARTIE

Exactly. Orange.

NICK

You were being sarcastic. Orange.

ARTIE

Oh, I was not. Orange.

POZO (*Quietly, but still trying to fit in*)

I might have seen something. Orange.

NICK

What?

ARTIE

I said I was not being—

NICK

Shut up, Artie. (*To POZO*) What did you just say?

POZO

Orange?

NICK

Not that. The other thing.

POZO

I might have seen something. Orange.

ARTIE (*His interest now peaked*)

Go on.

POZO

Well, there was this van parked out by the—

ARTIE

AGGGGGGGGGGHHH!

NICK

What?

ARTIE

I thought he was going to tell us something new.

POZO

You already know about the van that was blue?

ARTIE

We already know about the van. Orange.

POZO

No, it was blue.

ARTIE

I'm gonna kill him.