

Billy Buck & Jo-Jo

Frank Canino



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BILLY BUCK & JO-JO

by

Frank Canino

CAST

BILLY BUCK: A worn-out rodeo performer, well into his sixties.

JO-JO: A rodeo clown, also in his sixties and equally worn out.

Place

A room anywhere, close to eternity.

Time

The present and sometime in eternity.

Setting: A perfectly bare, symmetrical and colorless room.

At Rise: In blackout, there's a loud BANG. Lights flash up on two men who stare ahead in numb astonishment, then at the room around them, and finally at each other.

The two men are of a certain age --- or even beyond. They are seated on a small couch. On stage left, BILLY BUCK is in faded jeans and jacket, ragged leather chaps and scuffed boots. He speaks with a Southwestern drawl. On stage right, JO-JO is in a rodeo circus clown outfit, including a garish shirt, a woman's skirt, traces of clown white on his face, and a clown mask perched on his skull like a hat. JO-JO's accent is suspiciously close to the Bronx or Brooklyn. JO-JO holds an AK-47 semi-automatic rifle. He stares at it and then abruptly puts it down as if it were a dangerous animal. BILLY BUCK touches his own head gingerly and then starts to hit Jo-Jo.

BILLY BUCK: Goddam son of a bitch, you did it!

JO-JO: *(overlapping)* What? I didn't mean —

BILLY BUCK: *(overlapping)* I told you: wait till I —

JO-JO: *(overlapping)* I barely touched it –

BILLY BUCK: *(overlapping)* Always fuck everything up.

JO-JO: *(overlapping)* I didn't mean to pull the ----.

BILLY BUCK: And where the hell are we?

JO-JO: I don't know. Some kind of holding place. Before they send us on.

BILLY BUCK: But for how long?

JO-JO: Who knows? Forever maybe.

BILLY BUCK: With you? *(feeling his head)* Oh my Jesus, feel the size of that hole.

JO-JO: Mine's bigger I bet. See?

BILLY BUCK: But I don't feel nothin'. Do you?

JO-JO: *(shaking his head)* We're beyond that now.

(BILLY BUCK crawls around the room, looking under the couch and in the corners.)

BILLY BUCK: And where's the damn bullet. It's not in my skull or your empty --

JO-JO: Who cares? We're gone, aren't we?

BILLY BUCK: I just want to see what landed us here.

JO-JO: Not gonna do us any good.

BILLY BUCK: Where's that rifle? I swear I'm gonna kill you, boy.

JO-JO: I already did that! Remember?

BILLY BUCK: Give that to me. *(JO-JO hands him the rifle. BILLY BUCK examines it.)* God damn. Only time in your life you got a double target. And you had to get the two of us. Son of a bitch. I told you how to do it.

JO-JO: And I did. (*Picking up rifle, he demonstrates.*) Butt end firm against the sofa arm. Trigger cocked. Only one bullet in it. Then lean my head against the barrel as I pull the trigger.

BILLY BUCK: *After* I get up, Jo-Jo. *After!* So I'm not in the way!. Look. (*He sits next to him*) If I'm sitting next to you, I'm in the path of the bullet too, even if it ricochets. You were supposed to wait for my signal—

JO-JO: (*overlapping*) I was nervous! So maybe I just leaned too hard or—

BILLY BUCK: (*cutting him off*) All you had to do was wait till I got up, for Jesus' sake!

JO-JO: Some friend you are anyway. Letting me blow my head off. (*beat*) And why did you have to sit next to me?

BILLY BUCK: Someone had to be with you. You always screw up things on your own.

JO-JO: Well, look where your good intentions got you.

BILLY BUCK: What was I supposed to do? I told you I was going to stick to you to the last. I just didn't expect—

JO-JO: (*cutting him off*) I don't know why it went through you too.

BILLY BUCK: 'Cause there's so much empty space in your skull! Goddam, you are stupid!

JO-JO: Stop cursin' me. I had a bad enough life —

BILLY BUCK: You had as good a life as anyone. Me included. But you couldn't be happy with anything. This is what comes of listening to Oprah and Dr. Phil.

JO-JO: (*shaking his head*) Too many problems, and not enough future to look forward to.

BILLY BUCK: We was doin' fine. How much did we gross last year?

JO-JO: We didn't even make forty. Not enough to cover costs.

BILLY BUCK: Yeah, but that was up over the year before.

JO-JO: Only because you got that accident insurance. How many bones you gonna break this year?

BILLY BUCK: How many stupid cows you gonna scare away? (*Sighing*) Oh man, I don't know what's worse: you or the longhorns.

JO-JO: Cattle don't get discriminated against.

BILLY BUCK: Ok, Ok, I heard that one before. I'm tired of it.

JO-JO: We hide it from the guys we work with. And our families. And then all these young punks.

BILLY BUCK: They are Post-Stonewall, baby, I keep telling you. And we are Pre-Stonewall.

JO-JO: Yeah. Like prehistoric. We don't belong to no one.

BILLY BUCK: We belong to ourselves. We made a good livin'.

JO-JO: Thirty years of you breakin' your bones?

BILLY BUCK: We did OK. Better than your goddam brother who's pumpin' gas.

JO-JO: At least he's got a pension. What the hell are we lookin' forward to?

BILLY BUCK: We had all kinds of possibilities. And how many guys hang together like we did?

JO-JO: Stubbornness. That's all.

BILLY BUCK: Don't matter. We hung in. And we knew how to take care of each other.

END OF FREEVIEW

You'll want to read and perform this show!