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Acting Edition

Clown Bar Christmas

by Adam Szymkowicz

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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NOTE ON MUSIC

Optional preshow music by composer Brandon Scott Grayson is available for a fee. Licensees should contact their licensing representatives if interested in using this preshow music.

CLOWN BAR CHRISTMAS made its world premiere with the Crow River Players at the Little Theatre in New London, Minnesota, on December 21, 2023. The production was directed by Matt Hegdahl. The music director was Andrea Limoges, sound and projections were by Bethany Lacktorin, and the stage manager was Kirsten Campbell. The cast was as follows:

DUSTY	Gabriel Ryland
PETUNIA	Hope Taylor
ZIPPY	Gavin Johnson
ZULU	Acacia Banken
TIMMY	Justin Brainard
GIGGLES	Christopher Delong
SHOTGUN	Betsy Shadowick
HAPPY	John Szczur
POPO	Averi Linn
BLINKY	Nick Shadowick
OLD SPATCHY/BOBO	Thomas Lovecraft

CHARACTERS

DUSTY – male, the crooner

PETUNIA – female, the good time girl/waitress/dancer/babysitter/
bartender

ZUZU – a child clown played by an adult

ZIPPY – a child clown played by an adult

TIMMY – male, **HAPPY**'s brother, an addict. Can be doubled with
BOBO.

GIGGLES – male, a gangster

SHOTGUN – male, a gangster

OLD SPATCHY – any gender, very old, slavic accent. Can be doubled
with **BOBO**.

HAPPY – male, the leading man

BLINKY – female, the moll

POPO – female, an assassin

BOBO – male, the mob boss

SETTING

The Clown Bar, a bar full of clowns set up like a cabaret.

TIME

The present or recent past.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

This play precedes the events of the play *Clown Bar*, I'm not sure how long by. I'm not a fucking expert.

The Clown Bar is currently decorated for Christmas – maybe there's a small gaudy tree and a menorah. Maybe some clowns wear ugly sweaters or other clowny holiday outfits.

Action takes place in various audience areas and also on the small stage. Audience members are encouraged to dress like clowns. If possible, hand out clown noses to the audience along with their programs. Actors, stagehands, ushers, etc are all dressed in full clown makeup with bright hair and clown noses. Their outfits could be clowney or like gangsters from the '30s or more recent gangsters. Feel free to make guns as colorful as the clowns. Clowns may hold cliplights to illuminate scenes.

THANKS

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Matt Hegdahl.

Daniel Talbott and Addie Johnson, Kip Fagan, Andrew Neisler, Ari Schrier and everyone at Rising Phoenix and Pipeline who made those first Clown Bars happen.

Everyone (over 60 theaters) who decided doing *Clown Bar*, the first play, was a good idea. Without you, I never would have thought yeah let's go back to that well and see if there's anything there.

For Matt Freeman

*(At open, **DUSTY** has been singing a mixture of clown songs and holiday songs.)*

DUSTY. *(On the small stage.)* How's everybody doing? It's really coming down out there, huh? The snowstorm keep some of you away? That's okay. We'll work with what we got, which I guess is you clowns. You all clowns? Now's not a good time for non-clowns in the Clown Bar, even if it is the holiday season. It's too dangerous. You could catch a stray bullet or stray venereal disease. You could get a face full of seltzer or worse, fall in love with a clown. So now's the time to leave. Don't say I didn't warn you. I'll give you to the count of three. One. Two. Let's get into the holiday spirit.

(Sings to the tune of "I Saw Three Ships (Come Sailing In)" into his mic. As with most songs in the show, maybe we don't have to sing the whole thing. Maybe half or a third.)

I SAW THREE CLOWNS COME STUMBLING IN,
ON CHRISTMAS DAY, ON CHRISTMAS DAY,
I SAW THREE CLOWNS COME STUMBLING IN,
ON CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE MORNING.
AND WHO WAS WITH THOSE CLOWNS ALL THREE?
ON CHRISTMAS DAY, ON CHRISTMAS DAY,
AND WHO WAS WITH THOSE CLOWNS ALL THREE?
ON CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE MORNING.
OUR BOSS BOBO LOOKS REAL ANGRY
ON CHRISTMAS DAY, ON CHRISTMAS DAY,
OUR BOSS BOBO LOOKS REAL ANGRY
ON CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE MORNING.

AND WHAT BUMBLERED THOSE CLOWNS ALL THREE?
ON CHRISTMAS DAY, ON CHRISTMAS DAY,
AND WHY DID THEY NOT TRY TO FLEE
ON CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE MORNING.
OH, THEY STROLLED INTO THE WRONG CITY,
ON CHRISTMAS DAY, ON CHRISTMAS DAY,
OH, THEY FOUGHT BUT THEN THEY BLED ON ME,
ON CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE MORNING.
AND ALL THE CLOWNS THAT DIED THAT DAY,
ON CHRISTMAS DAY, ON CHRISTMAS DAY,
AND ALL THE CLOWNS THAT DIED THAT WAY,
ON CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE MORNING.

*(During the last part **PETUNIA** has entered from the back with the two clown kids, **ZUZU** and **ZIPPY**. They maybe have pigtails or breeches or those beanies with propellers – they are visually archetypal children, but also clowns. **DUSTY** stops singing whenever he sees them. **PETUNIA** sits them at a table.)*

What's this? Hey, Petunia, why did you bring kids in here? This is an inappropriate establishment for children, even clown children.

PETUNIA. Bobo doesn't like that song.

DUSTY. Yeah, I know.

PETUNIA. He wants you to stop singing it.

DUSTY. Yeah I know. But I like it. He's not gonna get angry at me over a song, is he?

PETUNIA. I think it's best not to give him a reason to be angry.

DUSTY. I think it's fine. What is he gonna do to me?

PETUNIA. Well –

DUSTY. Why are there kids in here?

PETUNIA. This is Bobo's niece and nephew. [or "nieces," or "nephews." Or "Bobo's their uncle."]

DUSTY. Oh. Oh! I didn't know. Oh hey kids, welcome. (*To the rest of the establishment.*) Hide the dildos! Put the guns out of sight. Maybe put the safety on. Hey! That's not okay! Stop that. There's some fucking kids in here. Petunia that reminds me, why are there kids in here?

PETUNIA. I don't know. Bobo just told me to watch them.

DUSTY. Why you?

PETUNIA. I don't know. I hate kids. No offense.

ZUZU. I take offense.

ZIPPY. I don't. But I'm a disaffected young clown. What's the Wi-Fi?

DUSTY. Oh yeah. Nothing works because of the snowstorm.

ZUZU. I hate snow.

PETUNIA. What? What kind of kid hates snow?

ZIPPY. I hate snow too. There's no school now to get cancelled anyway so what's the point? This is the worst Christmas vacation ever!

DUSTY. Hey now. I could sing again. Let me think if I know any appropriate songs. No. Not that one. No. No. No. Are you okay with the word "rim"?

(Rim shot sound effect.)

PETUNIA. Why don't I tell you a Christmas story? We should all get in a funny holiday spirit. Wouldn't that be nice? One year I was with a John. No maybe that's not appropriate. So this other year I was with these two Johns –

DUSTY. Petunia!

PETUNIA. What?

(Enter TIMMY, covered in snow. He doesn't look so good.)

TIMMY. Hi everybody.

PETUNIA. Timmy. You shouldn't be here right now.

TIMMY. No, I know. I thought maybe Bobo had some work for me.

PETUNIA. No work today.

TIMMY. Yeah but maybe I could pick something up or deliver something or maybe go tell someone they better pay up or else?

PETUNIA. Shotgun and Giggles got all that covered. Anyway, it's almost Christmas. Go home.

TIMMY. Yeah yeah. I will. I just need a little money. Petunia, you got any money?

PETUNIA. No. I'm flat broke. I don't know why they call it that. When I'm flat on my back, I'm not broke no more.

TIMMY. Dusty?

DUSTY. You know I don't give you money. "Don't ever lend and don't never borrow." You know who said that? Someone who's still alive. I'm trying to stay alive.

ZIPPY. I think that was Shakespeare.

ZUZU. What do you need money for?

PETUNIA. Kids, you don't need to...um.

TIMMY. Well kids, I got this friend, right? Frosty the Snowman. Actually looks kinda like Dusty in a different hat. Hey Dusty will you – Frosty's always like –

(DUSTY changes into Frosty. Does he throw a sheet over himself – like a ghost costume? And put on a top hat? Or just the hat?)

DUSTY. *(As Frosty.)* Hey. You got the money?

TIMMY. Frosty! You're alive! Was it some magic in the hat?

DUSTY. Yeah, something like that. Where's my money?

TIMMY. I'll get it. Can I just get a little more... *(Looks at kids.)* snow.

DUSTY. Not until I get my money.

TIMMY. Just a little taste. Just a little to tide me over.

DUSTY. No money, no snow.

TIMMY. I'm good for it.

DUSTY. If you were good for it, you'd have it.

TIMMY. I'll get it soon. Bobo will give me another job.

DUSTY. Until he does, don't call me, kid. Forget my name.
The name's Frosty. That's the name you should forget.

TIMMY. But – but –!!

(DUSTY takes off the sheet – has it slowly melt in front of him until it's just a top hat on the ground on a sheet.)

And then he melts and won't answer my texts anymore.

DUSTY. Sorry, Timmy.

TIMMY. What about you kids? You got any money?

ZIPPY. I got a dollar for you if you do a dance.

TIMMY. Nah, never mind.

ZIPPY. Two dollars.

TIMMY. No. Well... No.

ZIPPY. Five dollars?

TIMMY. Okay. Like, right now?

ZIPPY. Yeah. Do a Christmas dance.

TIMMY. What's a Christmas dance?

ZIPPY. Do it. Dance! Dance! Dance! Better! Do it better!

(TIMMY does a Christmas dance. When he's done, ZIPPY pays him. Exit TIMMY.)

TIMMY. *(On phone as he exits.)* Hey, Frosty?

ZUZU. That was sad.

ZIPPY. He smells bad too.

ZUZU. Every time a bell rings, a down-on-his-luck clown dies.

DUSTY. That's dark.

PETUNIA. Maybe let's come up with like a happy story we can tell.

DUSTY. What about the story of the mob boss, Bippineezer Stooze?

PETUNIA. Well, I wouldn't call that hap-

(GIGGLES and SHOTGUN enter, both covered in snow.)

GIGGLES. Bippineezer Stooze was ungenerous as the day was long.

DUSTY. Oh hey Giggles. How did you know we were -

SHOTGUN. Please Mister Stooze. Can I git Christmas Day off?

DUSTY. *(To SHOTGUN.)* Oh Shotgun's playing Bobo Crachit.

GIGGLES. No. I need you to do the thing.

SHOTGUN. The thing?

GIGGLES. Yeh, the thing. The thing.

SHOTGUN. The thing. But it's Christmas! Please, sir!

GIGGLES. I don't care what day it is. Bah! Dicktug!

DUSTY. That night, Bippineezer is visited by his old partner Morey which is weird because he's dead.

PETUNIA. Ohh! Can I play it? (*Putting on a voice.*)
Ooooooh! I'm dead. You must change your ways. Clown criminals can't unionize but they need time off and better pay or else bad things could happen. Heed my warning. Three clowns will come. Threeee!

DUSTY. (*Sings.*)

I SAW THREE CLOWNS COME STUM—

PETUNIA. No.

DUSTY. (*We Three Kings tune.*)

WE THREE CLOWNS OF THE CLOWN BAR ARE

PETUNIA. No.

DUSTY. (*Sings.*)

ON THE THIRD DAY OF CHRISTMAS MY TRUE LOVE GAVE
TO ME.

PETUNIA. No.

DUSTY. (*Sings - instead of three french hens.*)

THREE MAD CLOWNS!

PETUNIA. Be very afraid Bippineezer! Repent! Change your ways!

GIGGLES. (*As Stooge.*) Yeh. I'm not worried about this.
Three clowns. Whatever. Bah! Dicktug!

DUSTY. And he goes back to sleep. But then he wakes when there's a bang on his door.

SHOTGUN. Bang Bang Bang! Let me in! I'm a clown from your past.

GIGGLES. What da ya want?

SHOTGUN. Lookit who you used to be. Lookit the mistakes you made, the bad choices.

DUSTY. And he shows 'em.

SHOTGUN. I have this picture album you ken look at.
Look. Look. Remember you were loved once.

GIGGLES. No.

PETUNIA. Bippineezer, you lost your way. We were going
to marry once, weren't we? But you were too cheap.

GIGGLES. I made my choices!

SHOTGUN. Change now. Or else.

GIGGLES. I like my ways. Mostly. I think.

SHOTGUN. Okay, but, don't say I didn't warn ya.

DUSTY & PETUNIA. Don't say I didn't warn ya!

DUSTY. Then a while later there was another knock.

SHOTGUN. I am a clown from the present! Let me in! And
know me better, man!

GIGGLES. What?

SHOTGUN. Lookit how everyone's having fun and you're
not. Because you're a wet blanket.

GIGGLES. I don't care.

SHOTGUN. I think it would be good for you if you cared a
little.

GIGGLES. I don't care.

SHOTGUN. But look at Bobo Crachit's family. Huddled by
the fire.

PETUNIA. We are so poor.

DUSTY. So poor. But we are happy anyway, even though
I am dying. (*Cough. Cough.*)

PETUNIA. Bobo, we need more money for our poor little
son. Ask your boss for a raise.

DUSTY. I'm fine! (*Cough cough.*) I'll live a little longer,
probably. God bless us, everyone.

GIGGLES. We all make choices.

SHOTGUN. He made a choice to work for you!

GIGGLES. Should have gone into business for himself.
Didn't have the guts.

SHOTGUN. Listen to me. The third clown, not so fun.
But take my advice now and it'll save you a lot of hurt.
Seriously, before it's too late.

GIGGLES. Bah. I am me and I will not change in any
appreciative way. I'm not even sure change is possible.

DUSTY & PETUNIA. Hmm.

(They all think if change is possible.)

SHOTGUN. Your loss, big guy.

DUSTY. And he goes back asleep but he's awoken by
someone looming over him whilst he's in his bed.

GIGGLES. How'd you get in here? Why are you hiding
your face? What clown are you? Are you here about my
future?

DUSTY. But the clown does not speak. He just puts two in
his head and one in his heart.

SHOTGUN. Bang. Bang. Bang.

(GIGGLES takes a long time to die, loudly.)

DUSTY. You done?

GIGGLES. Ugh. *(Bippineezer dies.)*

DUSTY. And that clown that done him in was Bobo
Crachit. And that's how Bobo became the big boss.

PETUNIA. So what'd you kids think?

ZUZU. Meh.

ZIPPY. Wait. Is that how Bobo took over the Clown Bar?

SHOTGUN. Oh. That mighta been a secret.

GIGGLES. Yeah, don't tell any cops. You a snitch?

ZIPPY. No.

GIGGLES. You a snitch?

ZUZU. No.

GIGGLES. Good, then Bob's your uncle.

ZUZU. Bobo's my uncle.

SHOTGUN. Right, right. Now what? Want to hear about Hannaukuh Harry and the war against the Wilderness Wombat that almost ended in total annihilation of the human race?

PETUNIA. No, don't tell that one.

*(Enter **HAPPY**, brushing off snow.)*

HAPPY. What's going on here?

GIGGLES. Hey, Happy. Still snowing?

ZUZU. That's Happy?

ZIPPY. He doesn't look like much.

ZUZU. No, he doesn't look like much.

SHOTGUN. What's the haps, Haps?

PETUNIA. Oh hi Happy. Blinky's not here.

HAPPY. No. I know. Why you bringing her up then?

PETUNIA. Usually you're looking for her right before her show. But I hadn't seen her today. Did you have a fight again?

HAPPY. Why would you say that?

SHOTGUN. Because you're always fighting.

GIGGLES. Yeh, it's true.