

Cast of Characters

REX	40-50, rancher; a grim loner with a past
CODY	30s, rodeo clown
JESUS	30s, a forgiving man, a night visitor
LU-ANN	20s, rodeo groupie, a night visitor
ANGELA	20s-30s, pretty, homespun, a night visitor (<i>Lu-Ann and Angela may be doubled</i>)

Scene

Tiny desert island

Time

Afternoon

SETTING :

A desert island small enough to fit inside the stage boundaries. It's just a flat sandy island, but the men have invented three imaginary features: Big Mountain upstage; Big Forest stage right; and Big Rock stage left (with enough room onstage to walk around the island in the water). The sun is blazing, relentless.

REX is dressed in a full but sun-faded black cowboy outfit; CODY in a sun-faded colorful tee-shirt and boxer shorts patterned with ducks or fish-- something un-cowboylike. They both speak with a cowboy twang.

Besides the two men, the only thing on the island is a short, thick stub of driftwood, useless as a club or spear and a small arrangement of pebbles close to Rex.

AT RISE :

REX sprawls in the sand. CODY, on the other side of the island, walks around the perimeter in the water, hunting for fish with the stick. He can barely hold his head up. Both men are hungry. When he reaches Rex . . .

CODY

Whoa. There he is.

(Rex stirs.)

Hey, Rex. Rex. Country singer.

REX

No.

CODY

Female.

REX

No!

CODY

Okay. Alright. So . . . What do you wanna do?

REX

Sleep!

CODY

You been sleepin' all day.

(Rex struggles to his feet, starts walking away s.l.)

CODY

Where y'off to?

REX

Gettin' away from you.

CODY

Pick up a rack of Bud on your way home.

(Rex walks halfway around the island, navigating "Big Forest" along the way. He sits and stares out to sea.)

CODY

(to himself)

Mr. Personality. Let's see now, what'll we have for supper tonight? Me? I got a powerful hankerin' for seafood. Any volunteers?

(Cody's fish call)

Yodel-odel-teeeeeee...yip-yip-yip! Yip! Yip! Yip!

(Rex circles back to his original place.)

CODY

You dusted that trail. Couldn't find anything to do?

REX

What was it?

CODY

Category: Female Entertain--

REX

(obviously)

Dolly Parton.

(beat)

Well?

CODY

I don't know now, I forgot. Anyways, you don't just charge in there with the damn answer. You gotta narrow it down. "Is she a singer? Is she country? Does she write her own stuff?"

REX

Dolly Parton.

CODY

Fine.

(back to fishing)

Yip-yip-yip! Fisheee! "Is she blonde? Is she buxomy?"

REX

You may go hungry tonight.

CODY

Nope. I got a strong feelin' this time. Yip-yip!

REX

"Rack o'Bud!" "Buxomy!"

CODY
That?

REX
Talkin' beer. Talkin' sex.

CODY
I swear--

REX
Talkin' to yourself. Three laws in two minutes.

CODY
When was I talkin' to myself?

REX
Whilst I was gone.

CODY
(walking onto land)
What was you, a mile away? Man, you must have X-Ray hearin', you think you heard me talkin' to myself. But now that you're back, I believe it's my hat time.

REX
You're gonna slime it up.

CODY
(drying his hand)
S'pose I coulda saved someone else's life.

REX
(giving him the hat)
Wish you woulda.

CODY
Woulda. Coulda. Shoulda.

REX
And dry the sweat off your head before you--

(Cody puts on the hat and lies back with a smile, though he's beset with hunger pains.)

CODY
Much obliged, partner.

REX
We ain't partners.

CODY
Hell we ain't. For all you know, we're the last two cowboys left on earth.

REX
Last I heard, paintin' up your face don't make a man a cowboy.

CODY

You'd faint dead away, you faced some of the bulls I clowned. Black Lucifer?

REX

Yeah, you done a bang-up job with that hog.

CODY

Hog. Twenty million people seen me that day, I ever tell you?

REX

'Bout twenty million times.

CODY

That's right, the day I saved the ass of Mister Wild Bill Houston. Leaped aboard that animal's head, Black Lucifer himself, grabbed ahold of them mighty horns. Dislocated shoulder, concussion--

REX

Punctured a lung, busted two ribs--

CODY

--punctured a lung, busted two ribs--
damn right--and got laid twice the same
night. In a hospital bed.

REX

Not interested in your sex life. Told you that a million times too. And you're gettin' sand on the brim.

(He takes his hat back.)

CODY

"Thanks for savin' my life, Cody."

REX

I'd be happier dead.

(lying down)

CODY

Wild Bill Houston give me his silver-ass belt buckle. You? Won't even share your damn hat for five minutes. "I'd be happier dead." Fine. Die happy.

(returns to fishing)

Guess I'll work on my tan.

(beat)

Yodel-odel-teeeeeee...yip-yip-yip!

(beat)

Hey, Rex, got five bucks till we get rescued?

(beat)

I bought him a drink, ever tell you? I think I did.

(beat)

Right there on the cruise ship. Boilermaker for Wild Bill, and a Manhattan for the little lady.

REX

Hope they enjoyed 'em.

CODY

"Xcuse me, Wild Bill, remember me?" He sticks out his hand. "Course I do! You saved my damn life." Let me tell you, that man had a hand on him. "Whatcha drinkin'?" he says. "No, sir. This one's on me." And here comes the gal with their drinks. Prob'ly their last drinks on earth.

REX

Prob'ly so.

CODY

And that little girl? I know you don't wanna hear it, but I was her last rodeo man.

(to the fish)

Come on, little guys. Big guys. Yip! Yip!

REX

You scare 'em away with your damn fool yodelin'.

CODY

I didn't hear no complaints the day I yodeled up Big Sally. 'Member her? Man, she was some tasty. First couple of days.

REX

If you like bones.

CODY

Hat don't make the cowboy, anyways. I don't care how big a ranch he owns. Cowboy's the guy that works the land. Herds the cattle. Drives 'em to market.

REX

They're called ranch-hands, not cowboys, and they're a bunch of lowlife drifters and thieves, every last one.

CODY

Not all of 'em.

REX

Yeah, a clown knows all about it.

CODY

Fisheeee! Fisheeee!

REX

Jesus.

CODY

Yippee-ki-o. Anyone ever say that on your ranch, Rex? 'Cause that's a sure sign you got cowboys. Yippee-ki-o....

(beat)

Ki-yay.

(beat)

Category: Cowboy Movies. Three words, last one "Mountain."

(Rex jumps up as if to attack Cody, but stops short of getting his boots wet...)

REX

Gonna push me too far one of these days.

(Rex walks upstage-right where he enters the mountain path, then circles a serpentine trail three times around, clockwise, in ever-decreasing revolutions, making sure he ducks low at some point on his second pass... and steps over something on his third pass...which is how they climb Big Mountain-- four revolutions to reach the top. Three turns up, Rex stops and glares out to sea.)

CODY

Aw.

(Cody climbs up on land, walks two circles up the mountain, ducking on the second pass, then stops next to Rex.)

CODY

I apologize for that careless remark, Rex. You just pushed my-- Hello?

(Rex won't respond)

CODY

Now what the hell... he climb the whole damn mountain?

(Cody walks once more around--stepping over the obstacle--till he reaches Rex again)

CODY

I apologize for the movie comment, Rex. You pushed my buttons, that's all, with the clown business.

REX

We got laws on this island.

CODY

I know. I guess I was just expressin' my, whatever... pride, I dunno. You say "clown" like, you know, blow up balloons, hand out birthday cake--

REX

And it's two words, not three.

CODY

What, "Broke Back"--

REX

Gonna say 'em now?

CODY

Nope. I apologize, Rex.
(offering his hand)

REX

(turning away)
Godforsaken movie. Sometimes I'm glad to be here.

CODY

Nice little bluff you found. Set a spell?

REX

Best go back down. See if there's any fish you ain't scared off.

CODY

You can fish if you want, Rex.

(As they saunter off together to their spot...)

CODY

And, by the way, we like to be called barrelmen. Just so's you know, "clowns" is kinda old-school. Barrelmen.

(Rex ducks in the appropriate spot; Cody forgets. Rex stops. . . waits . . .)

CODY

Sorry, Rex.

(Cody walks back to the spot and ducks properly.)

CODY

Comin'?

(Rex follows.)

CODY

You know, I think we both got a mite short-tempered when the fish went south. Hell, two guys alone on a tiny little island--bound to have some differences, right?

REX

Pretty big island, if you ask me.

CODY

One might like to talk about their relationship--

(Rex stops.)

So maybe the other don't. One gotta respect the other. Don't got to, I s'pose.

REX

S'long as they respect the laws, like the one that says "No talkin' relationships."

CODY

Then again, laws was made to be broken. Ever hear that?

REX

Yeah. Criminals say it all the time.

(Arriving back at the shore...)

CODY

Think I'll fish down by Big Forest. Wanna sit over there?

(Rex sits where he always does.)

I guess my point is, the world keeps changin'.

REX

My world don't. And don't touch my rocks. I get 'em arranged special, the way I want 'em.

(Cody picks up the stick, steps over the penalty pebbles, and walks into the water...)

CODY

'Kay. Wish me luck, Rex.

(Rex lies back.)

CODY

Yodel-odel-teeeeeeee...yip... yip...

(He sees something.)

Yip?

(He stares out . . .)

Rex. Hey, Rex--

REX

Yup.

CODY

(peering out to sea)

Whatcha make outta that? Holy crow. Rex!

(Rex won't look.)

Great Baby Jesus.

(yelling)

Hey!

(Rex gets to his feet.)

CODY

See it? Yee-haw!

REX

Quit splashin'!

(waving his hat)

Stick!

(Cody tosses him the stick. Rex puts his hat on it, waves it over his head.)

REX

Where you lookin'?

CODY

That big-ass boat... out there!

(searching the horizon.)

See it?

(beat)

You made me look away. Now I lost 'em.

(Rex puts his hat back on, returns to his place and sits, drops the stick.)

CODY

It's out there. Probably circlin' us.

(Cody circles the entire island, staring out.)

Know I seen somethin'.

(brightening)

Know what, Rex, I bet I just yodeled up a whale?

(Rex lies back, miserable.)

CODY

Kind of a letdown, huh? And here I was, tryin' to cheer you up.

(Rex says nothing.)

You know, Rex, you been actin' somewhat de-pressed lately. More 'n usual. Don't wanna talk, fine. Just a way of passin' time. Conversation. Talk about this, talk about that. Small talk's all it is.

REX

Small talk! Big talk! You've talked about everything there is to talk about--a thousand times! Used every word in your puny vocabulary, in every possible combination.

CODY

Don't think I ever heard that combination.

REX

I know what color pocket was on your shirt your first day of kidney-garden.

CODY

Sky-blue.

REX

Sky-damn-blue. I shouldn't know that!

CODY

What's the damn harm?

REX

You're fillin' my brain with bullshit, that's what! And I've had about all I can stand of that clown voice.

CODY

Now, there weren't no need of that.

REX

Say somethin' important. Just once. Hell, I don't care. Say somethin' the least bit interestin'.
(*beat*)
That's what I thought.

(*Rex lies down again.*)

CODY

Man dressed up in cowboy gear and don't like cowboys. That's interestin'. Little bit.

REX

Didn't say that. I said real cowboys don't have to prove it all the time.

CODY

Human psychology. That's interestin'.

REX

If you're the type that's interested in another man's clothes.

CODY

You're the one wearin' 'em. The hell do I care?

(*back to fishing*)

But we do have to de-duce that you bought that whole fancy getup for some reason. I find that very interestin'. Man who don't have to prove he's a cowboy. Which he ain't. Really.

(*to the fish*)

Yip! Yip! Yip!

(*to Rex*)

What?

(*Rex gets up and starts walking away.*)

CODY

I know. I drive people crazy. Poor Angela I drove right out the door. In through the back, out through the front--

(*Rex stops.*)

Just sayin'--

REX

I've heard all I ever wanna hear about that woman--or any woman you ever knew or thought about knowin'! Besides the damn fact they're all against the law.

CODY

And that's the difference between you and me. I like to talk about these things. You keep 'em all bottled up. That ain't healthy, Rex. What do I know about you? You own a ranch. Bang, that's it. Don't even know your last name. If you're married. Or was married--that's the feelin' I get--

REX

It ain't your damn business!

CODY

You must love rodeo. Hat like that gotta go what, five, eight hundred?

(Rex walks away.)

CODY

Which some people might find interestin'.

(Rex sits. After a couple of beats, Cody joins him.)

CODY

Speakin' of Hat, Rex... I kinda got rooked on my hat time back there.

REX

You give 'er up, don't come cryin' to me.

CODY

I know. I know. It's just... Okay, headin' out on a limb here. She leave you, Rex?

REX

I hate the fuckin' rodeo, okay? They ain't nuthin' but dumb, people in 'em are dumber, and people who like 'em are just plain ignorant.

CODY

Well, excuse the shit outta me, what was you doin' on a rodeo cruise?

REX

I like the smell.

(Cody chuckles.)

CODY

"I like the smell." That's good.

(Rex allows a smile.)

You know, I think this might be the day.

(beat)

"What day?" The day we get to the bottom of ol' Rex.

(beat)

No, but really, back to Mister Hat there. Hot as the sun gets around these parts, and us with no shade trees--

REX

'The fuck you say?

CODY

I know. We got Big Forest back there--

REX

Hundreds of shade trees.

CODY

But Rex, really--

REX

I'm talkin' really.

(Rex gets up, walks away.)

CODY

(following)

Okay, we got all them big trees--giant trees--but somehow them rays find a way to penetrate. Know? I mean, a man could get his head fried to death. Without Hat.

(Rex keeps walking.)

Goin' for a walk, Rex?

REX

Headin' up Big Mountain so I don't have to listen to any more clownshit.

CODY

Clownshit. Ol' Rex. Good ol' buddy Rex.

(Rex heads up the mountain.)

CODY

(calling out)

Right?

(calling louder)

Rex? Right?

REX

(calling)

We ain't buddies! We ain't partners! We ain't nothin' but stranded!

CODY

'Course we're buddies. We're best damn friends.

REX

(exasperated; returning)

You can't talk to me when I'm on Big Mountain! And how you gonna be best anything with nothin' to compare to?

CODY

How 'bout compared to Stick?

REX

Then I'd have to give it some thought.

CODY

Compared to the ocean.

(Rex waits.)

Okay. Compared to that Arab that blew up the ship.

REX

Ship blew up of natural causes, told you a million times.

CODY

How you know it wun't a suicide bomber?

REX

On a rodeo cruise? Arab mighta stood out?

CODY

Not in a cowboy disguise.

(Rex studies Cody.)

REX

If you got sumpn' to say? I suggest we get down to business.

CODY

Seems like I been doin' all the talkin'.

REX

Goddamn fool.

(walks away)

CODY

You're the brains of the outfit.

REX

And my brains want it quiet for the rest of the day.

CODY

And my brains want some hat time!

(following; getting testy)

Hold on. Hold on here. I wanna know. How's Stick your friend, best or otherwise?

REX

Stick gets me food.

CODY

Stick don't get food, people get food. Me.

REX

When's the last time you got food?

CODY

What do you call breakfast?

REX

You clubbed a damn Cheerio.

CODY

Didn't hear no complaints while you was eatin' it.

REX

Too busy tryin' to chew the damn thing.

CODY

Well, be my guest. Take off your shiny new boots and go rustle up some grub. You and your friend.

(giving him Stick)

REX

The minute I take 'em off, they'll be on your stinkin' feet.

(Beat)

CODY

Stick ever save your life?

REX

She might. Someday.

CODY

'Cause you stick the damn hat on 'er?

REX

Whatever.

CODY

(a slow look)

"Whatever." Use that tone. "Whatever." Maybe I'll go find a best friend of my own.

REX

Maybe you best do that.

CODY

Maybe you best take that walk.

(Rex takes Stick two revolutions up the mountain.)

CODY

And keep right on walkin'. "Whatever." I'll show you whatever.

(Cody marches a quarter turn clockwise and heads into the water upstage right.)

(All the while, Rex stands on the opposite side of the mountain staring out to sea--but keeping Cody in his peripheral vision.)

(Moments later Cody returns with a softball-sized rock, walks back to his place and sits with the rock hidden between his legs.)

(Rex walks back down the mountain, twice around, and stands over Cody with the stick.)

CODY

You back? Way you stormed outta here, I thought you might climb Big Mountain to stay.