

# Cowboy South of Houston

A Ten-Minute Play

By

Stephen Bittrich

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"COWBOY SOUTH OF HOUSTON"

BY STEPHEN BITTRICH

SETTING:

An art gallery in Soho, New York City.

AT RISE:

RAPUNZEL, a Soho artist, stands down left center staring forward blankly into space. JIMMY, a tourist from Texas, enters down left. HE looks forward at an imaginary square four feet in front of him; HE makes a sour face. HE looks to his right, notices RAPUNZEL and slides over beside her--not too close. HE looks at another imaginary square now directly in front of him, steps back, squints his eyes, turns his head sideways, steps forward two steps to get close, and looks at a spot just below the lower right hand corner of this imaginary square. HE looks up, squints his eyes again, looks again below right of the square, steps back and shakes his head.

JIMMY

Damn.

RAPUNZEL

(Without breaking her blank stare)

"Bloody Sneeze."

(HE looks at her in surprise. Then HE turns again to the square, squints--a light bulb comes on in his head--)

JIMMY

(Nodding)

Yep. Yeah. . . damn.

(HE steps back, goes behind her to look at another

imaginary square to her  
right. This square is more  
massive than the previous  
two. It's too big to take in.  
HE steps back, then starts  
his same squinting routine)

RAPUNZEL

"Castration at Dawn."

(JIMMY does a double-take to  
her, then looks again at the  
square. An expression of  
horror slowly seeps over his  
face)

JIMMY

Goddamn.

(Beat)

Makes ya wanna lose yer lunch.

RAPUNZEL

(Pleased)

Yes.

JIMMY

(Looking down right of this  
square)

Twenty-two hundred! Twenty-two hundred! Damn. That's  
some balls, huh?

(HE looks at the square again  
and winces)

RAPUNZEL

Some balls?

JIMMY

(Quickly)

Oh, sorry ma'am, I meant--

RAPUNZEL

I know what you meant.

JIMMY

Twenty-two hundred!

(HE goes back to her square  
and again looks to the lower  
right of it)

Damn! Look at that! Two-thousand! Two-thousand for a  
goddamned bloody sneeze!

RAPUNZEL

It's a farce, really.

JIMMY

You'd have ta be crazy.

(Beat)

I mean--would you--?

RAPUNZEL

No, I wouldn't.

JIMMY

No, ma'am. Damn straight.

(Beat)

It's not like it takes any--ya know, anybody could--

RAPUNZEL

A monkey could do it.

JIMMY

Well, hell, I could do it. All ya gotta do is take a brush, dip it in some paint and--

(HE flicks his wrist at the square)

RAPUNZEL

You think that's paint?

JIMMY

Oh yeah, it's. . . well. . . you don't think that's--

(HE looks up close)

Naaah.

(HE looks down at the lower right corner again)

Bloody Sneeze. Yeah, like it's real blood. Dudn't even look like a bloody sneeze, if ya ask me.

RAPUNZEL

Yeah? What would you call it?

JIMMY

(After a beat; squinting)

"Oooops."

RAPUNZEL

(Coming out of her trance and seriously considering this prospect with some excitement)

"Oooops"! Yeah. Yeah! "Oooops in Red."

(SHE takes out a felt tip pen, squats beside the "painting" and begins to write on the label at the lower right corner. JIMMY looks around the gallery anxiously)

JIMMY

Hey. Now miss--?

RAPUNZEL

Keep an eye out for me. "Oooops in Red." I like it!

(Indicating the price)

What about this?

JIMMY

What?

RAPUNZEL

Two thousand? You wouldn't go that high?

JIMMY

I wouldn't pay two bits for it.

RAPUNZEL

How about one bit?

JIMMY

(Chuckling)

Yeah, okay.

RAPUNZEL

(Writing it in)

One bit.

JIMMY

Lady, you got some nerve.

RAPUNZEL

I know.

(Finished, SHE stands)

There. "Oooops--in Red."

JIMMY

I think you got away with it.

RAPUNZEL

(Moving left)

How about this one?

JIMMY

Now, don't go doin' any more writin'.

RAPUNZEL

What would you call it?

JIMMY

I wouldn't call it anything.

RAPUNZEL

But you know what? You know what you have to do? You have to see it from--they hung it wrong. Completely wrong.

JIMMY

Looks straight to me.

(SHE lies on the floor)

JIMMY (Continued)

You gotta be kiddin' me.

RAPUNZEL

Come down here.

JIMMY

Yeah, right.

RAPUNZEL

I am not lying. They hung it wrong. You have to see it from the floor. There should be signs up or something.

(Semi-seductively)

Come on down here, Cowboy.

JIMMY

Now be serious.

RAPUNZEL

Now don't be a sissy.

JIMMY

A sissy--I ain't.

RAPUNZEL

Well, come on. Please, pretty please. I'll give you a big kiss.

JIMMY

Makes more sense down there, huh?

RAPUNZEL

It's as clear as the universe.

JIMMY

(HE looks around)

Well, all right.

(HE lies down beside her)

This is real stupid.

RAPUNZEL

Give a chance, Partner.

JIMMY

You work here or something?

RAPUNZEL

Concentrate!

(HE concentrates. After a pause--)

JIMMY

Two people humping.

(SHE bursts into hilarious laughter)

JIMMY (cont'd)

Did I get it right?

RAPUNZEL

(Still laughing)

Perfect!

JIMMY

Hell, I kinda like that one.

RAPUNZEL

What's your name, Partner?

JIMMY

Jimmy.

RAPUNZEL

Jimmy? Zel.

JIMMY

Zel?

RAPUNZEL

Z-E-L.

(THEY shake hands from this  
prone position)

JIMMY

Pleased ta meet you.

RAPUNZEL

So, Jimmy, with tongue or without?

JIMMY

What?

RAPUNZEL

That kiss I promised.

JIMMY

(Popping up)

Well, you don't have ta, no, you don't have ta do that.

RAPUNZEL

(Getting up as well)

A promise is a promise.

JIMMY

Zel, really, you don't have to--oh, all right.

(HE takes her off guard as HE  
suddenly kisses her--  
passionately--now with  
reckless abandon for the  
gallery owners or any of the  
patrons. Then just as  
abruptly--HE quits and turns  
his attention back to the  
painting. SHE stands there a  
little stunned)

JIMMY (cont'd)

Yep, a coupla folks humpin'.

RAPUNZEL

"The Beast with Two Backs."



JIMMY

Say what?

RAPUNZEL

That's the real title.

JIMMY

It is?

(HE looks down at the tag at  
the bottom)

RAPUNZEL

But I'm changing it to "Two People Humping."

(Handing him the pen)

Here, go ahead and change it.

JIMMY

I ain't gonna change it.

RAPUNZEL

It's okay. You can. I'm the one who painted it.

JIMMY

You--? You're "Rapunzel?"

RAPUNZEL

Zel for short.

JIMMY

And you painted all--?

(Beat)

Oh, damn. I'm real sorry, miss.

RAPUNZEL

Zel.

JIMMY

Zel. Aw man, I'm real sorry.

(Indicating the "Humping  
Painting")

Zel, I like this one... on the floor.

RAPUNZEL

Now don't be lying, Jimmy. We just got started.

JIMMY

Zel, for real, I think this one's real nice. How much is it?

(Looking--it's too much for  
this Cowboy)

Three thousand.

RAPUNZEL

How much would you pay?

JIMMY

Well, uh, now that I know how to appreciate it better--like a true arteest--

RAPUNZEL

Tell the truth, Jimmy.

JIMMY

I really don't know.

RAPUNZEL

Would you pay two bits?

JIMMY

Oh, yeah, sure--

RAPUNZEL

Sold!

JIMMY

Now, come on--

RAPUNZEL

Two bits.

JIMMY

Zel, this is worth--this is valuable. You could make a lot-- somebody's gonna buy this one, Zel.

RAPUNZEL

Nobody's buying anything, Jimmy. Nobody's buying anything. Nobody's even looking. This show is a complete disaster.

JIMMY

You shoulda got 'em down on the floor.

(SHE doesn't appreciate the  
joke)

JIMMY (Continued)

Zel, I don't know diddle-dee-squat about art, okay? I'm from Texas. I mean, ta me them velvet Elvises you can buy in the K- Mart parkin' lot back home are like Rembrandt's or something.

THE PLAY CONTINUES FOR ONE MORE PAGE.

FOR THE LAST PAGE OF THE PLAY, WHICH YOU CAN READ FOR FREE, EMAIL STEPHEN BITTRICH AT SBITTRICH@AOL.COM