

All About Biffo

A Ten-Minute Play
By
Stephen Bittrich

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"ALL ABOUT BIFFO"

BY STEPHEN BITTRICH

SETTING:

SID and BIFFO's clown trailer at the circus. Two dressing tables are set up in front of the audience with just frames instead of mirrors (we are to imagine the mirrors as the characters apply their make up facing the audience).

AT RISE:

BIFFO is pacing around the trailer trying to get pumped up for the night's performance, maybe doing a few calisthenics.

SID, his older partner, walks slowly in and sits at his dressing table. HE sits gingerly -- moaning softly to himself. It is obvious his rear end is sore and that HE is really upset. BIFFO rolls his eyes, unimpressed by the dramatics. HE tries to lighten the mood.

BIFFO

Good news... I hear there's a big crowd out there tonight.

(pause, no response)

Filled to the rafters. They had to turn some away. Yes, siree. They want it bad out there.

(pause, no response)

You know, I bet a little dab of aloe vera would fix you right up.

SID

Just SHUT UP!

BIFFO

Whoa. Whoa now, Big Fella! Just tryin' to make a little friendly conversation.

SID

We have got twelve minutes! Okay? Can we just get ready?

BIFFO

(jumping around a bit)

I dunno. I dunno. I'm not feeling it yet. I'm waitin' for it to hit me.

SID

Well, when it does hit you, I wanna ringside seat.

(HE begins putting on his
white face in the mirror)

You know, you really drive me crazy. Every night the same thing. You wait 'til the very last minute to finish your make up, come waltzin' out of the trailer seconds before your cue, often *without even powdering*, and I never know for sure if you're even going to show up.

BIFFO

Have I ever missed an entrance cue?

SID

That's not the point. You're not supportive. Every night you leave my butt hangin' out there 'til the very last minute.

BIFFO

(stifling a laugh)

Heh, heh. Crispy fried butt.

SID

And that's another thing! Okay. While we're talking about things... you are out of control! Thirty years I've been in this business, ever since I was old enough to be shot out of a cannon, and not a single accident with the possible exception of the leaky baby pool incident in '92. But that was a freak accident! You, my friend, are reckless. You -- you come fresh outta clown school one month to the day and already there have been five -- count 'em -- five accidents, all of them involving me. Not the least of which was second degree burns on my back side!

BIFFO

Oh please, first degree. If that. And you gotta admit it was funny. Did you see that little freckled girl in the front row with the gap between her teeth? She nearly laughed herself outta her seat. Man, I love that!

(BIFFO sits and continues his
make up)

SID

Oh yeah, sure, sure, laugh it up. It was your job to run up with the spritzer bottle and put the fire out before it burns through the padding. I rely on you.

BIFFO

Hey, I grabbed the first thing I could find. After all, you were on fire. Coulda happened to anybody.

SID

Maybe it could've happened to anybody, but had to happen to you! Okay, you couldn't find the spritzer bottle... fine! So you improvise. You couldn't've grabbed the fire extinguisher? You couldn't've grabbed the whipped cream pie? No, you had to grab a jug of moonshine and splash it generously on my blazing backside. Where did you even find a jug of moonshine!?

BIFFO

Honest mistake. I thought it was like fake moonshine. And the audience loved it.

SID

What I want to know is how highly flammable moonshine even got out there in the first place?!

BIFFO

Sure you didn't leave it out there? You do like to hit the sauce.

SID

I enjoy an occasional cocktail, sure. But I do not drink on the job, nor do I drink moonshine. And I never would have made such an amateurish mistake.

(THEY turn away from each other, continuing to put on make up)

BIFFO

Could it be, uh, I dunno, could it be you're just feeling threatened because you're not the headline clown anymore?

SID

Look, Junior, I'm at the peak of my career. You've been stepping on all my gags... taking pies meant for me... don't think I haven't noticed the shameless scene stealing!

BIFFO

Hey, just because you're step slower than you used to be, it's not my fault. We shouldn't make the audience suffer because your timing is off.

SID

Kiss my butt! Who died and appointed you clown prince?

BIFFO

(after a beat)

Jealous relic.

SID

Amateur.

BIFFO

Fossil.

SID
Anarchist!

BIFFO
Serious.

SID
(deadly)
Don't call me serious.

BIFFO
Humourless. Solemn. Grave. Grim Reaper...
(beat)
... *serious*.

SID
YOU LITTLE TWIT! DON'T CALL ME SERIOUS!!

(In an apoplectic rage SID
pulls on a clown wig at the
end of the line)

BIFFO
I just don't think you have it anymore. No offense, I mean, God knows you had your day. You were funny. And you still appeal to the geriatric crowd. I remember, I mean, you used to break me up when I was, you know, like five, but lately you know--

SID
I--I--I tried to befriend you. I was the one got you into clown school after that long fan letter you wrote me.

BIFFO
Oh, so what am I supposed ta do? Kneel down and kiss your size fifteen shoes for the rest of my career?

SID
Just a tiny bit of gratitude would be nice.

BIFFO
Look, I thanked you plenty of times, Sid. Thanks! Thank you. I can't thank you anymore. Life goes on.

SID
And I got you this job in this circus! I did that because I thought you were a talented clown. Not some cut up, not some showboat -- but a team clown.

BIFFO

Well, I appreciate the hand up. But times they are a-changing, my friend. And if you can't keep up, maybe you should think about retiring.

SID

(choking)

Retire--!?

BIFFO

Look if you wanna outstay your freshness date--

SID

My family's been in this circus for four generations. My father's father's father, Doinkie the Great, originated the first clown through the plate glass window bit. He was a pioneer!

BIFFO

Look, Old Timer, you have your place in clown history. I'll give you that. When they, ya know, build a Clown Hall of Fame, yada, yada, yada -- your family has like a, a display case in there for sure, but if you wanna know the grim reality, the word around the tent today is: "Sid's not as funny as he used to be. He's lost a step."

SID

Who says that!?

BIFFO

I'm not gonna name names. But I mean, look at facts, they've cut your solo act down to two minutes. You used to do, what, fifteen? For God's sake, you follow the lions when everybody's takin' a pee and popcorn break. Your only moment of glory is when you do the butt-on-fire bit with me. When you think about it, I am the one keeping you in this circus. Maybe you oughtta be thankin' ME!

SID

Don't think I don't know what you're doing.

(sputtering)

Sucking up to the bearded lady. Showering her with bonbons. Just because she's the wife of the ringmaster.

BIFFO

It's a dog eat dog world out there, my friend. Kids are being churned out of clown school by the bus loads. Only the strong survive. You gotta be edgy. You gotta be radical. You should be takin' refresher courses, man.

Gettin' published in "Gags Monthly." Publish or perish!
Your stuff is stale -- the clown through the plate glass
window -- ha! Clown in a cage -- the chocolate pudding
clown -- the marriage and divorce clown. Booooooring.

SID

Says you--!

BIFFO

Now I've got some ideas! And I'm going to get them out
there one way or the other. The exploding clown! Yeah!
projectile vomit clown! The drawn and quartered clown!
Now yer talkin'!

SID

You sick freak. Just stay outta my way tonight. That's
all I got to say.

BIFFO

Sure thing, pops.

(BIFFO tosses a banana peel on
the floor as SID is turned)

SID

I saw that.

BIFFO

Gooooood. Just seein' if yer payin' attention. Keep ya on
yer toes!

SID

A banana peel in a trailer? Really? That's not funny!
Out in the ring with proper rehearsal, that's funny, a
classic bit, but in a trailer that's just dangerous!
Somebody could break a hip!

BIFFO

You're right, you're right, Sid. I'm sorry. Come on.
Truce.

(BIFFO sticks out his hand)

SID

Are you serious? You wanna shake my hand after you tried
to put a, a, a banana--

BIFFO

Are you refusing? I wanna shake. Let's make up. I'm sorry.

(THEY shake. BIFFO gets him with the ole buzzer in the hand trick. SID's body writhes with the shock)

SID

Son of a -- you conniving little --

BIFFO

Ha, ha! You're not thinking, Old School. You're so slow you didn't even see that trick from the classic playbook comin'!

SID

That wasn't a classic hand buzzer. That hurt.

BIFFO

Don't be such a baby. So I tweaked it a bit and added a few volts.

SID

You are a -- you're a dead clown. That's what you are. I'm gonna get you tonight.

BIFFO

Bring it, friend. Let's see whatcha got. Keep it real. Mix things up. And speaking of mixing things up, you could mix up your make up.

SID

There's nothing wrong with my make up.

(SID actually looks scary. HE should have some fluorescent green in his facial make up - - fake piercings all over his face -- a Mohawk wig)

BIFFO

White and red and a little black. White, red, little black. Same old, same old, same old. What are you -- Ronald McDonald? Come on, man, people wanna see like wild things, I mean, look at my wig -- multi-hued bursts of color, spiky sharp, you know how the lights look on that,

man? Spectacular! And the earrings -- all these little piercings I have. This is tremendous!

SID

You scare the kids.

BIFFO

They wanna be scared.

SID

Clowns aren't scary.

BIFFO

Are you serious? Get with the times. These kids can't sit still. They're hooked on the sugar, man. They all have **ADD** -- need quick cuts and 3D-in-your-face. Pow! Me, I'm an original... blazing new ground.

SID

That looks like my nose in your box.

BIFFO

And you're losing your eyesight, too, old man.

SID

Let me see that nose.

BIFFO

This nose?

SID

Yeah, let me see it.

BIFFO

You mean the nose that my granny got me upon graduation from Clown Academy?

SID

Granny, my butt.

THE PLAY CONTINUES FOR ONE MORE PAGE.

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