

CATTLE RUSTLERS – a comedy sketch

[A harmonica. Crackling campfire.]

COLE, AMOS and EZRA are sitting or hunched around a fire, eating. JED wanders around the stage, searching for something.

COLE: This is daggum perfect. Horses hitched up yonder, campfire crackling, beans in mah tin. Ain't it jus' the life Amos?

AMOS: It sure is some type of good, Cole. Like fresh cornbread, or a dusty sunset.

JED: Seriously? *Nobody* has a tent? You guys just sleep *outside*?

EZRA jerks his thumb towards JED

EZRA: Count muh saddle sores! I ain't never seen such a tendsome slicker in all muh days.

The three laugh. JED looks unhappy.

JED: It *sounds* like he's making fun of me... But a tent isn't anything special or fancy you guys. It's just a place to sleep when you're out-of-doors.

COLE: When you said ya wanted to learn more about the cattle rustling game, I telled ya no. Ya was sittin' plum pretty countin' beans with them bankin' mucky-mucks. We ain't got nuthin' out here!

JED: In the past year and a half you've robbed three trains, a stagecoach, and made off with over a hundred head of cattle. By my calculations that's over... 14,000 dollars you made.

[pause]

Surely you guys can afford a tent.

EZRA: Gummy! That fella sure is a persnickety corncob. Allbisselfa!

COLE: Easy now Ezra! He's just tryna help. Aren't ya?

JED: Yeah. Tryna help myself get a decent night's sleep.

AMOS: Y'know... bankin' suits yer constitution. All that indoor brain thinkin' and numberatin'. Real civilized like.

COLE: I a-told him that! But he was bellyachin' 'bout how he wanted to see the outlaw life!

JED: Well you all painted quite a glamorous picture of the life out here! Glamorous, and entirely inaccurate, I might add. There isn't even an outhouse to do my business in!

COLE: A poop in nature is one of life's singular pleasures, Jed.

JED shudders.

Wolf howls. Jed screams. All laugh.

JED: Anyone know the statistics on wolf attacks in this area?

COLE: Now, don't get all het up! You was the one fixin' to bond with your kin.

JED: Yes, but I pictured you taking me cattle rustling one weekend. I was NOT expecting to be kidnapped!

COLE: Kidnapped!?

AMOS: Whu-?

EZRA: Jumpbark floop the watering hole, camping's a purdy taffball.

JED (Off EZRA's nonsense): Aaarggh! (To the others) Yeah! Kidnapped! I haven't seen you in almost a year, and then you come into MY bank, steal a shipment of gold nuggets, pistol-whip me, and march me out here at gunpoint!

AMOS: We done tricked ya good!

COLE/EZRA: Suuurprise! (EZRA: -dinglydoo!)

JED: Surprise?! A "surprise" is getting a slice of poundcake ya wasn't expecting. Getting pistol whipped and dragged out to a tentless desert isn't a "surprise"! It's... pardon my crassness, complete bullcrap!

COLE: But ya weren't expecting it.. We got ya good!

AMOS: Kidnapping is such a "city" term. We was thinking it was more like a 'liberation'.

EZRA: Bungwater hellbow sheekicking ford paint! Hyuh hyuh! YUP!

JED: There is zero sense in what he says. Those aren't even words! That's it, I'm going back to the city. I think it's thatta way!

AMOS pulls a gun.

AMOS: Cattle rustling, horse thieving and stagecoach diggling is a life without worry. You best sit back and enjoy it.

JED: Rattlesnakes, exposure, shootouts, syphilis.. the list of worries is never-ending.

COLE physically stands in JED's way.

COLE: You can't go back now. You seen our faces.

That's it for JED. Over the next speech he gradually slips deeper into COWBOY ATTITUDE.

JED: Are you kidding me? We're related. You send me postcards from your hideouts! I've known AMOS here since he was the lazy son of a crippled farmhand. I was there when old EZRA done got kicked in the head by that mule, and he ain't spoke one damn word that made a licka sense since!

You knuckleheaded sheep-for-brains wanted to make a life on the wrong side of the law, and I abided it. Made no odds to me. Even when you went kidnappin' on my person, I ain't said nuthin'. But draggin' me out to this gawd-forsaken wasteland and callin' it some manbonding nonsense that was the dang durn gummy blastin dusty-bummed waysided last straw.

EZRA: Plookrinkle the shumbandits, stapplehoop?

JED: Quit yer kooky yammerin'! Listen: I ain't takin it no more. I am madder than a wet hen. Ya wanna shoot me, y'all can go head, but I ain't going down without no fight!

JED puts up his fists.

JED (CONT.): Alright. Good. Now gimme your gun. (AMOS does)

JED (CONT.): We wanna get serious about the outlaw life you're gonna need some brains! So, I'm the leader now. Anyone got a problem with that? Didn't think so. (*Sotto voce* Wow, this was easy!)

COLE/AMOS: Alright, easy now!

JED: Now! Let's go get ourselves some cappucinos!

EZRA Well, whimdang my hoplog!

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