



"F R E A K S"

Written by

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Based on the short story "Spurs" by
Tod Robbins

The main title of the film is a paper sign, which is torn away by a circus sideshow barker.

BARKER:

We didn't lie to you, folks. We told you we had living, breathing, monstrosities. You'll laugh at them, shudder at them, and yet, but for the accident of birth, you might be even as they are.

The camera reveals an attentive group of patrons standing. On the wall is a sign: "Sword Swallower," and in the background we glimpse some indistinct figures seated, as if on display.

BARKER:

They did not ask to be brought into the world, but into the world they came. Their code is a law unto themselves. Offend one, and you offend them all.

(He leads the crowd to a fenced pit, whose contents are hidden from the camera.)

And now, folks, if you'll just step this way, you are about to witness the most amazing, the most astounding, living monstrosity of all time.

(a woman screams.)

Friends, she was once a beautiful woman. A royal prince shot himself for love of her. She was known as the peacock of the air...

Flashback to a beautiful woman performing on a trapeze. On the ground a pair of little people, male and female, dressed in formal attire, watch from behind a curtain. The female midget, Frieda, says something in German to her companion, Hans.

HANS:

She's the most beautiful big woman I have ever seen.

FRIEDA:

Why, Hans, how you talk! I should be jealous pretty soon.

HANS:

Ah, don't be silly.

FRIEDA:

Don't be silly? I think this woman's making eyes at my Hans. Of course, I ain't jealous.

HANS:

Oh, Frieda, my dear, I have eyes for only one woman--the woman I ask to be my wife.

A shot of the aerialist performing.

A shot of the strongman wrestling a bull.

A costumed performer holding a pony's reigns calls to Frieda. She walks over to him and they converse in German. The aerialist comes behind the curtain near Hans. She is twice as tall as Hans. She notices him eyeing her and pretends to accidentally drop her cape, which Hans retrieves. Frieda watches. When he lifts the cape for her, the aerialist turns her back to him, smiles, and waits for him to drape it on her shoulders.

HANS:

Are you laughing at me?

AERIALIST:

Why no, monsieur.

HANS:

Then I'm glad.

AERIALIST:

Why should I laugh at you?

HANS:

Most big people do. They don't realize I'm a man, with the same feelings they have.

The aerialist kneels to allow Hans to place the cloak on her shoulders. When he does, she grabs his hands and pulls him so his cheek is next to hers.

AERIALIST:

Thank you. You are so kind, monsieur.

Frieda watches with annoyance. The aerialist walks over to Frieda, who is sitting side-saddle on her pony, and touches her ruffled dress.

AERIALIST:

Nice, nice.

FRIEDA:
 (waving her away))
 Don't, don't.
 (She motions her
 assistant to lead
 the pony away.)

AERIALIST:
 (to Hans)
 You must come to see me sometime,
 and we'll have a little wine together.
 (She pinches his cheek.
 He thanks her. He is
 clearly smitten.)

SCENE: A WOODED ESTATE ON THE FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE

Two men are walking down a path. One, Jon, is employed by the other, Dubois, owner of the estate. We hear them speaking excitedly before we see them.

DUBOIS:
 ...only your imagination.

JON:
 But Monsieur Dubois, at first, I
 could not believe my own eyes. A lot
 of horrible, twisted things crawling,
 whining, globbering.

DUBOIS:
 Really, Jon, what were you drinking
 last night?

JON:
 Nothing, monsieur, I assure you.
 (we see what appears
 to be a family group
 in the distance.)
 Oh, monsieur, there must be a law in
 France to smother such things at
 birth, or lock them up.

DUBOIS:
 All right, Jon, if there's anything
 like you say on my grounds we'll
 have it removed.

They suddenly freeze and stare at what is ahead. A group of circus "freaks" are singing and dancing in a circle, while one lies on the ground playing a harmonica. There are four "pinheads," a "half-boy," a "human skeleton," a "human worm," and a dwarf. When they see the two men approach, they run to their mistress, a normal woman, for protection, as Jon yells at them.

JON:

Go away all of you! Don't you know
tresspassing's the same as stealing.

THE WOMAN:

Oh, I'm sorry, monsieur. I am Madame
Tetrallini. These are children of my
circus.

JON:

Children! Monsters!

DUBOIS:

Oh, you're a circus. I understand.

MME. TETRALLINI:

So you see, monsieur, when I have a
chance I like to take them into the
sunshine and let them play like
children. That is what most of them
are--children.

DUBOIS:

Children...children. Please forget
the mistake, madame. You are welcome
to remain. Au revoir. Come, Jon.

MME. TETRALLINI:

Thanks a thousand, monsieur.

(the freaks continue
to huddle around her
as the men leave.)

Oh, shame, shame, shame. How many
times have I told you not to be
frightened. Have I not told you God
looks after all his children?

SCENE: THE CIRCUS BACKLOT

Mme. Tetrallini returns with her charges. As she passes,
some acrobats greet her with mock politeness.

FIRST ACROBAT:

(after she passes)

There she goes taking them off to
exercise. Nurse to a lot of mangy
freaks.

The acrobats see the "half woman - half man" approaching
from the other side. His/her gender separation is sharply
drawn vertically down the center of his/her body.

SECOND ACROBAT:
(imitating the barker's
pitch)

Ah ha! Just as they are represented
on the banners, you will meet them
on the inside--living, breathing
monstrosities: Josephine-Joseph,
half woman, half man.

FIRST ACROBAT:
Have a cigar, Joseph?

SECOND ACROBAT:
You dropped your lipstick, Josephine.

FIRST ACROBAT:
Don't get her sore or he'll punch
you in the nose.

Josephine-Joseph ignores them.

A woman is ushering some trained seals into their cage.

VOICE OFF CAMERA:
You're all wrong. I didn't d-d-do
it.

STRONGMAN:
What are you trying to do, be funny?

The strongman and Roscoe, a female impersonator, enter. Roscoe
is in drag.

ROSCOE:
(removing his wig)
Ah, you just d-don't understand.

STRONGMAN:
A Roman lady getting off the bull
and scratching yourself!

ROSCOE:
Well, c-can't a Roman lady itch?

STRONGMAN:
(helping Roscoe out
of his dress)
Why don't you take a bath.

ROSCOE:
I did, but it's the bull that needs
the b-b-bath.

Josephine-Joseph walks by and "Josephine" turns and looks
back at the strongman admiringly.

ROSCOE:

I think she likes you...but he d-
don't.

Strongman laughs.

SCENE: AT THE CURTAIN

Having completed her act, Cleopatra, the aerialist, enters from the other side of the curtain, and walks to where Hans waits for her.

CLEOPATRA:

Oh Hans, those flowers you sent to
me--they were beautiful!

HANS:

But none as beautiful as you.

CLEOPATRA:

Oh, thank you.

(She kneels.)

And Hans, I don't like to ask, but
may I have the loan of another
thousand franks until my money from
Paris arrives?

HANS:

With pleasure, fraeulein.

CLEOPATRA:

Thank you.

(She kisses him on
the cheek.)

HANS:

I'll bring it to your wagon tonight.

SCENE: INSIDE A CIRCUS WAGON

The strongman stands by in his costume, shorts and a studded vest, while a pretty young woman angrily gathers her belongings.

STRONGMAN:

Oh forget it, forget it. Maybe I was
just fooling.

GIRL:

Fooling? Fooling, huh? "Come little
girl, I want to take care of you."
Oh, and I fell for that!

STRONGMAN:
Ah forget it, forget it.
(watching her)
So you're quitting? Is that it?

GIRL:
Maybe I'm only fooling.

STRONGMAN:
Well you're not quitting me, 'cause
I'm kicking you out!

GIRL:
Oh?

STRONGMAN:
Oh no you don't.
(He grabs an atomizer
from her hand.)
I gave you this.

GIRL:
Why you cheap...! Oh!
(She storms past him.)

STRONGMAN:
And don't you come around crying
tonight, trying to get back in. I'm
through wasting my time and money on
dames like you.

GIRL:
(turning to face him
from the doorway)
Yeah, you're time, but my money!
(She turns and leaves.)

STRONGMAN:
(to himself))
Ungrateful little tramp.
(He sprays his bare
chest with perfume
and smiles with self-
approval.)

The girl, Venus, is an animal trainer. Carrying her belongings outside, she storms past a clown who is removing his makeup, stops and turns to face him.

VENUS:

Well, what are you staring at?

(She walks back to
him.)

Didn't you ever see a lady move
before?

(He takes off his
false nose.)

I guess you been listening to every
word he said. That's it. That's it,
go ahead and laugh. It's funny ain't
it.

(He just stares at
her.)

Yeah. Women are funny, ain't they.

(He removes his bald
top.)

They're all tramps, ain't they. Yeah.
Except when you can get money from
them.

The clown spreads cold cream on his face as Venus goes into
her trailer. Suddenly, he turns and, grabbing a towel, runs
to her trailer.

CLOWN:

Well, I'll be...Say, who do you think
you are, shooting off your hat.

(He goes inside. The
walls of the wagon
are decorated with
trinkets and glamour
photos.)

Hey, this is Phroso--Phroso you're
talking to! Not any of those lugs
you been chasing around with. Now
you listen to me--

VENUS:

Oh, I didn't mean you. I had to take
it out on somebody.

PHROSO:

Yeah, you dames is all alike. You
sharp shoot your cheeks, and how you
squeal when you get what's coming to
you.

(She sits down and
starts to cry.)

Aw, easy. Take it easy. Cut it!

VENUS:

It's my own fault. What gets me so
cockeyed sore at myself is that I
fell for that big bunch of beef.

PHROSO:

So you finally got wise to yourself,
did you?

(He wipes his face
and hands.)

Funny thing about you women, most of
you don't get wise soon enough. You
wait until you're so old nobody wants
you.

VENUS:

Nobody does most of the time.

PHROSO:

Yeah, you ought to be tickled to
death you're washed up with him.
You're not so hard to look at. Give
yourself a couple. You'll make the
grade. Your break is coming.

VENUS:

Coming! Gone, you mean.

PHROSO:

Oh, now your gonna sit there feeling
sorry for yourself.

VENUS:

Oh, no I ain't.

(She stands.)

Don't you ever accuse me of that!

PHROSO:

All right! All right!...But one thing.
Don't go around filling your hide
with a lot of booze, celebrating,
'cause fun what's got that way never
done no one no good. Get me?

VENUS:

I got you...Say you're a pretty good
kid.

PHROSO:

You're darn right I am. You should've
caught me before my operation.

He goes outside. A pair of female Siamese twins, who are
joined at the hip, comes walking by. They say hello to Phroso.

PHROSO:

Well, well, well! Tomorrow night's
the big night, hey ladies?

VIOLET:
Yes, my sister's getting married.

DAISY:
(sarcastically)
And I'm thrilled to death.

VIOLET:
She thrills at anything.

PHROSO:
Oh, Roscoe's a good kid.

DAISY:
She's only joking. She'll like him
lots after she knows him better.

PHROSO:
Oh, that reminds me. Close your eyes,
Violet. Go ahead, close them.
(She does, and he
touches Daisy's
shoulder.)
What did I do?

VIOLET:
You pinched Daisy's arm.

Roscoe is nearby, watching.

PHROSO:
Well, what do you know about that!

ROSCOE:
Oh, D-Daisy.

VIOLET:
Her master's voice is calling.
(they go over to
Roscoe.)

ROSCOE:
(to Daisy)
Getting fresh, ay? Well, I don't
like it one b-b-b-

VIOLET:
Well, come on. Come on. You'll have
to hurry. We haven't much time.

ROSCOE:
(to Daisy)
So you were flirting with that cheap
clown, were you?

DAISY:
No, I wasn't.

VIOLET:
All he was doing was a trick with me.

ROSCOE:
You shut up. I'm m-marrying your sister, n-not you.
(to Daisy)
I saw him getting familiar with you.

VIOLET:
Oh come on, Daisy.

ROSCOE:
Oh no you d-don't. She's gonna stay right here!

VIOLET:
No she isn't! I gotta go.
(they leave.)

ROSCOE:
Oh, phooey! You're always using that for an excu- for an excu- for an ali-b-b-bi.

SCENE: EXTERIOR, LATER

Hercules, the strongman, walks across the circus backlot, singing. He is in his street clothes. He hears a tapping sound and turns to see. Cleopatra leans out of her trailer window.

CLEOPATRA:
(seductively)
Where are you going?
(He walks over to the window, smiling broadly.)
Well, you don't look around me so much.

HERCULES:
Oh yes, I have seen you.

CLEOPATRA:

So that's how it is. You got to be coy. Well?

(as he leans up to kiss her, she withdraws. He goes to the door.)

Ah! Come on in.

(She puts on a flowery robe over her black slip. Cleopatra's trailer is larger than the others. The woodwork is elaborately carved.)

Help yourself to a drink.

HERCULES:

Ah! That is fine.

(He pours a drink.)

CLEOPATRA:

Do you like eating something?

HERCULES:

Always.

(He hands her a glass. They toast and drink.)

CLEOPATRA:

(holding up an egg)

How many?

HERCULES:

Oh, I'm not very hungry--about six.

She cracks it and puts it into a pan. Then she faces him, and strikes a suggestive pose, as her robe falls open.

CLEOPATRA:

How do you like them?

HERCULES:

Not bad.

(suddenly, he grabs her roughly.)

CLEOPATRA:

(laughing)

Oh, but you are strong! You're squeezing me to death.

HERCULES:
And you like it.

CLEOPATRA:
Oh! You're taking my breath away!

They kiss. Josephine-Joseph is watching at the doorway. When Cleopatra sees her/him, her smile drops immediately. Hercules shouts and runs out after her/him. Josephine-Joseph is leaning against the wagon. Josephine powders her nose.

HERCULES:
Now here's something for your eye!
(He punches Joseph.
Cleopatra laughs.)

SCENE: EXTERIOR
Hans and Frieda are sitting at a table alongside a trailer.

FRIEDA:
But Hans, mein lieblich, you have not been listening to a word I have been saying.
(She taps his arm.)
Hans!

HANS:
Yes, Frieda.

FRIEDA:
You have not been listening to me.

HANS:
Yes I have, Frieda, I have.

FRIEDA:
Then what was I saying?

HANS:
You were saying-- You were saying--
What were you saying?

FRIEDA:
I was saying tonight you must not smoke such a big cigar. Your voice was very bad in tonight's show.

HANS:
Please, Frieda, don't tell me what to do! When I want a cigar, I smoke a cigar! I want no orders from a woman!

FRIEDA:

Ah, Hans, this is the first time since we have been engaged you have spoken to me so. Why is it?

HANS:

(touching her arm)

Oh, Frijy, I'm sorry. I-- Ah, here's our coffee.

A fat woman, comes and places two cups before them. Her manner is as if she were serving two little children.

HANS:

Five lumps of sugar in each.

SCENE: IN CLEOPATRA'S WAGON

Cleo is in her robe, peeling a potato. Hercules, in street clothes, is eating an apple and looking over a basket of fruit.

HERCULES:

Say, the little imp spent some francs on this.

CLEO:

Yes, he did, very. We're doing very well.

(He sits and eats an apple. She walks over to him.)

But I don't like fruit.

HERCULES:

You should eat a lot. It's good for you.

CLEO:

Next time I tell him I like champagne.

(a knock on the door.)

Who is it?

HANS:

Hans.

CLEO:

(She smiles, motions to Hercules to be quiet, and goes to the window.)

Who?

HANS:

Hans.

CLEO:

Oh, my darling, your basket of fruit
was lovely. But I am--uh--
(She winks at Hercules.)
I'm taking a nap. Can't you come
back later?

HANS:

Yes, fraeulein.

CLEO:

Oh, thank you, dear.
(Cleo and Hercules
laugh silently.)
Shhh, you'll spoil everything if he
hears you.

Hercules falls back on the bed, laughing. She kneels beside
him and they embrace and kiss.

SCENE: EXTERIOR

Venus sits on the steps of a wagon, sewing. Frieda is hanging
clothes on a clothesline.

VENUS:

What's the matter? You ain't singing
as usual.

FRIEDA:

Oh, this morning I have such a big
washing to do.

VENUS:

How's Hans?
(no answer.)
I said--uh--how's Hans?

FRIEDA:

Oh, Hans is fine. Thank you, he's
fine.

VENUS:

Frieda, something's wrong. What is
it?

FRIEDA:

Oh, nothing...
(She walks over to
Venus)
...only--well--that Cleopatra woman--
my Hans--oh, I cannot tell you.

VENUS:

She's still after Hans, ain't she.

FRIEDA:

Yeah. Always she's smiling by him.

VENUS:

Yeah, well if she smiles by somebody I know, she'll have to buy herself a new set of teeth.

FRIEDA:

But why is it we women always have got to worry?

VENUS:

Oh, it's always been that way. I guess it always will be.

FRIEDA:

Yeah. And by me she has no shame. Always when I can hear it, she says to him, "Many thanks, my darling, for the flowers. Thanks, my darling, for this," and "Thanks, my darling, for that." Always something he is give her.

VENUS:

Oh, don't you worry, Frieda, he doesn't love her--that big horse.

FRIEDA:

Yes, but she keeps after him. That's why I worry.

(She goes back to her wash.)

SCENE: UNDER THE TENT

Hans stands gazing admiringly at Cleopatra, who sits in the bleachers. Hercules and the two acrobats are playing cards. They are intent on goading Hans.

ACROBAT:

(to Hercules)

Why not pink tights, you know, with spangles all around. It'll show her figure off more.

HERCULES:

No. Nein. No tights, without tights. You know that stuff--they're flimsy--what you call that stuff? We'll see her through it.

ACROBAT:
Why not like Lady Godiva?

HERCULES:
Yeah, that's it, we'll have her ride
the feathered white horse.
(They laugh.)

HANS:
(losing control)
What have you in your sawdust heads!
(Cleopatra suddenly moans. Hans rushes
over.) What's the matter! What's the
matter!

CLEOPATRA:
Oh, I think I sprained my shoulder
last night. Give a rub, will you?
(She pushes her blouse
off her shoulder and
Hans rubs her back.
She and the men smirk
at each other.)
Further, further, down, down, over,
over. Oh, it's so good to be rubbed.

THE MEN:
(extending cards, in
unison)
Our card, lady.

CLEOPATRA:
What for?

THE MEN:
A fellow rubber from Berlin.

Hans angrily shouts at them in German. They laugh.

SCENE: EXTERIOR

PHROSO:
(about to get into
costume)
That reminds me, I had a swell dream
about you last night.

VENUS:
(interested)
Oh, you did?

PHROSO:

Yeah. You were standing in a bathing suit on a rock, you know, like a statue, and the wind was blowing through your hair, and the waves were washing around you, and your figure--how it stood out. It looked great. Say, you have got a good figure.

VENUS:

Oh, do you think so?

PHROSO:

Sure...

JOHNNY:

(From off camera)

Hey Phroso! (Johnny is the half-boy. He is a handsome, charming young man who has no body below his waist. He enters walking with his arms.) Did you try that gag I told you about?

PHROSO:

Yeah, I did, and it was a wow. Get up here, Johnny and I'll show it to you.

(Johnny climbs the trailer steps as Phroso goes off camera.)

I did everything you told me and it laid 'em right in the sawdust. Watch this. Venus, watch this.

JOHNNY:

Hello, Venus.

VENUS:

Hello, Johnny. Say, Phroso, what else did you dream?

PHROSO:

Then the dream changed and we was in Paris.

VENUS:

Paris!

PHROSO:

Yeah, at the opera, right in the front box. We were all dressed up.

VENUS:

Oh gee, what 'd I have on?

PHROSO:

And did I look swell. Everybody was pointing at me. They were saying, "That's Phroso, the clown." And was I embarrassed.

(Phroso is now in an oversized clown tuxedo.)

VENUS:

Well, did they say anything about me?

PHROSO:

(coming back out) Sure, sure.

VENUS:

What 'd they say?

PHROSO:

Hit me.

(He hands her an oversized mallet.)

Go ahead, hit me.

(Venus' smile has dropped.)

On the head.

(She takes the mallet and hits him over the head. His head disappears into his collar. He flails about, shrieking. Then his head pops out again.)

Oh, that's how it is. You don't think it's funny? It's sad, is it? Well, it was just panicking 'em--that's how sad it is.

OFF CAMERA:

Phroso! Phroso!

(one of the pinheads runs up to Phroso and whispers in his ear.)

PHROSO:

No! When?

(He and the pinhead
run off. He calls
back to Johnny and
Venus.)

Come on! Come on, Venus, the bearded
lady's baby's born!

Inside a wagon several freaks are gathered around the bearded lady, who lies in bed. Johnny comes in and balances himself on one hand on the bedpost. An armless girl lifts the cover with her foot to show the baby.

PHROSO:

Oh, ain't it beautiful! What is it?

ARMLESS GIRL:

A girl.

PHROSO:

Oh boy, that's great--and it's gonna
have a beard.

SCENE: EXTERIOR

The human skeleton (an impossibly skinny man) brings a box of cigars over to the men playing cards.

ACROBAT:

Ah, how's the proud father?

SKELETON:

Fine.

ACROBAT:

What was it?

SKELETON:

Girl.

ACROBAT:

Better luck next time. You might get
a couple of Smith Brothers.

SKELETON:

I'm trying.

(laughter, the skeleton
walks over to a couple
of dwarfs sitting
nearby.)

SCENE: INTERIOR

The Siamese twins are making their bed.

DAISY:
Please, Violet, please don't quarrel
with him any more.

VIOLET:
Oh well, if he's going to say
anything, let him say it. Don't let
him "p-p-p" for an hour.
(Roscoe enters, hearing
the last remark.)

ROSCOE:
Say, you're going to do as I say.
I'm the b-b-boss of my home.

VIOLET:
Half of it, you mean.

DAISY:
Please, please, Violet.

ROSCOE:
(putting on a tie)
Listen here, I d-don't want those
tramps you g-go with hanging around
my wife.

VIOLET:
Oh, be quiet! Hook up our dress.

ROSCOE:
(as he does so)
Oh, your d-dress. I'll hook it up
and something else. And another thing,
you gotta cut out getting d-drunk
every night, too.

VIOLET:
Is that so?

ROSCOE:
Yeah. I'm not gonna have my wife
laying in b-bed half a day with your
hangover.

VIOLET:
Come on, Daisy, let's get out of
here.

ROSCOE:
Oh no she d-don't. She's gonna stay
right here.

VIOLET:
Come on, I gotta go.
(they exit.)

ROSCOE:
Ah, phooey! You're always using that
for an excu- excu- for an alib-b-bi.

SCENE: INTERIOR

A dwarf is humming as he pours two drinks. His name is Angelino. The armless girl, Frances, sits nearby.

FRANCES:
Cleopatra ain't one of us. Why, we're
just filthy things to her. She'd
spit on Hans if he wasn't giving her
presents.

ANGELINO:
Let her try it. Let her try doing
anything to one of us.

FRANCES:
You're right. She don't know us. But
she'll find out.

ANGELINO:
There you are.
(He places a drink
between her toes. He
toasts and they drink.)

[The midgets, Frieda and Hans, are proportionally small, including their heads and faces, so they resemble children. Only the age lines in their faces, seen close up, reveal their age. The dwarfs, on the other hand, have almost normal sized heads and bodies, with very short limbs.]

SCENE: EXTERIOR

The "human worm" lies on a ledge as Rollo, the acrobat, brags about his act. The human worm (a.k.a. the "living torso") is a black man with no arms or legs. He is bald and wears loop earrings. While Rollo talks, the worm opens a matchbox, takes out a match, lights it, lights a cigarette and smokes--all done by manipulation with his lips and teeth.

ROLLO:

I kinda peeked out the corner of my eye and caught Mme. Tetrallini giving us the once over. I guess she knows she's got a good act--one of the best in the business. It isn't only our act that gets them. We've got personality. We know how to sell the stuff. Same way in the last town. Never heard such applause in your life. Let me tell you something that everybody around here don't know. We're only killing time with this circus. We've got bigger time to follow. And we can do it too. Well, catch our act tomorrow night. We've got something new.

WORM:

(calling after him as
Rollo leaves)
Anything I can do in the act, bro?

SCENE: EXTERIOR

Phroso is washing up as a pinhead approaches and taps him.

PHROSO:

Oh, Schlitzey, what a pretty dress.
Oh, how beautiful you look tonight.
(Venus, in a spangled
costume, watches
from the sidelines.)
You're just a man's woman. You know
what I mean? Huh? You.
(Schlitzey is
delighted.)
If you're a good girl, when I get to
Paris I'm gonna buy you a big hat,
with a long beautiful feather on it.
(two more pinheads
enter, arm-in-arm,
and greet Phroso.)
Oh, hello, Elvira. Hello, Jenny-Lee.
Hasn't Schlitzey got a beautiful
dress? Isn't that pretty?

[The pinheads are small women with heads that come to a point at the top. They are bald except for a tuft of hair at the top with a bow on it. Their faces are comically homely, and they are mentally retarded. They are cheerful, affectionate creatures.]

PHROSO:

(to Jenny-Lee)

When I get to Paris I'm gonna buy
her a big hat with a long feather on
it. And if you're a good girl, when
I get to Paris I'm gonna buy you a
hat with a bigger feather on it.

(Schlitzey says

something

unintelligible, as

if scolding Phroso.)

Why, Schlitzey, what's the matter?

(She comes over and

slaps him playfully

on the chest.)

Oh, I'm sorry, Schlitzey.

(She finishes scolding

him and leaves. Venus

climbs the steps to

her trailer.)

SCENE: EXTERIOR

Frances, the armless girl, and Molina, a pinhead, are seated
at a table, eating. Molina is older than the other pinheads.
She also differs from them in that she has hair on her head,
a long nose, a somewhat higher I.Q., and a sober demeanor.

MOLINA:

Did you see him? He's out there again
tonight.

FRANCES:

He followed you from the last town.

MOLINA:

I know it, and if Eddie sees us
there'll be a fight.

FRANCES:

Why? It's not your fault.

Rollo enters.

ROLLO:

Ah, there you are, Frances. Thought
you'd gone to bed.

FRANCES:

Hello, Rollo.

ROLLO:

Well, hear that crowd out there again tonight? I bet you thought the tent was on fire, huh? Well, it wasn't. Just the Rollo Brothers panicking 'em again.

(while Rollo talks,
Frances feeds herself
and drinks with her
foot.)

But then we do it in every town. We're so used to it, it's getting monotonous. Hey, come on and take a look at our act tomorrow night.

SCENE: INTERIOR

Fade from Frances' drink to close up of a drink being mixed. Camera pans to reveal first Cleopatra, half-reclining in bed, then Hans, who is serving them both.

CLEO:

Careful! Careful! Don't waste any of it.

(as she brings it to
her lips)

Look how it sparkles.

HANS:

Like your eyes, dancing, gay, with bubbles.

CLEO:

Oh, it's delicious. Mmmm. Nice, nice.

HANS:

It comes by the finest vineyards of France.

CLEO:

Have you sent for it specially for me?

HANS:

(toasting)

For the most beautiful woman in all the world.

CLEO:

Darling!
(they drink.)

SCENE: EXTERIOR

Phroso is sitting in a bathtub, apparently naked, rubbing himself with a cloth. Venus comes out of her trailer and walks over to him. She is dressed to go out.

PHROSO:

Hello there, baby. Hey, where you been so long?

VENUS:

You're a funny guy, Phroso.
(She walks up to the tub.)
Sometimes you panic me.

PHROSO:

Don't I know it. I panic the world, because I use my noodle.
(Venus leans on the tub.)
I think up funny gags. I make the world laugh. With me, clowning is an art.
(She is peering closely into the tub.)
Hey, why the hat? The head cold?

VENUS:

Thought you and me had a date to go out.

PHROSO:

Oh! I forgot all about it. Well, I'm into this now. I gotta go through with it.
(He appears to be vigorously scrubbing his legs.)

VENUS:

Well, make it snappy, will ya. I'm all dolled up for the occasion.

PHROSO:

Sorry, kid, can't do it now.

(suddenly he dips
forward out of sight
and slips out from
the tub's false
bottom. He stands.

He is wearing pants.)

We'll make it some other time, huh?

(She sulks.)

Aw, don't feel that way about it. I
just got this idea all of a sudden
and I gotta finish it. Funny gag,
isn't it?

(He is attaching a
wire-spoked wheel to
the base of the tub.)

VENUS:

Yeah. I'm laughing myself sick.

PHROSO:

Aw, say, come on.

(He gets up and goes
to her.)

Honey. Hey. Come on, come on, come
on. Now, now, now, now.

(She smiles.)

That's much better.

(He kisses her.)

VENUS:

That's the first time you ever done
that!

PHROSO:

Ain't the first time I felt like
doing it.

VENUS:

Yeah?

PHROSO:

Oh, Venus.

(They embrace and
kiss again.)

I don't mind telling you I wanted to
do this for a long time.

VENUS:

(whispering in his
ear)

So've I, Phroso.

PHROSO:
Well, we're all set now, hey Venus?

VENUS:
(softly)
Yeah.

PHROSO:
(bursting)
We're all set now!

SCENE: EXTERIOR

A handsome suitor holds Violet's hand as they sit together, while Daisy reads a book.

VADJEZ:
Please. Please do. Don't you want to
make me happy?

VIOLET:
Yes...but I don't know what to say.

VADJEZ:
Just say yes, dear. Will you?

VIOLET:
Yes.

VADJEZ:
Oh, Violet.
(they embrace and
kiss. Daisy lifts
her head and smiles
in ecstasy.)

SCENE: EXTERIOR

PHROSO:
(still working on his
tub)
What are you kicking about? You got
a good wife. You're happy.

ROSCOE:
Oh, that sister-in-law of mine--she
wants to sit up half the n-night r-
reading.

PHROSO:
Gee, that's tough.

ROSCOE:

Tough! You b-b-
 (He suddenly stops
 and stares. He pokes
 Phroso, who turns
 and looks. Cleopatra
 and Hans are saying
 goodnight. Hans kisses
 her hand, then
 descends the wagon
 steps and walks away.)

ROSCOE:

Cleo's gone on a d-d-diet!
 (Phroso laughs loudly.)

SCENE: EXTERIOR

VADJEZ:

It's awfully sweet of you to say
 that.

DAISY:

(shaking his hand)
 And I know Violet will be happy. Oh,
 here's Roscoe.
 (He enters.)
 This is Mr. Vadjez.

ROSCOE:

Glad to meetcha.
 (they shake hands.)

DAISY:

Violet and he are engaged to be
 married.

ROSCOE:

Oh, yeah?

VADJEZ:

Yes, and you must come to see us
 sometime.

ROSCOE:

Thanks. You must come to v-v-v- come
 to see us sometime, too.

VADJEZ:

I certainly will. Thanks.

SCENE: EXTERIOR

Frieda approaches Hans' wagon hesitantly. She knocks, then backs away.

HANS:
Who is it?

FRIEDA:
It's Frieda, Hans.
(He opens the door.)
May I come in?

HANS:
Yes, Frieda.
(She enters and sits.)

FRIEDA:
Now that I'm here, I don't know how
to say it--how to make you understand.
(on the verge of tears)
If you knew how I feel, Hans, to
come to you about her.

HANS:
Oh, Frieda, I'm so sorry. I don't
want to hurt you.

FRIEDA:
If you could be happy, Hans, I would
not care.

HANS:
But I am happy, Frieda. Never in my
life was I so happy.

FRIEDA:
No, Hans. You think it only. For you
she cannot bring happiness.

HANS:
Ah, Frieda, you don't know!
(He walks away.)

FRIEDA:
But I do, Hans.

HANS:
You think because she's so beautiful
and I'm just a mi-

FRIEDA:

(cutting him off)

Don't, Hans! To me you're a man.
But to her you're only something to
laugh at. The whole circus, they
make fun by you and her.

HANS:

Let them laugh, the swine! I love
her. They can't hurt me.

FRIEDA:

But they hurt me.

HANS:

Frieda, I have been a coward. I should
have come to you in the beginning.
Please forgive me?

FRIEDA:

Yes, Hans, I forgive you. It is only
that you should be happy I want.
(She turns to go.)

HANS:

Frieda, you won't worry now, will
you?

FRIEDA:

(without looking back)

No, I won't worry.
(She exits.)

SCENE: INTERIOR

Close up of a necklace, as Cleo hands it to Hercules

CLEO:

Nice, very nice, hmm?

HERCULES:

It's platinum! Hey, where do you
think the little pollywog is getting
his money?
(they laugh.)

CLEO:
 Being so particular!
 (He hands her a drink
 as she sits on the
 bed.)
 What do you care where the money
 comes from.
 (She drinks.)
 How much is it worth?

HERCULES:
 We got five hundred for the bracelet--
 but this looks like thousands!

CLEO:
 I think next time I'll take a fur
 coat.

HERCULES:
 Say, that little ape's got ideas
 about you.

CLEO:
 Jealous?

HERCULES:
 Me? I'll squash him like a bug.
 (a knock at the door
 turns their heads.)

CLEO:
 That's his knock. I'll get rid of
 him. Go, quickly!
 (He goes into the
 next room, taking
 the liquor with him.)
 Come in.
 (Frieda enters.)
 What do you want?

FRIEDA:
 (She slowly walks
 over to Cleo.)
 Its about Hans.

CLEO:
 Well? I'm listening.

FRIEDA:
 It's behind his back, everybody's
 laughing, because he's in love with
 you.

CLEO:

Go on.

FRIEDA:

I know you just make fun. But Hans, he does not know this. If he finds out, never again will he be happy.

CLEO:

What makes you think that I'm just making fun?

FRIEDA:

Your face--so beautiful--

CLEO:

--and Hans is so little, so cute, eh? Well, maybe I'm going to marry him!

FRIEDA:

If you marry, it will be at you they laugh and stare!

CLEO:

Of course. Nothing like being different. Cleopatra, queen of the air, married to a dwarf!
(laughs)

FRIEDA:

A dwarf!

CLEO:

A dwarf.

FRIEDA:

Then it's not for Hans you care!
It's the money!

CLEO:

Money. You...little mind reader.

FRIEDA:

Ah, he has told you of the fortune he has inherited.
(Cleo's eyes light up.)
Always he warned me to tell no one until after we leave the circus.

CLEO:
A fortune...and fancy you knowing
about it too. Well, I can't be angry
at him for that.

FRIEDA:
No! No! You cannot do this!

CLEO:
No? Hmm, you wait and see.

FRIEDA:
Please, you can't.
(hopeless, she exits.
Cleo jumps up as
Hercules reenters.)

HERCULES:
A fortune! I bet the little lame's
worth billions!

CLEO:
A fortune! Can you beat that! A
fortune! And I have him like that.
(snaps her fingers)

HERCULES:
A fool he ain't. He knew enough to
keep his mouth shut.

CLEO:
I could marry him. Yes! He would
marry me.
(Hercules laughs.
Camera pans in on
Cleo, who has become
deadly serious.)
Midgets...are not strong...They could
get sick.

HERCULES:
(quietly)
How?

CLEO:
It could be done...slowly.

SCENE: IN THE BIG TENT

Caption on screen: "The Wedding Feast."

All the freaks are seated about a huge table set up under
the big top. Koo Koo, a pinhead, is dancing on the table to
a harmonica played by the human skeleton. She wears tights

and a feathered jacket, a big feather atop her head, and large round eyeglasses. She shimmies as the crowd laughs and drinks, including Cleo and Hercules, who are seated next to each other. Cleo's hand reaches under the table and pours something from a vile into a bottle of wine. She then lifts the bottle and pours a drink for Hans, who sits on her left, wearing a tuxedo.

CLEO:

(exuberantly)

Oh, come on, my little precious,
let's drink. Be happy! Drink!

(as they toast and
drink, Roscoe taps
the table with a
wooden spoon to gain
attention.)

ROSCOE:

Hey, K-Koo Koo, give somebody else a
chance! (Everyone laughs.) All right,
professor.

PROFESSOR:

A waltz, please.

(He inserts the entire
length of a sword's
blade down his throat.
Madame Tetrallini
and Schlitzey laugh
and applaud. Frieda,
sitting next to them,
is somber.)

ANGELINO:

Show him up, Volcano!
(the fire-eater places
a flaming torch in
his mouth. Elvira
and Jenny-Lee laugh
with glee and clap.)

CLEO:

Our wedding night!
(laughs)
What a thrill!

HANS:

(slightly tipsy)
Never before did I think I should be
so lucky.

CLEO:

Lucky!
 (laughs)
 I'm the lucky one, my little Hans.

HANS:

My Cleo's happy...happy.

CLEO:

Happy?
 (She laughs, as Frieda
 watches sadly.)
 I'm so happy I even could kiss you,
 (to Hercules)
 You big homely brute!
 (Cleo and Hercules
 kiss passionately.
 Hans' face drops.
 Mme. Tetrallini tries
 to comfort Frieda.)
 Ah, my little green-eyed monster.
 (to Hans, laughing)
 My husband is jealous!
 (Frieda is crying.)
 He loves me!
 (Frieda gets up and
 leaves. Mme.
 Tetrallini looks on
 the scene
 disdainfully, then
 hurls an epithet at
 Cleo and runs after
 Frieda.)

CLEO:

Come, my little lover. Drink to the
 happiness of your loving wife.
 (Schlitzey laughs.)

ANGELINO:

Attention! Attention! We'll make her
 one of us. A loving cup! A loving
 cup!

Josephine-Joseph, Frances, Johnny, Koo Koo, and the others
 pound the table and chant, as Angelino stands on the table
 top and pours from a bottle into the loving cup.

ALL FREAKS:

(chanting)
 We accept her--one of us--gooble,
 gobble--we accept her--one of us--
 gooble, gobble...

HERCULES:
They're going to make you one of
them, my peacock!

(He laughs. But Cleo stops laughing and stiffly rises from her chair. Angelino is walking back and forth across the tabletop giving the others sips from the loving cup. He trots over to Cleo, drinks from the cup himself, then offers it to her. She takes it in her hand.)

HERCULES:

CLEO:
(shouting)
YOU!...DIRTY!...SLIMY!...FREAKS!
((There is silence.))
FREAKS!...FREAKS!...GET OUT OF HERE!
(She throws the drink
at them.)

HERCULES:
Get out! You heard her! Get out!
(laughs. They all
slowly leave.)

CLEO:
You filth! Make me one of you, will
you!
(to Hans:)
Well, what are you going to do? What
are you a man or a baby!

HANS:
Please! Please! You make me ashamed.

CLEO:
Ashamed! You! Holy Christmas!
(She sits next to
him.)
What must I do? Must I play games
with you? Must Mamma take you horsey-
back ride?

HERCULES:

Ha, ha, that's it! Horsey-back ride!

(laughing, he gets
up, goes over and
picks up Hans.)

Come, come, my little fly speck.
Momma is going to take you horsey-
back ride.

(Cleo laughs as
Hercules places Hans
on her shoulders.
She gets up and dances
around the table in
her silken white
wedding gown, bouncing
Hans on her shoulders.)

Geddy-up! Geddy-up!

(Hercules grabs a
trumpet from one of
the departing freaks
and runs after her,
tooting it. Hans
covers his face in
shame.)

SCENE: INTERIOR

Cleo sits on the bed. Hans stands, his hand to his forehead.
Hercules hovers over Hans in dark silhouette.

HERCULES:

Ah forget it, Hans. She is sorry. I
am sorry. Didn't I told you she was
drunk? Didn't I told you we was only
having a little fun?

HANS:

Please. I- I understand...everything.
(He wipes his face
with a handkerchief.)

HERCULES:

No, you don't. I tell you, there's
nothing between me and Cleo.

CLEO:

Oh, be quiet! Haven't you done enough
damage for one night! Don't you
realize what I'm being accused of?

HERCULES:

I ain't going to be blamed for
something I have not done.

HANS:

I don't blame you, Cleo. I don't blame Hercules.

(Angelino appears at the window.)

Only me, myself.

HERCULES:

Now you're talking like a man. Ha, ha.

(He slaps Hans on the back, causing him to fall against Cleo's lap.)

CLEO:

(to Hercules)

You fool!

(Hercules takes a drink.)

HANS:

Always I should have known you would only laugh at me.

(He wipes his face.)

CLEO:

My sweet, I'd rather fall from the trapeze and break my neck, than hurt your feelings. Do you understand now? It was only a joke.

HANS:

Our wedding--a joke? Now I know how funny it is. Hans, the midget.

(laughs)

I'm the fool! Everywhere they're laughing. Laughing! Laughing!

Laughing! Oh!

(He puts his hand to his head and faints to the floor.)

HERCULES:

You give him too much.

CLEO:
 No, I haven't. I know what I am doing.
 (She stands.)
 Come on. Pick him up.
 (Hercules puts down
 his drink, lifts
 Hans and hands him
 to Cleo, who carries
 him out and across
 to her trailer. The
 human worm watches
 from behind a wagon
 wheel.)

SCENE: HANS' WAGON

Outside, various circus people watch and wait. Inside, Cleo and the doctor are seated at the foot of the bed where Hans lies. Mme. Tetrallini watches from the inner doorway.

MME. TETRALLINI:
 Doctor, what is it? What caused it?
 (others are seen
 peering from beyond
 the front door.)

DOCTOR:
 Poison.
 (Mme. Tetrallini and
 Cleo exchange hostile
 looks.)
 A bad case of ptomaine poisoning.
 (Mme. Tetrallini
 continues to look at
 Cleo with suspicion.)

CLEO:
 Doctor, did I do wrong then, giving
 him mustard water?

DOCTOR:
 No. Probably it saved his life.
 (Angelino is seen at
 the window.)

Outside, Frieda sits at her trailer door, with Venus standing beside her.

FRIEDA:

Never before did he drink like that.
But she kept making him and making
him.

VENUS:

(sarcastically)
Drink, huh?

Hercules stands with his leg up on a wagon step. He looks worried. He steps away and disappears behind the wagon. Across the way a group of freaks sits quietly watching. Venus approaches Hercules behind the wagon.

VENUS:

You better get Cleo to tell the doctor
what she put in that wine last night.

HERCULES:

What you talking about, eh?

VENUS:

The stuff she put in the wine!

HERCULES:

You're crazy.

VENUS:

Yeah? Well, you can't get away with
it. I'll tell the coppers.

HERCULES:

So, hey, tell on your own people?

VENUS:

My people are decent circus folks.
Not dirty rats what would kill a
freak to get his money.

HERCULES:

Dirty little...

(He grabs her as she
turns to leave, but
he sees the freaks
watching and lets
her go.)

Ah, your imagination's getting the
best of you.

VENUS:

Yeah? Maybe it is. But coppers don't
have imagination, so I've been told.
Don't make me have to go to 'em.

(She leaves.)

SCENE: EVENING

Several freaks are standing watch. Hercules comes out of his wagon, in costume. Roscoe is standing there, in women's dress, holding his wig in his hands. They do not speak. After an awkward moment, Roscoe leaves. Beneath a wagon the human worm edges across the ground. Other freaks huddle under a wagon. Hercules laces his boot.

Inside Hans' wagon, Cleo, in her trapeze outfit, is putting away a glass. Hans is in bed.

HANS:

Cleo.

CLEO:

Yes?

HANS:

It has been the fifth night we have been married--a week since I have said all those things to you.

CLEO:

(going over to him)

Don't, don't.

HANS:

Never can I forgive myself for what I've said.

CLEO:

(stroking his head)

I've forgotten. Nothing matters, except for you to be well.

HANS:

(patting her hand)

How good you are by me, Cleo.

(Angelino watches at the window.)

CLEO:

I must fix your medicine, or I'll be late.

She goes into the other room and prepares his medicine. From the window, Angelino watches her add something to it from a little bottle. She returns to Hans and feeds him a spoonful, which he passively accepts. When she leaves the room, Hans eyes open and he leans forward and spits the medicine into a handkerchief. She puts the medicine away and returns.

CLEO:
I'll be soon back, my little. Don't
be lonely.

HANS:
I'll never forget what you are doing
for me, Cleo.

CLEO:
But it's what I want to do, my
darling. Now, now I must hurry.

HANS:
Cleo.

CLEO:
Yes?

HANS:
(very weakly) Will you leave the
door open, please?

CLEO:
Yes, my darling.

As she walks across the court to her wagon, Johnny crosses her path walking with his arms. Under the steps she is about to climb she sees other freaks lurking. She quickly goes in. Angelino slips into Hans' wagon and walks over to him.

HANS:
Tonight.

ANGELINO:
They will be ready.

HANS:
All right. You come to my wagon.
(Angelino nods and
leaves. Hans lies
back and grins,
mockingly.)
I must hurry now and fix your
medicine, my darling, or I will be
late...(
(His smile drops.)
...dirty...slimy...freaks.

SCENE: NIGHT

Thunder.

Beneath the line of wagons Johnny propels himself swiftly across the ground on his arms.

Lightning.

Beyond him we see the legs of men busy with preparations to set the circus to traveling again.

Johnny comes to the underside of a wagon where a group of freaks waits.

JOHNNY:
He's waiting.

ANGELENO:
Fine...fine.

Fade to a shot of wagons being pulled by horses through a violent storm. Inside one of the wagons Josephine-Joseph turns from the window to face the others.

JOSEPHINE-JOSEPH:
Soon we go.
(She turns back to
the window.)

In his wagon, Hercules puts on a hat, blows out his lantern, and then leaps from the moving vehicle.

Thunder.

In another wagon, Frieda and Phroso sit talking.

PHROSO:
Ah, you're imagining things.

FRIEDA:
No. Then I hear Hercules tell Cleo,
"Venus knows too much."

PHROSO:
Hercules? Venus?

FRIEDA:
Yes.

PHROSO:
Oh, ho! Thanks, Frieda. (He puts on
his hat and leaves.)

In Hans' room Johnny and a couple of dwarfs are gathered about his bed, as one of them plays an eerie melody on the flute. Outside, the storm rages. Cleo enters from the galley.

CLEO:
My little, you must go to sleep.
Your friends better go now.

HANS:
I like them here.

CLEO:
No, no, no, Hans. They can come back tomorrow. I will give you your medicine and get you off to sleep. Go, go on, all of you, quick, quick.
(as she goes to get his medicine, Hans abruptly swings his feet around and sits up. She returns with the spoonful of medicine and stops short.)
What's this?

HANS:
Give me the little black bottle.

Lightning flashes.

She backs away. One of the dwarfs casually pulls out a switchblade and polishes it. Johnny takes a gun from his pocket and wipes it with his handkerchief. Cleo drops the spoon.

HANS:
(extending his hand)
The bottle.
(She pulls it out of her pocket and gives it to him.)
You got this full of poison--to kill.

In the rain a figure climbs onto the rear of a moving wagon. Inside, Venus turns to see Hercules breaking in. She backs away, grabbing a crowbar for defense. As Hercules crawls in, Phroso leaps onto the wagon and jumps him from behind. They roll into the wagon and struggle, as the wagon rocks wildly from the bumpy ride.

VENUS:
Phroso!

PHROSO:
Get out, Venus!

Another wagon hits a rut and tips into a ditch. A scream. Cleo climbs from the tilted wagon and runs screaming into the woods. Little figures scramble out and run after her.

In the other wagon Phroso again cries out to Venus to get out. She calls for help at the window. Hercules and Phroso

struggle wildly. Outside, Mme. Tetrallini runs about, shouting frantically. Hercules grabs Venus. Phroso jumps on him and they fall out of the wagon. In the mud below, Hercules is on top of Phroso, choking him. Suddenly a thrown knife strikes Hercules. Phroso gets away. Writhing in pain, Hercules looks up to see freaks crawling and slithering towards him from every direction in the pouring rain, with knives in their hands and in their teeth.

In the woods, Cleo is running and screaming, pursued by her revengers. Her scream fades, as the early scene of the sideshow barker standing over the enclosed pit, surrounded by circus patrons, reappears.

BARKER:

How she got that way will never be known. Some say a jealous lover. Others, that it was the code of the freaks. Others, the storm. Believe it or not, there she is.

In the pit is a creature with no human body beneath her head. A feathered, bird-like belly bulges from her frilly circus jacket. She support herself on shaky arms, as Johnny did with more grace, and her face is scarred, deformed, and has a dead expression. From her mouth comes a wild squawking sound, in keeping with her chicken-like appearance.

SCENE: INTERIOR OF A MANSION LIBRARY

Hans paces the floor. A butler enters.

BUTLER:

But, sir, they insist on seeing you.

HANS:

You know how I feel. I'm seeing no one. Have I not told you, Fritz? Send them away.

BUTLER:

Very good, sir.
(He turns to exit as
Phroso forces his
way in.)

HANS:

I can see no one.

BUTLER

Excuse me, sir, you can't come in.

PHROSO:

Can't I?

BUTLER

No, sir, I have my orders.

PHROSO:

Well, I'm in ain't I?

(to Hans)

Oh, yes you can, Hansy old boy.

There's someone you just gotta see.

(He enters, followed

by Venus and Frieda.)

HANS:

(to Frieda)

Why did you come here?

FRIEDA:

Please, Hans, don't be angry. Venus and Phroso have been so kind by me.

HANS:

Please, go away...I can't see no one.

(He turns away.)

FRIEDA:

But Hans, you tried to stop them. It was only the poison you wanted. It wasn't your fault.

(She approaches him.

Venus pokes Phroso and they smile and leave.)

Don't...don't worry, Hans. Come to me, my lieber. Don't cry.

(She sits and strokes his head as he sinks into her lap.)

Don't, Hans. Don't cry. I love you. I love you.

THE END