

# COLD FACTS

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a play in one act

by

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# CHARACTERS

**BUM**

**MANAGER**

**WHEELCHAIR BUM**

**JOE ROSSI**

**CRACK ADDICT #1**

**CRACK ADDICT #2**

**MRS. MAYOR**

**REPORTER #1**

**REPORTER #2**

**RACCOON**

# PLACE

*Colfax Boulevard. Denver, Colorado*

# TIME

*Present-day*

# SCENE

*Storefront, with side alley and dumpster. BUM is asleep. MANAGER enters*

**MANAGER**

*Hey! You're blocking my entrance. Move! What are you looking at?*

**BUM**

*(Awakes)*

*"Labor Ready," right? "Work Today, Pay Today." That's your slogan.*

**MANAGER**

*So what, skunk-ass?*

**BUM**

*Well, sign me up. I mean, I came yesterday, but there weren't any openings. So... I slept here all night to be first in line. Now, please, put my name at the top of your list.*

**MANAGER**

*Are you kidding? A fuckin' trashman wouldn't even pick you up.*

**BUM**

*Very charitable of you.*

**MANAGER**

*Yo, yo. Back up. You're too close.*

**BUM**

*I got nothin', man. I'm hurtin'. Please! I don't know how I'm gonna eat breakfast.*

**MANAGER**

*You're too close in proximity. ...Jesus Christ... I can smell the skeez, ya bum.*

**BUM**

*I'm not a bum. I'm enterprising. I'm lookin' for work, like a solid citizen.*

**MANAGER**

*Uhhhh, no. (Unlocks front door of "Labor Ready") You smell like a damn baboon.*

**BUM**

*Yeah, but I work like a mule. Just kick me!*

**MANAGER** *kicks BUM and steals his water bottle*

**BUM**

Ouch.

**MANAGER**

You drunk old bum. Leave! Or I'm calling the cops.

**MANAGER** *exits, through front door*

**BUM**

Fuckin' cold facts, huh? God, I just *love* bullshit people. I really do *enjoy* being harassed. Thanks for nothin'! (*Stands on street corner, holding cardboard sign that reads: "Hungry"*)

**WHEELCHAIR BUM** *enters, holding cardboard sign that reads: "Homeless veteran. Contracted AIDS, two times. Need some help. Even just a particle of food"*

**WHEELCHAIR BUM**

Hey, you got a cigarette?

**BUM**

Don't smoke.

**WHEELCHAIR BUM**

What do you mean, you don't smoke? You're lying to my face. Now buy me a pack! Fuckin' Camel Wides! Hey, come back here, punk. Lie to my face some more...

**BUM**

Yeah, yeah. Just keep on rollin'.

**WHEELCHAIR BUM**

This is my spot, man. I make a good living here.

**BUM**

What's the matta? Afraid of a lil' competition?

**WHEELCHAIR BUM**

Man, you ain't shit.

**BUM**

Hey, I got the same rights as you.

**JOE ROSSI** *enters*

**JOE ROSSI**

What a beautiful day! Lovely, isn't it?

**WHEELCHAIR BUM**

What's up, man? Gimme a dollar.

**BUM**

Excuse me. Can you please buy me a bottle of whiskey, please? Wall Street or Country Club.

**WHEELCHAIR BUM**

Yo! Watch me dance. (*Starts dancing in place*) Uh-uh-uh-uh-uh... uh-uh-uh-uh-uh... *hey hey!*

**JOE ROSSI**

Is that the Denver Two-step?

**BUM**

Have a heart. I'm on my last leg here. ...all shaky. ...about the pass out.

**JOE ROSSI**

Yeah – you look like a bag of shit.

**BUM**

Well, then open your wallet. Whatchoo got?

**JOE ROSSI**

Your sign says you're just hungry. He's got AIDS, twice. So, you know? Who can work? Who's needier? (*Hands money to* **WHEELCHAIR BUM**)

**WHEELCHAIR BUM**

Two times, man... hit me two times.

**BUM**

I'm sorry, what's your name?

**JOE ROSSI**

Joe Rossi.

**BUM**

Allright, Joe Rossi. (*Intercepts* **JOE ROSSI'S** *outstretched dollar bill*) Denvah loves ya! (*Runs away*)

**WHEELCHAIR BUM**

Hey, that's my money.

**BUM** *exits*

*We hear a spasm of car horns, offstage*

**WHEELCHAIR BUM**

Can you believe it? That's some bullshit.

**JOE ROSSI**

Yeah, you'll never catch him now.

**WHEELCHAIR BUM**

Stop! (*Suddenly springs up*) Get back here!

**WHEELCHAIR BUM** *exits, running after BUM*

**JOE ROSSI**

A miracle! This man is healed! He can walk again! He can thank the Holy Father. (*Crosses himself*)

**JOE ROSSI** *exits*

**CRACK ADDICTS** *enter*

**CRACK ADDICT #1**

Ohh shit! Where's my glass-dick? Huh?

**CRACK ADDICT #2**

You lost it?

**CRACK ADDICT #1**

I can't find it. My pockets are empty.

**CRACK ADDICT #2**

Shit, your *promises* are empty.

**CRACK ADDICT #1**

What's up? You stole my pipe, or what?

**CRACK ADDICT #2**

Don't blame me. I'm just standing here.

**CRACK ADDICT #1**

My 7/11 thermometer is missing. Now hand it over.

**CRACK ADDICT #2**

There's your pipe. It's right behind you. In your ass pocket.

**CRACK ADDICT #1**

Ah-ha! I found it. (*Hits pipe*) What'd I tell ya? Right here. (*Passes pipe*)

**BUM** *enters*

**BUM**

What's up, crackheads? Gettin' down?

**CRACK ADDICT #1**

Hey, I'm not a crackhead, alright? I'm a crack-smoker, dammit. Big difference. Huge.

**BUM**

Oh, I apologize. (*Jumps into dumpster and, just as quickly, jumps out*) Aaaaaiiiieeeee!

**CRACK ADDICT #2**

What happened?

**BUM**

Motherfuckin' raccoon bit me.

**CRACK ADDICT #2**

A raccoon did it, huh?

**BUM**

You see that? I got teeth marks.

**CRACK ADDICT #1**

Dude, you're a grown-ass man. You should be fuckin' up a raccoon.

**CRACK ADDICT #2**

Nah, he's too skinny. Besides. Raccoons — they like to brawl. Raccoons love to instigate shit.

**BUM** *dives back into dumpster*

**CRACK ADDICT #1**

Do you live here? In this dumpster?

**CRACK ADDICT #2**

He's just renting. He doesn't own.

**BUM** *digs ukulele out of dumpster*

**CRACK ADDICT #1**

What's that? Uh, uh, a ukulele? Hey, play a little melody, will ya?

**BUM**

*(Strumming ukulele)*

*I knew the day you met me*

*I could love you if you let me*

**BUM**

*(Con't)*

*Though you touched my cheek  
And said how easy you'd forget me  
You said, "Butterflies are free and so are  
we"  
On that velvet morning  
When our love was forming  
I said it wouldn't hurt me  
If you left without warning  
I said, "Butterflies are free and so are we"*

**CRACK ADDICTS** *sit and share pipe*

**CRACK ADDICT #1**

That's the worst song I've ever heard in my entire life.

**BUM**

Thank you, thank you.

**CRACK ADDICT #1**

No, I said it was terrible. Don't you know any punky shit?

**BUM** *begin hyper-salivating. Dark circles form around his eyes*

**CRACK ADDICT #2**

Dude, man.

**BUM**

*(Strumming ukulele, faster and faster)*

*Yeah, yeah, yeah  
Always do as you're told?  
Sir, yes, sir  
Jawoh  
Can't count past two  
All kinds of confused  
YOU! Stay where you are  
Shit, you came this far  
Take a fuckin' listen  
Turn off your television*

**CRACK ADDICT #2**

More! More! We want more.

**BUM**

*You again, hooligan?*



**BUM**

(Con't)

*I wish I could yank out your teeth  
So you can't yell "Police"  
You old-timer  
With Alzheimer's  
I'll deflate your prostate  
Break your nose  
Throw a few knuckle blows  
Wiggle your toes  
If your brain is froze  
'Cause mistakes are all I make  
Kickin' your face  
All over the place*

**CRACK ADDICT #1**

Oh man! Louder, little louder.

**BUM**

*I dye my pubic hairs blue  
I spike my hair with glue  
I never tie my shoes  
Whatever, man, I can't lose  
Now, you better get your face off the streets  
You better watch out when we meet  
This bum's gonna smash you in half  
I'll plant a pipe bomb in your ass  
Hear me  
Talkin' shit to everybody  
Workin' for a livin' is just a hobby  
Yeah, allright  
Sing together now*

**CRACK ADDICTS**

*Talkin' shit to everybody  
Workin' for a livin' is just a hobby*

**BUM** *torches dumpster*

**CRACK ADDICT #1**

Dude — your house is on fire.

**BUM**

HA! Let it burn!

**CRACK ADDICT #2**

One more! Let's hear another!

**BUM**

See here? (*Pokes end of stick inside dumpster, impaling flaming raccoon carcass*) Hey, 'heads. See here? A raccoon kabob. You want some?

**CRACK ADDICT #2**

Yes. Very badly.

**BUM**

Then feed. (*Sits in abandoned wheelchair*) Tear it apart.

**CRACK ADDICTS** *devour charred raccoon flesh*

**BUM**

And transmute! The both of yous.

**CRACK ADDICTS**

*Mm-hmm-mm.*

**MRS. MAYOR** *enters, trailed by* **REPORTERS.** **CRACK ADDICTS** *steer*  
**BUM'S** *wheelchair*

**REPORTERS**

Mayor! Mayor!

**MRS. MAYOR**

You and I, let's walk. Have a little Q & A, uh? On historic Colfax! America's longest boulevard, running twenty-seven miles. Maybe a *bit* rundown, but Colfax is making a comeback, baby. That's right. Against all odds, I'm remaking the character of this street. No more stray bullets, no more homicide signs. I invite anyone to walk their dogs after dark. I'll be out here, too, dragging my muppet around City Park. (*Aside to* **REPORTERS**) Don't tell me. *More* unhoused people? You notice all the little sickies and crack dealers moving in? I mean, this is the heart of the community. Well... things are gonna change – now that I'm Mayor. (*Into* **REPORTERS' microphones**) Seriously, though, primo real estate. That's right. Check out new Colfax!

**CRACK ADDICTS** *begins hyper-salivating. Dark circles form around their eyes*

**REPORTER #1**

Mrs. Mayor! Question. Your community outreach program—

**MRS. MAYOR**

—is outrageously popular. What?

**REPORTER #1**

Doesn't it just transport street people *up* but not *out*?

**MRS. MAYOR**

No, it doesn't. Does not.

**REPORTER #1**

It doesn't move them farther down Colfax?

**MRS. MAYOR**

Well, I guess you'll have to ask the Police Commissioner. That's a question for him.

**REPORTER #2**

Mayor, your critics say it's, "Too little, too late. Too lenient, too liberal." What do you say?

**MRS. MAYOR**

I say that I'm not left or right — I'm ambidextrous. You know. I like a balance of power. Call me a radical moderate. Next question! Man with the microphone. Freaky-town! *Go!*

**BUM**

*(Into microphone)*

Hey, can I spit in your eye, please?

**MRS. MAYOR**

Come again? *(Presses earflap)* I didn't hear a word.

**BUM**

I wanna spit in your eye. *(Taps microphone)* This on? Listen to me! Pay attention to the speaker.

**MRS. MAYOR**

I can't understand you.

**BUM**

*Hey, guess what?  
Your Mayor's a slut  
Yeah, she's open to gropin'  
She says, "Well, hello"  
Then gives you a grab-n-go*

**MRS. MAYOR**

*I'm taking a lot of abuse  
From a guy with no front tooth  
It doesn't matter  
Just don't chatter  
Don't stand next to me  
Don't even breathe*

**MRS. MAYOR**

*(Con't)*

*You think you own the street?  
Because this is where you sleep and eat  
You wanna sell me your bus pass? Please  
Stop saying terrible things about me*

**CRACK ADDICT #2**

*The Mayor don't ask, she orders  
But everybody ignores her*

**BUM**

*So much beauty  
So little brains  
So so sad  
Is my refrain  
My valentine?  
Plastic bag o' wine  
You're mine  
All the time*

**CRACK ADDICTS** *bow*

**BUM**

Listen, can I tell you something? I look across the faces before me, today, and see a sad state of affairs. Our reality is grim, but it isn't hopeless. Together, we can resuscitate our great city by expelling the fat cats and graft-mongers at city hall.

**CRACK ADDICTS** *cheer*

**BUM**

Don't elect corrupt politicians, friends, elect a person who's risen from the dregs of society. I've lived in the gutter and now I'm speaking for us all. I promise a raccoon in every home, a pigeon in every pot.

*More cheering*

**BUM**

Notice to everybody! I shall rule by edict. Meaning, what I say is the law. Ecologically, I'm *pro*-global warming. Let's hasten the demise of mankind, friends. Diplomatically, my message to the world is, "Shut up and get bombed!" As for race relations! I offer a bold new initiative. All companies who profited from the American slave trade, like Aetna Insurance, must pay reparations to the descendants of those slaves! Precedent being Holocaust survivors – the Hebs – who sued companies like Volkswagen, Fiat and others, and won punitive damages for their free labor during Nazi-Germany. Who's with me? Allright, now one more thing. I'm banishing all

**BUM**

*(Con't)*

forms of advertisement. That shit's gotta go. But I *am* giving graffiti artists free-rein over the city.

**CRACK ADDICT #2**

Hey, you got my vote, man. Good ideas, the right passion. You're on to something.

**BUM**

*(Distributing raccoon jerky to REPORTERS)*

Behold! The source of my powers...

**CRACK ADDICT #2**

I overfed, man, on raccoon flesh. It made my mouth water. Made my tongue drip.

**BUM**

*(Strumming ukulele)*

*Emphatic crack addicts*

*Pill-poppers and crime-stoppers*

*Sleeping where the street ends*

*Concrete is my closest friend*

*Sleep and sleep, sleep some more*

*Life's amusing, 'cause it's a bore*

**BUM**

Tell me! *(Throws ukulele away)* What time is it on the Moon? Precisely! You don't know.

**CRACK ADDICT #1**

I know. I know I can't catch a shark with breadcrumbs. No, I need a damn horse's leg.

**CRACK ADDICT #2**

You see any crazy people around here? *(Looks over his shoulder)* That's why I don't walk down Colfax – it's *click-clack. Snip-snap. Quack-quack.* BUGGED.

**MRS. MAYOR**

Allright! Allright, that's enough. *(To BUM)* What's your problem? Quadriplegic, huh? God, how horrifying. That's totally depressing. What a sad character. What a pathetic man. Sorry – I don't mean to offend you. *(Into microphone)* Psst, stay away from the glass-penis, kids. You don't wanna end up like this bummo.

**BUM**

*(Into microphone)*

*Children of today*

*Grow the fuck up*

*"Oh, everything sucks*

*Laugh or sigh*

**BUM**  
(*Con't*)

*Live or die*  
*Which should I?"*

**MRS. MAYOR**  
(*Aside to BUM*)

Look, I'll be candid with you. The world doesn't care about your little problems. You either fix your life or you don't.

**CRACK ADDICT #2**

General question! Mayor. Over here! Look over here. Is it too late for me?

**REPORTER #2**

Please, stop following me. What the fuck is up with this guy?

**REPORTER #1**

He's got an infection, he's rabid.

**REPORTER #2**

Oh my God... they're fomenting with hate.

**CRACK ADDICT #1**

The streets will run red with blood, come the revolution!

**MRS. MAYOR**

Come on, people. We can do better. I'm supposed to be casually strolling down Colfax, answering questions from the public.

**MANAGER** *enters, through front door*

**MANAGER**  
(*Throws water bottle at BUM*)

Shoo!

**BUM** *picks up water bottle*

**MANAGER**

Shoo!

**BUM**  
(*Holding empty water bottle*)

Can I fill this water?

**MANAGER**

Get away from my office!

**BUM**

Is there any place I could fill the water?

**MRS. MAYOR**

I can get you some water. Hold on a second. He's not asking for anything we can't give. He's not asking for money or food or a handout. Why make him suffer? I mean, water is a basic human right. It's actually against the law to deny people water. Get him a big jug.

**REPORTER #1** *hands water to* **MRS. MAYOR**

**MRS. MAYOR**

Here you go.

**BUM**

Thanks, Mayor. –Yahaahaaahhh! (*Flies out of wheelchair at* **MRS. MAYOR**)

**MRS. MAYOR**

Ack! My arm! You scratched me!

**BUM**

Did I, Mayor? I'm sorry. (*Barks*)

**MRS. MAYOR**

...you ruined my suit... look at this!

**REPORTER #1**

Uhhh, Mayor, he's foaming at the mouth...

**BUM** *bites* **MRS. MAYOR** *three times*

**REPORTER #2**

Right. Looks like the Mayor is gonna need emergency services. I'll call it in. On Bum's Corner!

**MRS. MAYOR**

(*Strangling* **BUM** *with bare hands*)

Help! He's all over me! (*Kicks* **BUM**) Help!

**REPORTER #1**

We got a mad dog on the loose! Call Animal Control! Put him down! He's blood-crazy!

**MRS. MAYOR**

Tell me why I ran for office again? (*Stabs* **BUM'S** *neck with pen, blood gushes*) I'm a fool.

**BUM**

Hey, anyone wanna gimme the kiss of life?

**REPORTERS**

Uh, nooo.

**BUM**

Well... here I go... I'm seeing angels. She's flying! The Exterminating Angel is here to claim me. I'm close to death. But death is an honor – it means I lived! (*Dies*)

**MRS. MAYOR**

Hey, don't look at me. I only stabbed him. The rabies killed him.

**REPORTER #1**

Mayor! Are you alright, Mayor?

**REPORTER #2**

Mayor, do you feel anything? (*Shoves microphone into MRS. MAYOR'S mouth*)

**MRS. MAYOR**

No, I don't feel anything. (*Begins hyper-salivating. Dark circles form around her eyes*)

**CRACK ADDICTS** deposit **BUM** into wheelchair, then cart him offstage. **MRS. MAYOR** chases **REPORTERS**, who scatter. **RACCOON** enters, ambling out of dumpster. **RACCOON** then stands up, holding ukulele

**RACCOON**

(*Strumming ukulele*)

*Ok, this is my coda  
The tail of my story  
I'm the one who penned it  
But I didn't intend it  
To be so bloody and gory  
The plot I contrived  
And revised, a million times  
Is a terrible parable  
That's right  
The premise, in a brief sentence  
"Come down from the sky, Big Guy"  
Could be you in a year or two  
Clawing back to the top  
Now stop being such an asshole  
And welcome me into your household  
All you gimme are icky vibes  
You laugh at a feel-good genocide  
But you know what?  
You're all gonna die, die, die*

**RACCOON** bares his teeth and leaps out at audience



*END OF PLAY*

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