

The Frio Kid

**A Comedy in One-Act
by
Kenneth Robbins**

Original Music by Bob Dodge

THE FRIO KID

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THE FRIO KID

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Freely adapted from the short story,
“A Chaparral Christmas Gift,” by O. Henry

There is a permanent construction on stage: a door arch capable of being used as a gallows. It is center and forms the fulcrum for all scene changes as everything else is mobile. There should be room behind this construction to allow action to occur. Fluidity is essential for the action to work.

THE FRIO KID

CAST

6 Men, 2 Women, Ensemble

A Guitar Player

Johnny McRoy (also The Frio Kid and Santa)

Madison Lane

Rosita

Nick, the Bartender

A Cowboy

Another Cowboy

Parson

Dance Hall Girl

Boy

First

Second

A Chorus of townsfolk, dance hall girls, and cowboys

THE FRIO KID

THE FRIO KID

SCENE 1

A saloon. There are dance hall girls, card players, a guitar player, a bartender, and cowboys hanging out at the bar. The guitar player sings.

GUITAR PLAYER: Into our town two lonely boys burst
With dust in their hair and a killing thirst
They didn't want it but trouble found them soon
When they entered our one and only saloon.
It was the Chaparral
Into the Chaparral
They found their gal
But trouble found them first.

(Into this "pastoral" scene come Johnny McRoy and Madison Lane, dusty and tired. They belly to the bar.)

BARTENDER: What'll you have?

JOHNNY: *(to Madison)* You want our usual?

MADISON: The usual.

JOHNNY: Two sarsaparillas.

BARTENDER: *(loudly for all to hear)* Two sassy parillas here!! You want that on ice, sugarplum?

MADISON: I'll take mine neat. *(Laughter all around. Several cowboys make fun of Johnny and Madison. One pushes forward, followed by his sidekick.)*

COWBOY: Let me buy you a man's drink, Buddy. Something to tickle yer innards. Two whiskeys for my friends here, Nick.

JOHNNY: Sarsaparilla suits me just fine...friend.

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COWBOY: That right? Then how about this. This suit you just fine, too? *(He swings at Johnny's head and a fight breaks out. This is a traditional barroom brawl from John Wayne's legacy. However, in this instance, our heroes do not win. They are tossed into the street where they land with thuds.)*

BARTENDER: And don't come back! Sassy parilla my hind leg. *(Johnny looks at Madison.)*

JOHNNY: What d'ya think?

MADISON: Personally, I'm still thirsty.

JOHNNY: Yeah, me too. *(They return to the bar. Everything stops. Silence.)*

COWBOY: Well, looky here.

BARTENDER: We don't need no more trouble in here.

MADISON: We're still thirsty, sir. Nick, right? Nice to meet you. Need us some Sarsaparilla.

JOHNNY: We been riding three days and four nights--

MADISON: Just to have us some of your fine sarsaparilla.

COWBOY: What you say to a sandwich, Sassy Parilla boy? I'll feed you a lead sandwich, you say the word. *(An old fashioned gun fight develops, the cowboys against Johnny and Madison.)*

JOHNNY: Step aside, Maddy. I can take care of this.

MADISON: You sure about that? Odds are a little heavy.

JOHNNY: Just about even if you ask me.

MADISON: All right then. This is your show, Kid. *(Madison steps aside with a little bow. The combatants square off. Johnny and his six adversaries wait. Finally, one of the cowboys goes for his gun. Johnny whips out his revolver and fires five times, knocking the revolvers from the hands of five of his opponents. The original cowboy stands with his revolver half out of his holster. He is frozen, can't move.)*

JOHNNY: *(to Madison)* What d'ya say, Maddy. Got me one slug left. Where should I put it? Tween his eyes? Take off his right big toe?

MADISON: See his left ear lobe?

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JOHNNY: Sure do.

MADISON: That'd give him something to remember you by.

JOHNNY: Guess it would. Only, I can't do it just standing here. I got to be moving.

MADISON: Then, move. *(Johnny reholsters his gun. The cowboy sees his opening and raises his gun to shoot. But before he can get off a shot, Johnny redraws his revolver and fires. The cowboy yelps in pain and grabs his left ear and flees the bar.)*

BARTENDER: Damn. *(He places two bottles of Sarsaparilla on the bar and Madison collects them, giving one to Johnny who is reloading his gun.)*

MADISON: Nice shooting.

JOHNNY: Piece of cake.

MADISON: Ain't had this much fun since that time in Loredó.

JOHNNY: Oh, that was a hoot, wan't it.

MADISON: Yes indeedy. *(They turn to leave with their drinks.)*

BARTENDER: Say, mister, who are you?

MADISON: Madison Lane, thank you for asking.

BARTENDER: Not you. Him. Quick draw.

JOHNNY: Johnny. Johnny McRoy. Most folks call me the Frio Kid. *(The name echoes around the bar in whispers.)*

BARTENDER: The Frio Kid. Never heard of you.

JOHNNY: Well, now you have. *(He and Madison leave as the guitar player begins to play and sing.)*

GUITAR PLAYER: The Frio Kid rode into town

And didn't leave till the sun set down

The smoke from his gun left a thickened haze

And ever one of us stood in a daze.

That's the Frio

The Frio Kid

Got his name right

Remember this fight

The Frio the Frioóóóóóó Kid. *(Outside the bar, Johnny and Madison sit on the edge of the boardwalk drinking from their bottles. Rosita McMullen enters, coming from a shopping spree.)*

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*She is laden with a number of packages, bags, and paraphernalia.
The two watch her as she approaches.)*

JOHNNY: Hey, she's a looker.

MADISON: You leave her alone.

JOHNNY: Huh?

MADISON: A woman like that -- she's too good for you. So stop ogling.

JOHNNY: You know her?

MADISON: Not yet. *(They poke at one another in a friendly way. As Rosita passes them, she trips, dropping her packages and sacks in the dirt. The two rush to help her gather herself. What ensues is a tussle between them to outdo the other with the poor Rosita caught between their good intentions. After a few moments of frustration)*

ROSITA: Please, I can take care of this myself.

JOHNNY: Johnny. Johnny McRoy.

MADISON: And I'm his best buddy, Madison Lane.

ROSITA: Will you please let me get home?

JOHNNY: We could help you with that load there.

ROSITA: Don't need any help, thank you.

JOHNNY: Mighty big bunch of packages you got there.

MADISON: She could use a Wells Fargo Wagon with this many packages.

JOHNNY: That or a branch of the Kansas City Southern--

ROSITA: Will you let me pass?

JOHNNY: I don't know. It just might be me that makes a pass, you're so darn purty.

ROSITA: You're an awful bore.

MADISON: 'Scuse us, Missus. We don't mean to bother.

JOHNNY: Just we ain't seen something as purty as you since--

MADISON: Since our first day of college. Now hush, Johnny? Can't you see you're scaring her?

ROSITA: College?

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JOHNNY/MADISON: Harvard./Yale. *(They look at one another, then back to Rosita)* Yale./Harvard.

ROSITA: I went to Sarah Lawrence.

JOHNNY: Is she as purty as you?

ROSITA: I must get home, please.

MADISON: Where do you live?

ROSITA: Just down there, end of the street. The parsonage. My daddy's the parson?

MADISON: He's a good man.

ROSITA: You know him?

JOHNNY: No, but we heard tell he was a good man. Word is the parson of this town is the best parson this town's got. Weren't you telling me, Maddy, about how good a parson this here woman's daddy is?

MADISON: I might of been telling you that, yeah.

ROSITA: Well, if you'll excuse me --

JOHNNY: Be our pleasure.

MADISON: To excuse you to your --

JOHNNY: Parsonage. To your parsonage--

MADISON: At the end of the road.

ROSITA: Idiots. *(She exits, they follow, pushing and shoving each other as they go.)*

SCENE 2

GUITAR PLAYER: Two best friends eyeing the same gal

That don't bode well in the high Chaparral

Two best friends, gonna end up bad

One with joy, the other with sad

In the Chaparral

The high Chaparral

Looking for love in the high Chaparral. *(A room with a table and a bowl with water. Madison is discovered with his shirt off, taking a sponge bath. He shadow boxes with his image in the mirror. Johnny comes in.)*

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JOHNNY: Hey now, watch it, watch it. (*They playfully shadow box with one another.*)

MADISON: Okay, okay, okay. I gotta go.

JOHNNY: Uncle?

MADISON: Uncle, smuncle. Gimme my shirt.

JOHNNY: Where you going?

MADISON: To see my girl.

JOHNNY: You don't got no girl.

MADISON: Do so got a girl. Purtiest thang. . .

JOHNNY: You ain't got no girl.

MADISON: You know her. She's a real looker.

JOHNNY: I don't know no lookers.

MADISON: Sure you do. Name's Rosita.

JOHNNY: Rosita ain't your girl. She's my girl.

MADISON: Oh, that so? I done asked her to go to the dance with me.

JOHNNY: You ain't going to no dance.

MADISON: Going to the dance, yes sir, with my girl.

JOHNNY: I'm going to the dance.

MADISON: No you ain't.

JOHNNY: Am too. Get outta my way.

MADISON: Ain't in your way.

JOHNNY: Are too.

MADISON: Am not. (*They continue going at it as the cowboys and dance hall girls enter with the Guitar Player and his music and begin square dancing. Madison joins them where he finds Rosita and they join the dancing while Johnny looks on.*)

JOHNNY: SHE'S MY GIRL!!

MADISON: NO SHE AIN'T!

JOHNNY: YES SHE IS!!!

ALL: NO SHE AIN'T!!! (*And Johnny storms off. The bartender calls the dance which ends with a whoop and a holler from all.*)

BARTENDER: Okay, ever body. This here whomping stomping thingamagig is being held in order to raise the money needed to build us our new school house. For our newly hired schoolmarm! Step up here, Missy, and take your bow. (*Rosita curtseys and giggles with*

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embarrassment.) Now, what we're gonna do is have us an old-fashioned wrestling match. The two contestants willing to bid the most money will get the opportunity to dance all night with our schoolmarm. And she's worth ten thousand dollars a dance, no question of it. The winning wrestler gets to cut a rug with Ms. Rosita McMullen. Who's gonna start our bidding?

MADISON: I bid five dollars. *(Oohs and ahs from the crowd)*

COWBOY: I bid ten. *(More oohs and ahs)*

ANOTHER: Twenty. I bid twenty. *(Johnny has entered to the edge of the crowd.)*

JOHNNY: I bid five hundred dollars. *(All are shocked, even Rosita.)*

MADISON: You ain't got five hundred dollars. *(Johnny drops his roll of money on the ground.)*

JOHNNY: Count it. *(Someone does.)*

ROSITA: I'm not worth five hundred dollars.

JOHNNY: That and more, ma'm. That and more. So, who's gonna match me and wrestle for this gal's hand? *(Silence. No one moves. No one except Madison. He steps forward.)*

MADISON: I spect that's all the money you got in the world. Well, I'll match it with all I got. Twenty-five dollars and eighty-one cents. *(He tosses his money to the ground.)*

ROSITA: No... no... *(Silence. The crowd clears the center of the stage, giving the two friends room to fight.)*

JOHNNY: Don't worry, sweetheart, I won't hurt him much.

MADISON: Where'd you get five hundred dollars?

JOHNNY: Know that little bank over in San Antone?

MADISON: They got a bank in San Antone?

JOHNNY: Well, they did, till I took ever cent they had this morning. *(They wrestle. It is a fun match since the two friends know each other too well. The crowd "oohs" and "aahs" with each wrestling move, punctuated by the guitar player. It looks like Madison is going to get the better of Johnny until Johnny pulls a move that is unfair if not downright dirty. He wounds Madison to such a degree that Madison is left dazed and on the ground. Johnny moves to Rosita and offers her his hand. She backs away and then rushes to Madison who is struggling to*

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regain his composure, leaving Johnny alone and angered. Johnny pushes his way through the crowd as Madison receives all of Rosita's attention.)

SCENE 3

Split stage. The guitar player in the center, playing music to accompany the action. On one side we watch as Madison courts Rosita by bringing her flowers, sitting with her on her father's front porch, laughing at her jokes, and finally taking her hand. Eventually, he slides to his knee and proposes. It is obvious from her nod that she accepts, judging from the joy that Madison expresses. At the same time, we see Johnny robbing a grocery store and shooting the owner in the back. He then attacks a husband and a wife, hitting the man with his gun and forcing himself on the woman against her protests. Finally, he enters a school yard where he finds two children playing marbles. He kicks the toys aside with a guffaw and a grimace. The final image in the scene is the wedding of Madison and Rosita with the Bartender serving as the preacher. Just as the groom is kissing the bride, Johnny interrupts the ceremony. The guitar player provides a dramatic strum on his instrument.

JOHNNY: I'll get mine, Madison Lane. You can count on that.

MADISON: You're a damn fool, Johnny McRoy.

JOHNNY: Johnny McRoy's dead, you idjit. Been dead quite some time now.

MADISON: That so. So who is it that's talking so big?

JOHNNY: It's me, the Frio Kid!

GUITAR PLAYER: (*singing*) That's The Frio

The Frio Kid

Got his name right

Remember this night

The Frio, the Frioooooooooo Kid.

ROSITA: Won't you leave us alone?

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MADISON: Don't waste your breath, Rosey. He's a fool and always will be one.

ROSITA: Still, won't you please leave us in peace?

JOHNNY: Why, I ain't even got started yet.

ROSITA: Yet?

JOHNNY: Maddy, my friend. Rosita, his new wife. Just when you least expect it, I'll be there, for my revenge!

MADISON: What revenge could you possibly want, Kid?

JOHNNY: You stole my gal! I'll make you pay, old boy, and when you least expect it, too. You're both gonna pay!! *(He leaves.)*

ROSITA: Oh, Maddy, he frightens me.

MADISON: Ah, he's all bluff. I know him. All bluff.

ROSITA: But if he does what he says--

MADISON: We won't see him again, not to worry your pretty little head.

ROSITA: Oh, Maddy. . . *(They leave along with the rest of the wedding party except the guitar player. The Frio Kid enters, watching them as they leave. He gives the guitar player a gold coin. The player sings his song as he stands, transfixed. The cowboy with the wounded ear enters behind him. He has a bandage on the left side of his head.)*

COWBOY: Hey, Kid. *(They face one another.)*

THE FRIO KID: Get on with you. I got no beef with you.

COWBOY: But I got one with you. I'm not hearing so well these days.

THE FRIO KID: Don't make me hurt you again. *(They are circling one another.)*

COWBOY: I should warn you. Since that last time in the saloon? I've been practicing. I ain't so slow no more. In fact, I'm known in these parts as Black Butch, fastest gun on the Chaparral.

THE FRIO KID: Yeah, Black Butch. I've heard of you. They say you're fast. Fast on the draw.

COWBOY: Fastern you.

THE FRIO KID: You ready to prove that? I should of put that slug right between your eyes the first time we met.

COWBOY: Guess so. Now it's my turn.

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THE FRIO KID: Well?

COWBOY: Well what?

THE FRIO KID: What you waiting for? *(They draw. Both fire. Black Butch staggers as The Frio Kid holsters his gun. Black Butch turns, struggling to stay on his feet. The Kid goes to him and pushes him slightly. Black Butch falls to the ground, dead. The Kid steps over the body and leaves. Two other cowboys enter.)*

FIRST: Did you see that?

SECOND: Shot him dead.

FIRST: Deader than a pig at slaughter.

SECOND: Somebody's gonna have to hang that fool Kid. He's no good.

FIRST: Good with a gun.

SECOND: But not much else.

FIRST: Hang him. Hang him high. Till he's daid. *(They drag the body off stage and lights change.)*

SCENE 4

A ranch house. Rosita sits alone, waiting.

GUITAR PLAYER: There's no place like home

There's no place like home. *(This segues into "Silent Night." Madison enters from his day's work, tired and dirty. She rushes to him and hugs him close.)*

MADISON: Hey, so, you missed me, did you?

ROSITA: Mm hm. Are you all right?

MADISON: Of course I am. Why would I be otherwise?

ROSITA: Nick was by earlier, saying that the Frio Kid's been seen hanging around.

MADISON: Well, that's likely, seeing how he has kinfolk in these parts. Of course he'd want to spend time with them, seeing's it's Christmas. Have you been resting today?

ROSITA: How could I possibly rest? You gone, the Kid wandering around, thinking and planning no earthly idea what.

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MADISON: He's nothing to worry about.

ROSITA: He threatened you, Maddy dear. He swore revenge. Don't you remember?

MADISON: Who pays attention to that blow-hard. I know I don't. We having dinner tonight?

ROSITA: In a moment. Let me catch my breath first. (*She sits. He hugs her from behind.*)

MADISON: Now, sweet pea, you've gotta stop all your worrying. I've known Johnny McRoy all his life. He likes to get under a body's skin and play with his nerves. Seems like, with you, he's done just that.

ROSITA: How can I help it?

MADISON: You can help it by trusting me.

ROSITA: Will you take care of yourself?

MADISON: A course I will.

ROSITA: You won't let yourself get shot dead?

MADISON: Ah, now, old Johnny Mac's not that kind.

ROSITA: Oh, yes he is. He killed that store owner over in Cripple Creek last year.

MADISON: He must of had cause.

ROSITA: And that traveler only last month? Over in the High Chaparral?

MADISON: Rumors, that's all.

ROSITA: And he's robbed every bank between here and Abilene.

MADISON: Not that many banks between here and Abilene.

ROSITA: Still--

MADISON: Sweetie, you've got to stop worrying. Put that no good cowpoke out of your mind. Okay?

ROSITA: Wish I could.

MADISON: You know what I think? I think we've seen the last of the Frio Kid.

ROSITA: What makes you think that?

MADISON: Well for one thing, it's Christmas.

ROSITA: So?

MADISON: Nobody in their right mind's gonna mess with Christmas.

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ROSITA: Who says the Kid's in his right mind? (*Big striking chord from the guitar player who plays a rousing traditional old-world Christmas song, like "Good King Wenceslas." And the next scene is set by the rest of the cast.*)

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