

Profiles of Character:

I. The Strange

A foodie with a strange affliction comes to terms with what is lacking in his relationship.

A pint of cherry ice cream with dark chocolate chunks strewn about the frozen bloody pulp. Or a jar of unblinking pitted olives. I can take all of that or leave it for some cold cuts stacked precipitously on toasted slices of rye and slathered in a dark decadent steak sauce.

My fridge is stocked and the larder is fit to burst.

This is where my mouth and mind coincide. Where they care enough to come to the table and compromise on something, eventually.

When I tell you I love you, you softly ask in what ways, and it's a debate between my senses.

My mouth recounts:

Soft lips pressed to theirs and familiar fingers placing red grapes to mouths that rest momentarily on their cusp like a globe on its axis.

And what my brain desires to be true:

A well intended kiss and digits that push towards the maw before casually retreating, a hair's breadth from being crushed between well maintained teeth.

When I select a delectable piece of ripe fruit. What am I drawn to? The initial feel of the taut skin drawn over the wanting flesh. A sniff to waft in the faint alluring scent buried beneath a thin obscuring barrier. A truly superb profile but limited until I can *taste* the flesh and know its saccharine flavor. Knowing that all I must do is take a bite and it will surrender itself in ecstasy, exploding in my mouth under the slightest amount of pressure. A kaleidoscope of colors unmatched now masticated into an ochre orgy. Everything is right with the world when these senses align.

But how do you love something with only four senses? How do you give yourself wholly to that which is incomplete? I look at you and I think I know perfection. I hear symphonies in your soft snores. Your sweet trace you left when I awaken each morning is allusive, yet comparable in those moments one is tempted by the seductive beckoning trail of slow braised meat in a smoker or a honeyed treat cooling on the sill. I can touch skin that holds shape and hands with unequalled grace. How you tempt me with an unexplored path. Forbidden; riddled with taboos and trappings.

Perhaps a stray strand of hair here, a drop of blood there, would go unnoticed. But who can subsist on samples, however ample, alone? The main course is waiting and promises textures and sensations unknown to but a rare few. And is that not part of this thrilling paradox? I have what no one else can have. Yet when I have what I want most, I find myself wanting more. More than I can have. Or at least more than I'm allowed to.

There will come a time when what resides in my freezer and pantry will be... unsuitable. Then, My Love, I will give in. Temptation is too titillating. And I cannot resume regular patterns of eating when the feast awaits me.

Please.

Know that I've loved you well. But I've never been one to leave a partial plate. When I dine tonight, there will be no accouterments, no aperitif, nor dessert to pervert my tongue. Every last morsel will pass my palette uninterrupted. Untainted. And it shall be just as inspired as everyday with you that came before it. I only fear afterward, I will know a new hunger even greater than I ever knew you.

A man, his horse, and the play that shook a theater community to its core.

We now return to Act II, Scene I of tonight's play "The Pony Expressed", an original production written, directed, produced, and starring the playwright Jefferson T. Williams in the role of Johnathan Neighsmith. Co-Starring his lifelong friend and companion (who happens to be a horse) Sergio "Reinsplitter" Vavente the IV, portraying the pony known as Chestnut.

As the curtains recede, we open at twilight. A humble stable sits stage right with CHESTNUT (Sergio) resting comfortably in its single stall. The sound of shifting hooves can be heard on the floor boards. The pungent scent of fresh droppings permeates the theater, causing some audience members to pinch their noses. Enter stage left JOHNATHAN (Jefferson). Visibly miserable he slowly trods toward the stable, as he lifts his head, we can see his right eye is blackened.

JOHNATHAN:

Oh, Chestnut. My dearest friend. My closest confidant. This day could not have ended sooner. And now that I find you here, content in the stall I provide you, my heavy heart is lightened and I know it to be all worthwhile.

CHESTNUT:

Stares blankly.

JOHNATHAN approaches the stable, gently stroking the bridge of CHESTNUT's long nose.

JOHNATHAN:

You're so much more than just an animal. You're a fierce friend and loyal compatriot. We've been everywhere together. Seen so much of this world and what it has to offer us. And yet...

JOHNATHAN gazes deeply into CHESTNUT's unblinking gaze;

They say I am touched in the head. Sick, for how I feel. A man can have a dog at his beck and call all the livelong day. Follow him from sunrise to sunset, let it rest on his feet, and eat from the same dish. What we have is so much more. Deeper than any mere man and mongrel could attain.

CHESTNUT bobs its head downward toward a large sack resting beside the stable, filled with oats. As JOHNATHAN is soliloquizing, CHESTNUT's head nodding grows harsher.

JOHNATHAN:

But who cares for them and their lowly thoughts? We were meant for more than this one horse town, pardon the expression.

A polite smattering of laughter can be heard from the audience.

JOHNATHAN:

And this flier proves it! I've discovered a wonderful organization just for us.

JOHNATHAN pulls out a paper titled:

**“WANTED: YOUNG, HOT STUDS/RIDERS FOR THE PONY EXPRESS!!!
SEE THE COUNTRY, SUPPORT YOUR COUNTRY, & GET PAID BY YOUR COUNTRY
TOO!!!”**

If this opportunity doesn't practically chase us down and shake us by our vestments, I don't know what will!

CHESTNUT's neck is straining downward toward the oats but JOHNATHAN mistakes it for him coming closer. JOHNATHAN steadies his head in his hands. The horse and man stare into each other's eyes for what feels like an eternity. JOHNATHAN's lips twitch. The audience collectively holds its breath in anticipation. As JOHNATHAN starts to lean in, enter stage left THE VILLAGERS.

VILLAGER #1:

There's that horse lover now! Eyeing that beast like it t'were a pretty little Filly from Philly! And not an actual Filly, what with the hooves 'n' sich.

VILLAGER #2:

If that first black eye didn't learn him, perchance a matching one will! I saw that god damn sodomite gettin awfully cozy with my mare Marabel this morning while I was trading with Farmer Gilletz down in the village square!

JOHNATHAN turns to CHESTNUT, horror and shame blatant upon his face.

JOHNATHAN:

Tis' blasphemous slander and nothing more!

JOHNATHAN reaches for the oat sack resting beside the stable and places it on the ledge of the stable door.

Now eat thine oats while I deal with these ruffians, Chestnut. But be warned, we may need to leave at a moment's notice!

THE VILLAGERS approach menacingly cracking knuckles and exchanging shifty glances. **JOHNATHAN** sweats profusely as he dusts himself off. **SERGIO**, finally given the feedbag, eats his oats with gusto.

JOHNATHAN:

Good Evening, Gentlemen! How may I assist you on such a fine-

SERGIO:

Having eaten his oats much too, **SERGIO** quickly begins to choke.

JEFFERSON:

Oh, Jesus! No! Not again!!

JEFFERSON motions frantically to some unseen person(s) off stage.

Two stage hands rush over and with **THE VILLAGERS**, steady the thrashing animal. **JEFFERSON** climbs into the stall and onto **SERGIO**, attempting to perform the heimlich maneuver on his 1,000 lb companion. He turns to the audience, with desperation in his voice .

JEFFERSON:

FOR THE LOVE OF GOD! IS THERE A FULLY LICENSED AND ACCREDITED VETERINARIAN IN THE BUILDING?!

SERGIO'S soft brown eyes roll back into his head until only the whites remain. Half chewed oats froth out and cake his lips. The animal collapses with **JEFFERSON** on top of him, taking down the prop stable with ease in a heap of limbs and 2x4s. An immense cry of pain can be heard. The breaking of boards and bones rings throughout the deathly silent theater. For a moment nothing can be heard as more cast and crew rush the stage to attempt to clear the bodies trapped under the spasming animal. An awkward smattering of applause from the audience slowly builds to an uproar.

This concludes tonight's production of "The Pony Expressed". This production (with limited commercial breaks) was made possible by a generous endowment from The Walter B. and Evelyn G. Bondale Foundation, dedicated to a more equitable world through education, comprehension, and compassion for equine/human relations. As well as viewers like you.