

Excerpt from

BONE TO PICK

by

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and

c/o New Dramatists
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BONE TO PICK was commissioned by the Cutting Ball Theater and Magic Theatre/Z Space New Works Initiative and produced with the support of the New Works Fund. It premiered at Cutting Ball Theatre on July 18, 2008 and ran until August 16, 2008. Rob Melrose directed; Paige Rogers played Ria. It will be reprised at Cutting Ball from May 23 – June 30, 2010, with the same cast and director.

CAST

RIA, or Ariadne by another name, a waitress.

TIME & PLACE

Now. Last Diner on the Face of the Earth. Post-Apocalypse.

NOTE

In the course of the play, Ria steps into *her* version of the characters of her lover, Theo, and boss, Kingman. The actor should not play three different roles, but play *Ria* playing Theo and Kingman.

Some of the combinations that Ria uses to open the lock to the freezer door correspond to historical dates:

3-20-0-3 = March 20, 2003, the U.S. invades Iraq

9-11-0-1 = September 11, 2001

8-6-4-5 = August 6, 1945, the U.S. drops the bomb on
Hiroshima

11-8-4-B-C = 1184 B.C. the Trojan War

State of Siege. Last diner on the face of the earth. On the wasteland floor, a bull's skull DSR, a chair CR, a bullet-ridden cash register or other diner detritus DSL. RIA, a waitress from the heart of America holds a coffee carafe. Old or young, she's been through hell and needs a little relief. Sound of a HIGH WIND.

RIA

Someone needs to treat me like a piece of meat.

Know what I mean?

Cuppa joe?

Sure.

She pours an imaginary cup with the carafe. Sits. Then takes a swig of whatever's in the carafe, puts it down.

I mean you take your plate square in front of your gut,

For leverage,

Lay the filet down,

Grain parallel to your clean cutting surface,

Test to see if she's done,

One slap,

Soft as a baby's boo boo —

Rare;

Two,

Like the flat of mama's quick hand,

Ooh! —

Medium;

Three

(Knock knock knock)

Who's there? —

Well well well well well.

Choose your implement accordingly.

An axe for baby's butt

Because youth is a hard nut to crack.

A chainsaw for mama.

Need I explain?

And one slim slip of a stiletto

For well well well

Because that is the kindest cut of all.

I adjusted that direction myself to show my learning in
these areas.

She rises.

The stiletto is a wonderful blade.

Tall

Lean

With a profile guaranteed to match anyone's dark shadow,
(as if there is such a thing as a light shadow).

Take said stiletto.

Ria uses two fingers as a blade.

(High learning.)

What you wanna aim for is the shadow of the bone,
Not the bone itself.

Too obvious.

Too hard.

Too impenetrable.

(Another gold star for vocabulary.)

Here's a tip from one professional to another:
the 5 second rule.

When no one's looking,

Front to back, north to south, east to west --

Lick your pointer digit long and slow,

She licks her blade fingers.

Close your eyes,
trace the bone from tip to toe.
Feel its edge.
You know,
the point between squishy and squashy
like where the eyeball is next to the vile jelly.
(A+ for me.)

She sticks the blade into an
unseen steak and de-bones it
accordingly.

Well stick your knife hard by the eye.
That's your dark shadow.
Take stiletto.
Slip its point clean by shadow edge.
And let 'er rip.
Zip.
Flesh from bone in one cool slice.
Bull's eye.
Meat meat meat meat meat.
Not to mention mashers for a little fluff;
injun succotash for some history;
and au jus for flow flow flow.

She sings.

Oh, the knee bone's connected to the ' thigh bone
The thigh bone's connected to the ' back bone
The back bone's connected to the ' neck bone
My, you sho' look fine!

She stops singing. Looks out.

Edge o' the horizon. High noon.

Theo, you're a horny bastard.

I expect you to come charging through that door any time now.

And I do mean charging,

She begins to walk the terrain
between skull and register, as she
plays at being Theo and herself.

*Ria, gimme three all beef patties special sauce lettuce
cheese pickles onions on a sesame seed bun.*

(How original.)

Charge it!

Hey, hold the onions,

I like my breath sweeeeet—

(Like he likes his Old Spice sweeeeet)

Small order of fries --

Gotta watch the abs --

To go! --

I'm in a hurry got to save the day.

Charge it!

On my account.

Ria, cuppa joe, lite.

Charge it!

Ria, a glazed raised.

Charge it!

Ria, a lemon coke to cut the grease.

Has Kingman been changing the fry oil or what, girl?

Charge it!

*Ria, gimme a half-caf, decaf mocha latte
splash o' espresso Americano.*

Wha-a-a-at?

Don't you understand me, Ria.
I said Americano. You no speaka the English?
You some kinda foreigner or something?
I'm royalty, Mr. Mister. I'll give you a Sanka.
Some half and half for your gut. Charge it.
Gimme a half dozen pastrami subs for me and my boys here.
They're real hungry.
And when they're real hungry,
They get real angry. Charge it.
And one rib eye for me.
Rare. I like my chop to drip.

The rib eye?
The prime cut?
That's the sacred slice.
You got the last one in this joint.

(Oh Brother, Oh Bull. The One and Only.)
We gotta steer. Is all.
Ain't nothing 'much.
He's just a bag o'bones for a bull.
Skinny little thing.
Sinew and bones.
Too tough for the likes of you.
His rib eye's a little tired.
A little weepy.
A little bleary.
Gimme gimme gimme.

(Oh Brother, Oh Bull.)
He's just a itty bitty ole Bullboy.
With nice soft eyes.

Our one sweet thing.
Under lock and key.
One sweet thing
Under lock and key.
Gimme gimme gimme.

(Oh Brother, Oh Bull.)
Kingman says no more ribeye.
Kingman says no more ribeye for you.
Kingman says your account is in default.
You haven't given him a dime in over 90 days.
Kingman says he can't go on like this.
You're eating him out of house and home.
He's losing money on you.
We're down to baked beans because of you.
I been eating baked beans for the last month.
Beans and sody crackers 'cause of you.
All the good stuff goes to the customers.
And all's that's left is beans and sody crackers.
I'm like a hobo,
A ordinary girl on the street.
But I got class.
I got a job.
This is the capital of the world.
I'm royalty.
Kingman says the rib eye is reserved.
When the profit margin is wide
(When hell freezes over),
Then Kingman says I can kiss the cow.

She moves behind her chair.

When I can bring in a paying customer,
Then I can serve

I can serve
The best
The sweetest
The kindest
cut o' the house.
(Oh Brother, Oh Bull.)
No sooner, no later.
The ribeye is under lock and key.
Kingman says,
Kingman says.
Gimme the meat.

As Theo, she BANGS the chair
against the floor.

Gimme the flesh.

BANG!

Gimme it...

BANG!

Gimme it...

BANG!

Gimme it.

Ria begins to back up USR.

I can't do it I can't do it I can't do it
He's the last he's the last he's the last of his kind
No no no no no no no no no ...

A SLAP. Ria's hit by a hard hand,
which spins her around to face US.
A moment.

Ohh...

She turns DSL, soothingly, and
approaches the chair.

Hey girl, you wanna ride in my new car.

She lunges at and leans on its
seat. Theo soothing Ria again.

I gotta Sting Ray.

The top goes down --

ZZZZip --

Then you go in.

The wind blows right through your hair,

Dust flies off the dash.

And the sun glints off the chrome.

Like a razor.

You won't feel a thing.

Except good.

You like?

You get me that ribeye,

We can talk.

You get me that eye,

We can go on a little ride.

Ciao, Ria. Ciao-Ciao. Later.

Ria nurses her slapped face.

Bye, Theo. Bye.

Who's the foreigner now?

She kneels next to her chair.

The capital of Nevada

Is Reno.

The capital of Reno

Is Fort Knox

The capital of Fort Knox
Is China.

Whoops! Foreign.

Sorry.

The capital of the United States
Is Washington, D.C.

The capital of Washington, D.C.
Is Texas.

The capital of Texas is
In your pocket.

Your pocket is poop.

Bull shit!

She sits back on the chair.

I'm gonna lick the can for my lunch today.

Takes another swig from her
carafe. Puts it back down.

Tip from one professional to another:

The umami of legumes will be ruined by the taste of tin on
the tip of the tongue.

Bite down on the foil you used to wrap up yesterday's
burrito, you lucky pig. You'll know what I mean.

Beans are not poor people's food.

They are the food of the future.

Of health, vim and vitality.

Of the last Joe and Jane

On the face of the earth

Sharing a can by a' unlit stove.

Earthquake food.

You can survive forever on a can and a cracker.

In times o' plenty, beans are like a wonder drug.

A strict diet of beans and rice will equal a proportionate drop in weight.

I lost fifteen pounds that way while providing for most of my amino acids.

I owe my figure to beans.

38-24-36.

What's that spell?

M-E

What's that spell?

M-E

Lentils and chickpeas are good too.

Fried up in little patties.

But we don't get them around here.

Too foreign.

Ria stretches out and luxuriates
on the chair.

Gimme a T

Gimme an H

Gimme an E

Gimme an O

What's that spell?

Theo!

What's that spell?

Theo.

She sits up.

Kingman says to hold out.

Don't let a man rule your life.

Kingman's a kindly man.

Best boss I'll ever have.

Talk that nighttime talk he does --

She spreads her legs: Ria as
Kingman.

Baby, I love you like a daughter.

*You got the face of a princess, you know that
A beautiful round-ass moonface
I could just eat you up
If I didn't love you like a daughter*

*I could just take your hand in mine
And walk down to the riverside
I could lay out a mat just for the two of us
If I didn't love you like a daughter*

*I could just spread your hair upon the grass
And worship you like a suppliant
I could get down on my hands and knees
If I didn't love you like a daughter*

*I could bury my head in your lap
And sup of your honey and sweet wine
I could ride you like a bull
If I didn't love you like a daughter*

I could dig my heels into your flanks

Ria digs in her heels.

*And you could kick and scream and chomp at the bit
And ask for more and more and more
If I didn't love you like a daughter*

*I could brand you with my initials
Right on the rump.*

Ria makes a SIZZLING sound.

K-M. King Man.
*Your flesh would perfume the air
And purify our sins.
If I didn't love you like a daughter*

*I would give you the key to the cashbox.
I would give you the combination to the lock
You would never go hungry
If I didn't love you like a daughter*

*Now scrub this floor where the sun don't shine. Don't
forget to oil your hands to keep 'em nice and soft.
Kiss-kiss.*

Ria rises and moves DSR, near
skull.

Recipe for the day:
Grind one bean.
Add a pinch of salt peter.
Add zinc.
Add dash lead. Meld over a low fire. Cast. Blow.
Swallow. Boom the whole city explodes.

Incantation 1:
Oh sweet Jesus. Oh Mother May I. Oh Cow.
Oh Brother. Oh Bull.
Gimme a little something to chew on.
A piece o' smoked jerky.
Some pemmican to last.

Incantation 2:

Eighty six the onions.

Bad for the breath.

Won't come.

Won't kiss.

Shoot.

Incantation 53:

I'll give you the fries.

For free.

Incantation 69:

Skip it.

Incantation 75:

I am alive

I am alive

I am alive

Oh Bull...

--ONEY!

She crosses DSL to the register as
Theo.

*That's what I want on my Dutch Crunch. Lettuce cheese
special sauce. Hold the onions. My sweet breath.*

Ria turns back.

No meat! FRIDAY FISH! Got you!

(Oh Brother, Oh Bull.)

No really. No meat. The cupboard is bare.

Lock and key.

She turns back again, Theo.

*Me and the boys are waiting outside.
We could save the day.
But we need a little sumptin' sumptin'.
A little protein to last the siege.
We win or lose; it all depends on you.
The war effort is resting on you, Ria.
That's what the General says.
That's what the General says.
And you know me and the General...
Tight. You got that li'l cow in the back.*

Turns again CS.

Mr. Mister, we do not serve any bull here.
Y'all got your rations.
I seen 'em.
Your K's, your C's, your MRE'S.
Lifetime supply of rice and beans there.
Lifetime supply of meats and sides there.
You got chicken --
Chicken tetrazzini, chicken mexicano, chicken Country Cap'n
(Whatever that is.)
You got cow too.
Cow stew. Cow ravioli. Cowloaf. Cowdogs. Buffalo
burgers. You got gravy.
You got cheese --

Exasperated w/hunger and longing,
she drops to her knees.

You got nachos oozing with sauce and peppers.
You got lots of stuff.
You got Ho-Ho's and Ding Dongs and Twinkies and M and M's.
You got chips. Lots and lots and lots of chips --

KC Barbecue, Mesquite Lime, sour cream ranch.
Food to last forever.
You got Juicy Juices and O.J. and V-8 and Pepsi.
You got water in a bottle.
Water in a bottle.
You got a heaven in those there.
I bet you even got beer and pretzels. Can't you stand to
give a girl a little beer and pretzels.

She beckons.

A little sumptin' sumptin'. A little lucky charm to last
the night, sugar?

Beat. Rebuffed, she retreats next
to the chair.

The capital of Alaska is Detroit.
The capital of Detroit is Baghdad.
The capital of Baghdad is in
Your head.

Ria runs to the back wall USR.

Y'all don't have to get fresh on me. I mean no one wants
to see blood run. Kingman agrees. Kingman says, no fresh
blood running in this establishment. Attracts flies and
predators. Rot. Brain rot and the like. Kingman says
we're turning vegetarian for the war effort. To conserve
our resources. Kingman says it's better for our health.
Did I tell you I'm down to a size 6? Always wanted to be a
size 6. Rah-rah-sis-boom-bah. Did you notice?

HAIL OF GUNFIRE throughout next
scene. Ria runs to and climbs the
chair for protection.

END OF EXCERPT