

Pony

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<i>Characters</i>	PONY, passing as male, heartthrob, unemployed, mid-late 30s
	CAV, stone butch, dignified, social worker, late 50s
	HEATH, trans man, hipster, early 20s
	MARIE, wild-eyed intellectual woman, a waitress, 30s
	STELL, Machiavellian foxy lady, a sales agent, 30s
<i>Setting</i>	On the other side of the forest from <i>Woyzeck</i> .
<i>Time</i>	Now and <i>Woyzeck</i> .
<i>Note</i>	A double dash (--.) indicates a wordless beat.
<i>Source</i>	This is a response to Georg Büchner's 1837 play <i>Woyzeck</i> , which he died before completing. Of the heap of manuscript pages assembled by different editors, one critic writes, "strictly speaking, [this play] does not exist."
<i>Music</i>	Notes on music follow the play text.

WOYZECK:

This is all because of the tiny line between yes and no.
Is no to blame for yes, or yes for no? I must think it over.

— Georg Büchner

[A dense woods outside a fictional county seat, possibly in Upstate New York. Industry has left behind some vaguely military buildings and new life is slowly returning. There's an affluent city 250 miles south. A few buses serve the town. The bus station sits near a news stand and a social services field office. Ramshackle houses and a rusty fairground are tucked away in the woods. There is a river. And a backroads bar.]

[The set is a landscape of wide old rough boards isolated in the darkness. All the settings in the play should be conjured from those boards. The clothes people wear look like what you'd expect in a depressed rural town, but there's something, maybe in the tailoring at the shoulders, or maybe the silhouette, that suggests a hint of another time, of history hovering beneath the surface.]

Prologue. Sunrise.

[A man emerges from the woods through early morning fog. This is PONY. He pulls a beat-up tin from his pocket. Holds it a moment. Puts it away and walks on.]

1. River Bank.

[MARIE, measuring the distance across the river. Wading in. Seeing what it would be like to throw a knife. It's a creative act – imagining what might have happened here.]

[After a little while, a PONY enters and watches.. Marie resists breaking her concentration. Then, finally,]

MARIE

Seems pretty, right?

PONY

Sure.

MARIE

You'd never know –

PONY

What.

MARIE
Something terrible happened here.

[*Hold.*]

PONY
What are you doing.

MARIE
Trying to figure it out.

PONY
Or trying to get pneumonia.

MARIE
Can't get it from water.

PONY
You could drown.

MARIE
I can swim.

[*Hold.*]

PONY
Isn't this for the sheriff?

MARIE
They don't know the half of it.

PONY
They catch the guy?

MARIE
Yeah, but that don't make me feel any better.

PONY
What else is there to know?

MARIE
--.

PONY
--.

MARIE
Everything.

[*Hold.*]

PONY

--.

MARIE

--.

PONY

Something's gonna kill me I don't know what.

MARIE

No different from anyone else.

PONY

Don't you get flashes of your death?

Mine's not natural.

MARIE

You don't know.

PONY

That drop in your gut. The bottom falling out. I wake up with that feeling.

MARIE

Have we met?

PONY

Oh -

MARIE

It's okay -

PONY

I shouldn't have -

[He goes.]

MARIE

Wait -

[His words echo in her head — strange. She comes to the edge of the water, grabs her towel and rubs herself dry, as much as that's possible in jeans. The drying is vigorous, almost disturbingly so. She pauses a moment. Thinks she sees something in the distance.]

2. News Stand

[STELL minds her news stand near the bus stop. A tinny radio plays. It's the all-purpose general store for this neck of the woods. The News Stand scenes all have a kind of door-slamming-farce physicality.

STELL checks the time. Sound of a bus arriving. STELL looks hopeful.

HEATH enters. He is a young man, casually but expensively dressed. He carries a plastic woven shopping bag. That's his hipster suitcase.]

STELL

Might I interest you in a—

HEATH

No thank you.

[STELL is miffed. She checks the time again, and seeing no other customers, shuts the stand.

HEATH realizes he's in the middle of nowhere.]

HEATH

Wait—

[Too late. STELL hangs a LUNCH sign and heads out.

Damn. HEATH checks his watch, and sits to wait for her return.]

3. Road House

[Cyndi Lauper's "Money Changes Everything" comes on loud. PONY sits with a beer. MARIE has her back to him — she doesn't realize he is there. She sings along to the first verse of the music. She really wants to sing along loudly, but sings softly instead. She holds a compact in her hand and inspects her face as she sings. PONY pretends not to listen.]

MARIE (*quoting Cyndi*)

"I said sorry babe
I'm leavin you tonight.
I found someone new
He's waiting in the car outside.

(I said) "how could you do it
We swore each other everlasting love."

I said "well yeah I know when we did
there was one thing we weren't thinking of

and that's money."

[The music bumps down. STELL has just arrived at MARIE's seat with drinks for the two of them.]

STELL
I told them to turn it down.
Hey, were you singing?

MARIE
No.

STELL
Thought I heard your voice.

MARIE
No.

STELL
What's up.

MARIE
Thought I saw smoke outside on my way here.

STELL
Again?

MARIE
Yeah. I don't know where it's coming from.

STELL
It's not coming from anywhere.
What's going on with you?

MARIE
Lots of things.
Did you see a new guy over there?

STELL
No, why?

MARIE
Thought I saw a guy I didn't recognize.

STELL
And smoke outside and you're singing along in the bar?

MARIE
Shut it.
Here's money.

STELL

Oh I got this round.

MARIE

Stell, you don't got it.

STELL

I do. I got it.

MARIE

Fine. Thank you.

STELL

Are you going to tell me how things are going?

MARIE

I did.

STELL

With your boyfriend?

MARIE

He fucks me too hard.

STELL

Oh.

MARIE

Look – you wanna pry? That's what's going on. It's distracting.

STELL

What are you going to do about it?

MARIE

I don't know.

STELL

How about – tell him?

MARIE

I can't.

STELL

How about – ask for it soft?

MARIE

Yeah -

STELL

Can't say no?

MARIE

Could you keep it down?

STELL

Oh that guy's not listening.

PONY

Oh I'm totally listening.

STELL

Asshole!

MARIE

Don't listen, okay?

PONY

Well don't talk about sex so loud.

STELL

What a jerk.

PONY

I'll just mind my own business.

MARIE

Thank you.

PONY

Just let me know if you want any advice.

STELL

From you? You don't look like you'd know anything.

PONY

I have a lot of – experience.

STELL (to Marie)

Cocky!

MARIE

Yeah but a little cute.

STELL

Naw –

MARIE

Yeah. A little. So – my cunt hurts.

STELL

From when he fucks you too hard?

MARIE

Yeah.

STELL

I wish I could help. I really do. It's too bad.

[Marie drains her drink.]

MARIE

You wanna help?

STELL

[blushing] -- Yeah.

MARIE

Get me another one.

STELL

[disappointed] Already? Okay.

[STELL goes to the bar.]

*[MARIE and PONY make eye contact. PONY feigns not looking at her.
MARIE approaches.]*

MARIE

So who are you.

PONY

Pony. I'm new up here.

MARIE

Well that's nice. From where. Oh let me guess – South City.

PONY

Oh hell no. Maybe twenty years ago -

MARIE

Thought you might be the type –

PONY

I was out way further than that!

MARIE

Oh.

PONY
Yeah.

MARIE
You must like the fresh air.

PONY
The old houses. Tucked away.

MARIE
There's starting to be artists here now.

PONY
What's that saying – first the artists and the queers?

MARIE
What?

PONY
When areas start gentrifying?

MARIE
That's probably not happening here.

PONY
I wonder.

[STELL swoops in.]

STELL
Whiskey.

MARIE
Thanks.

PONY
Little early for the second whiskey.

[A hot look between MARIE and PONY. STELL sees this.]

MARIE
Shut up.

[And another. This is unacceptable to STELL.]

PONY
What's your name?

STELL
Um, Maric, I gotta go back to work. Don't you?

MARIE
Worked breakfast.

STELL
Oh.

MARIE
And I'll do it again tomorrow.

STELL
See ya later?

MARIE
Sure.

STELL
Okay.
Be good.
Bye.

MARIE
[*Not turning*] Bye.

[*STELL exits.*]

PONY
So. Marie.

MARIE
Yeah so you know my name. Whatever.

PONY
Sorry.

MARIE
No, it's fine.

PONY
What were you doing at the river?

MARIE
Already told you.

PONY
What were you doing, walking into the water like that?

MARIE
Did I scare you?

PONY

You said there was something the sheriff didn't know.

MARIE

New guy's got a lot of questions.

PONY

A fella's got to know the lay of the land.

MARIE

I see.

PONY

And I'm fascinated.

You're like a detective.

[MARIE conceals a blush.]

PONY

So what's the big mystery?

MARIE

[Rhetorical] If you commit a crime of passion, can you be innocent?

PONY

I guess it depends.

MARIE

I say, you can.

PONY

But you're still "committing" the crime.

MARIE

Don't forget insanity.

PONY

Right. Insanity.

MARIE

Our killer. The one I'm following. Killed his girlfriend. Rivers of blood from a single slash. Police said it was well done. He knew just where to put the knife.

PONY

How would he know that?

MARIE

You study up.

PONY

Passion's no excuse then.

MARIE

Especially if she didn't actually cheat. Like he thought.

PONY

How do you know?

MARIE

I know. And I've done extensive interviews with people from town.

PONY

So now you go down to the river –

MARIE

To reconstruct. He's disaffected, alienated, stone cold broke, and working a number of menial jobs. And then his woman's running around. What happens in that moment – that snap – that blink. How do you get to that point?

PONY

Do things like that happen around here – often?

MARIE

People are scraping by right now. And.

PONY

Is this – what you do?

MARIE

"Do"? Like do for a living?

PONY

You wait tables, but what do you "do"?

MARIE

This n' that. And this.

[PONY looks a little dubious.]

MARIE

Still fascinated?

PONY

I -

MARIE

Because I still don't know anything about you.

PONY

I don't really like to talk about myself.

MARIE

I can tell. Why this place, then.

PONY

Thought I could find some peace.
Just be my self. Be my real self.

MARIE

What makes you think it'll be better here?

PONY

I'm just hoping. Could be my last chance.

[Beat. PONY gets up.]

PONY

I gotta go.

MARIE

I'll find you.

PONY

Don't. You're taken.

MARIE

I do what I want. I'll find you.

PONY

Apparently it's a small town.

[Strains of the next jukebox song well up. Fleetwood Mac's "Dreams," at the top of the first chorus "Thunder only happens when it rains . . ."]

4. Social Services.

*[CAV's office at the Social Services Field Office.
CAV is PONY's Social Worker.]*

PONY

So, what's the deal with that experiment you told me about.

CAV

It's a study. You still interested?

PONY

Maybe. I get paid?

CAV

\$15 an hour.

PONY

That's a lot.

CAV

It's like a job. You have to come in or sometimes we come to you to see how you're doing, a couple times a week, while you keep looking for a job.

PONY

And can you get fired?

CAV

Only if you miss your appointments.

PONY

So what's it about?

CAV

People getting back on their feet after time inside.
People starting over. Like you.

PONY

Like me.

CAV

--.

PONY

How many people you got?

CAV

I can't tell you that.

PONY

A lot? A hundred?

CAV

More.

PONY

Wow.

CAV

Yes. Well I have a staff.

PONY

Really? This place is, like, dead.

CAV

Funding is – well – you know. So they work from the institute in town.
I come out here once a week.

PONY

In the study, are you gonna use our names and tell about our backgrounds?

CAV

I can change the name if you prefer. It'll just be published amongst scholars – people you'd never run into.

PONY

But why are you doing this?

CAV

I guess the study asks, can people change? What does it mean to change?

PONY

What do you think?

CAV

I don't know.

[*Beat.*]

Right now you're doing good. You're putting out applications, right?

PONY

Yeah! Sure.

CAV

What have you done.

PONY

Do you need to give me the third degree?

CAV

This is how it works.

PONY

Okay. Well. I went to town and I checked out the hardware store. And the diner.
And the feed store.

CAV

Checked out?

PONY

I went in. And asked if they were hiring.

CAV
And?

PONY
No! They weren't.

CAV
Sounds like that's making you angry.

PONY
Of course!

CAV
All they did was say that they weren't hiring. It had nothing to do with you.

PONY
Oh yeah? I don't know. It was like "[*A look up and down*] No."

CAV
[*a laugh*] That's just small town bullshit, don't you think?

PONY
Fucking discrimination is what it is.

CAV
Against the unemployed?

PONY
You know what I'm fucking talking about.

CAV
You think they can tell there's something different about you?

PONY
Maybe.

CAV
I can't tell.

PONY
Well look at you.

CAV
What about me.

PONY
Look at us.

CAV
I think we're pretty hot.

PONY
Fuckin fag.
I'm kidding.

CAV
I know.

PONY
When I was getting out and I heard of you, I didn't think it would be in this kind of place. All these military, all these medical complexes in the area.

CAV
What did you imagine.

PONY
Some hippy-dippy fruit stand run by some Statue of Liberty who'd want to date me.

CAV
You couldn't've gone to your sister, huh?

PONY
She doesn't get it.

CAV
Sorry to hear that.

PONY
Yeah. Hey, what pronouns do you use?

CAV
She and her.

PONY
Okay.

CAV
It's one thing I never pushed.

PONY
Was that too personal?

CAV
It's fine.

PONY
Why didn't you push?

CAV
I don't –
It was –
another time.

PONY
Right.

CAV
We can talk about it – another time.

[Beat. CAV looks out a window.]

PONY
Why do you have those stones on your desk?

CAV
These? I pick them up when I go to the beach. Don't know why.
I like looking at them.

PONY
Me too.

CAV
Thanks.

[Hold. CAV, shifts.]

PONY
Okay, so, see you next week?

CAV
Yeah.

PONY
Thanks. And I forget. Do I pay you?

CAV
I can charge it to the study.

PONY
Great.

[They nod goodbye to each other. PONY ducks out.]

[CAV holds. She considers the stones.]

5. News Stand.

*[STELL is rushing back from lunch. She almost trips over HEATH who has spread out, kind of resting his eyes.
As soon as he sees her he springs into action.]*

HEATH
Hi!

STELL
Hi.

HEATH
Did you have a nice lunch?

STELL
Yes.

[She gets situated back at her stand, taking down the sign and resuming her reading.]

HEATH
What are you reading there?

STELL
Porn.

HEATH
Porn?

STELL
--.

HEATH
Cool.

STELL
Can I help you?

HEATH
Can I buy a water?

STELL
Here. It's a dollar.

HEATH
Thank you sooo much.

STELL
You weren't planning on sleeping here, like tonight, were you.

HEATH

I was waiting for you to come back from lunch. What makes you think I'm staying in this shit-hole tonight?

STELL

By shit-hole are you referring to town or this particular area?

HEATH

I thought this was a public park.

STELL

You shouldn't close your eyes here. It's not safe.

HEATH

Oh I'll be fine.

STELL

What are you doing here?

HEATH

Oh that's right, this is like a small town and everybody knows everything about everybody so, like, who's the stranger.

STELL

--.

HEATH

I'm here to find someone.

STELL

Who.

HEATH

Kind of a father figure. Who didn't raise me. But who I just hope is gonna wanna know me. I don't need taking care of. But I can't live at home anymore and –

STELL

Who is it.

HEATH

Wait wait I don't want to make it this shocking surprise, I mean, it's surprising that I'm showing up but I want to do this in my own way.

STELL

Well – whoever it is – I'm sure I can help.

HEATH

Really?!

STELL

I'm very helpful.

HEATH

[Laughs, thinking this is a funny joke.]

Are you, like, the person who knows everybody's business?

STELL

[Laughing with him] That's my business! *[Stell continues to laugh for a second and then totally stops.]*

HEATH

[Laughing a second too long.]

[Noticing STELL's not laughing.]

STELL

It'll be a thousand dollars.

HEATH

No way.

STELL

--.

HEATH

Five hundred.

STELL

Don't insult me. Eight hundred and you pay half up front.

HEATH

Six Hundred, half up front.

STELL

Seven, half up front.

HEATH

Fine.

STELL

There's an ATM –

HEATH

I fucking got it, okay? Jesus.

[HEATH pulls out a wad of cash.]

STELL

That yours?

HEATH

[“*Tes*”] No, wait. How are we gonna do this?

STELL

You pay me.

HEATH

And.

STELL

And I find Daddy.

HEATH

It's not Daddy like that.

STELL

Does Daddy have a name?

HEATH

It's different now. Changed.

STELL

Daddy with a name change.

HEATH

And maybe some – other changes.

STELL

Uh huh. Well, we got options.

HEATH

More than one?

STELL

Two.

HEATH

Good.

STELL

One at a time.

*[She puts her hand out for the money.
Heath hands it over.]*