

50 Speeches From The Contemporary Theatre

822.

008

MON

EQUUS Peter Shaffer

Alan - 17 A boy guilty of blinding 6 horses tells his psychiatrist how his obsession with the animal began.

ALAN. That's what you want to know, isn't it? All right: it was. I'm talking about the beach. That time when I was a kid. What I told you about ... I was pushed forward on the horse. There was sweat on my legs from his neck. The fellow held me tight, and let me turn the horse which way I wanted. All that power going any way you wanted ... His sides were all warm, and the smell ... Then suddenly I was on the ground, where Dad pulled me. I could have bashed him... *(Pause.)* Something else. When the horse first appeared, I looked up into his mouth. It was huge. There was this chain in it. The fellow pulled it, and cream dripped out. I said "Does it hurt?" And he said—the horse said—said *(He stops in anguish. Desperately.)* It was always the same, after that. Every time I heard one clop by, I had to run and see. Up a country lane or anywhere. They sort of pulled me. I couldn't take my eyes off them. Just to watch their skins. The way their necks twist, and sweat shines in the folds ... I can't remember when it started. Mum reading to me about Prince who no one could ride, except one boy. Or the white horse in Revelations. "He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True. His eyes were as flames of fire, and he had a name written that no man knew but himself" ... Words like reins. Stirrup. Flanks ... "Dashing his spurs against his charger's flanks!" ... Even the words made me feel—... Years, I never told anyone. Mum wouldn't understand. She likes "Equitation". Bowler hats and jodhpurs! "My grandfather dressed for the horse," she says. What does that mean? The horse isn't dressed. It's the most naked thing you ever saw! More than a dog or a cat or anything. Even the most broken down old nag has got its *life!* To put a bowler on it is *filthy!* ... Putting them through their paces! Bloody gymkhanas! ... No one understands! ... Except cowboys. They do. I wish I was a cowboy. They're free. They just swing up and then it's miles of grass ... I bet all cowboys are *orphans!* ... I bet they are! No one ever says to cowboys "Receive my meaning"! They wouldn't dare. Or "God" all the time. *(Mimicking his mother.)* "God sees you, Alan. God's got eyes everywhere—" *(He stops abruptly.)* I'm not doing any more! ... I hate this! ... You can whistle for anymore. I've had it!