

Four Horses - Anabel, Year 10, VIC

I own a bar. Bad idea from the start! You get to serve drinks, watch people drink, talk about drinks and then go on to ramble about their problems, it's great. There are many characters... like 'person who watches sport and cheers number one', 'person who watches sport and cheers number two,' and 'person who watches sport and boos to the dismay of number one and two'. We often have to escort the booper out, but the whole bar knows that they are incredibly important to the ecosystem of the bar... bar fights.

There are 2 regulars. One permanently depressed about their life, and the other constantly miserable about the state of the world. And there is a third chair and a fourth chair and a fifth chair and so on because this is still a running business.

And no, these chairs are not the inciting incident, because the door? It got kicked down.

My left ear alerted me to "THE END IS NIGH!" Three four-legged figures walked into a bar, the fourth one ducked.

Turn to your left to see exhibit one.

Those four figures turned out to be horses. Anthropomorphic horses.

Talking to me, one asked, "Yo bartender, can we grab a drink? Three beers, one water, the pale guy is sober. In glasses, too, not buckets. That last bar did that. Don't underestimate the power of divinity, we have opposable thumbs."

Are you confused? Because I was, so I said, "Wait, who are you???"

The horses replied in order, almost as if they were preparing for this moment. The first, with almost blinding white fur, proclaimed "We are..."

The second, an auburn red horse, continued, "...the four horses..."

The third, a black mare, raised up onto its hind legs in an attempt to do jazz hooves: "...of the apocalypse!"

The final, grey horse, finished with, "Or death, or the end of the world, just all things bad."

Chair one sad era person, the only one not bewildered out of the six of us, chipped in, "Aren't you meant to be the four horse MEN of the apocalypse?"

The white horse, even more offended than before, replied, "No! Number one, who said it was just *men* riding us? Just because we destroy and kill everything doesn't mean we don't care about diversity. And number two..."

Before the sentence could be finished, red horse butted in, “Steve, what did we talk about? It’s over, no more controlling us, FREEDOM!!!”

I guessed Steve was a former horseman of the apocalypse, and the shadowy figure in the alleyway that was scrambling away.

I guess the pale horse could feel that the bar had never had this much confused energy, so in an effort to be the master of breaking walls and explaining this absurdity, the pale horse rambled like there was no tomorrow. I mean, the horses are to do with the end of the world, no tomorrow, but alas.

“So hi, let me introduce us! I’m Pale Horse aka Death, that’s Grey Horse, Conquest, that’s Red, War, and Black Horse, Famine! But don’t you dare use those names because we now are Google, Facebook, Apple and Amazon! The four horses of tech!!! NO MORE ARE WE OUTDATED!!!”

Red Horse whispered into White Horse's ear.

“Okay, correction people! We are actually the four horses of *human crisis*! So we have Poverty, Global Warming, Extremism and Human Rights Violations! Wait, or did we choose the four horses of the human rights of minorities? Or was it four horses of hating on the younger generation, or was it four horses of no one talking about certain issues because the media is biased, four horses of artificial intelligence? Or the four horses of global superpowers that could nuke the world at any minute? This bit has gone on too long, 100 out of 865 words and attention is valuable!”

Pale Horse stepped back sheepishly, so the booper took over, leapt up onto a table – almost what Conquest Horse would’ve done if not for the name change – kicked a glass onto the floor (that made me cringe), and announced:

“Ha! You keep changing your name, what’s next? The four horses of seasons? You might need to resort to that if you can’t make your mind up on what world ending event you’re gonna focus on! Or is there too much so you’ll give up? Boo hoo!”

The two cheerers did what they do best: cheering. “YEAH! GO BOB YES, expose those horses!”

Surprisingly, the two sad life era people also joined in, in agreement for once of what was truly worse, and to my dismay shouted, “FIGHT FIGHT FIGHT!!!”

I wouldn’t dare to bore you with the details of a bar fight, but what I will say is that the three sport patrons ran off with the horses, and I guess Steve slipped back in.

The two miserable regulars have taken to the streets with soup cans, infer from that what you will.

See, the trouble is I've lost my most loyal patrons. Now I have troubles. So I walked into the bar and ouch, something hit me. So that's what it's like on the other side of the bar.