

BREUCKELEN

by Chris Van Strander

CHARACTERS

WITCHY	female, 20's; a witchy-looking girl
CAKEMAVEN	male, 20's; a hipster
DUTCH WIDOW	female, 20's; Colonial-era
BATHTUB GIN	female, 30's; from the Roaring Twenties
SQUATTER	female, 30's; from 1866
VICTIM OF UGLY GEORGE	female, 20's; from 1981
SAPPHIC	female, 20's; from 1822
YOUR HOST	either gender, any age
An assortment of OPEN MIC ACTS	

SETTING

Creeper Bar, a Brooklyn dive. Now.

Note: Breuckelen runs approximately 80 minutes.

(Creeper Bar, a dive-y Williamsburg, Brooklyn watering hole. Canvases by local artists. A stage set up for an open mic night. Audience is divided into 2 seating areas—say, A and B. CAKEMAVEN, a black-framed-glasses-wearing hipster, sits amongst the audience in Seating Area B, sucking on a PBR and blogging on his laptop. A WITCHY girl mills casually about. CAKEMAVEN checks her out, but she doesn't even know he's alive. As the audience take their seats, a musical OPEN MIC ACT is singing/playing its heart out. Once most everyone's seated, the ACT finishes; YOUR HOST takes the stage.)

YOUR HOST

Give it up for [name of OPEN MIC ACT], everybody—let's hear it. Thanks, that was great. Welcome everybody to Creeper Bar, located at the corner of lovely Bedford Ave and North Sixth. I'm your host, and this is the open mic we do here every week. Thank you all for coming out tonight to catch these great acts. Most of these are local performers, but even if they're not local they support the cause—see, we're also a benefit to help raise awareness about, and hopefully stop, all the out of scale building going up around Brooklyn. It's gonna mean more noise, more rent, more traffic, more subway crowds. All tonight's proceeds are gonna go towards this fight. So let's hear it for that. (*applauds*) Anyway—back to our lineup.

(YOUR HOST introduces more OPEN MIC ACTS; they each take the stage, perform, then leave. Two additional acts here seems like a good number—maybe one each, briefly, of poetry and stand-up. After the last ACT has gone, YOUR HOST takes the stage, a copy of *Leaves of Grass* in hand:)

YOUR HOST

*Others will enter the gates of the ferry, and cross from shore to shore;
Others will see the shipping of Manhattan north and west, and the heights of Brooklyn to
the south and east;
Fifty years hence, others will see them as they cross, the sun half an hour high;
A hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years hence, others will see them,
Will enjoy the sunset, the pouring in of the flood-tide, the falling back to the sea of the
ebb-tide.
What is it, then, between us?
What is the count of the scores or hundreds of years between us?
So that was the last act on the list; anyone else want to get up and share anything?*

WITCHY

I'd like to say something.

YOUR HOST

Sure, come on up—let's bring up my friend here, who helps make this night possible each week.

WITCHY

(takes the stage, clipboard in hand)

Hey everybody. Thanks for coming out to support these amazing local artists. So here's the deal: I'm asking people to sign this petition to stop noncontextual building development in my neighborhood—Bushwick. Basically, a few months ago the whole area of Bushwick was rezoned, so now it's "R6," which just means developers can come in and build a whole lot higher and a whole lot larger than they used to be allowed, and basically just take over block after block after block and force out the people who've been living there their whole lives and building the community. They want to buy up and then knock down all the residences there to build high-rise condos.

But the thing we're most worried about losing is a historic site that's there: the Stuyvesant Leg Museum. *(displays an informational brochure)* There used to be this two-story farmhouse at what today is 93 Grattan Street; this Dutch carpenter Adrian Van der Boss lived and worked there in the 1650's and '60's. So in 1660, Peter Stuyvesant, who as you know was the governor of New Amsterdam then, went to Van der Boss to have him make a replacement for his artificial leg. (See, before he was governor, Stuyvesant lost his right leg in the Caribbean during a battle when it was crushed by this cannonball, so he wore a pegleg the rest of his life.) So Van der Boss tells him that for a really reasonable price, he'll actually make him *two* legs—really nice ones too, silver inlays and everything—so he'll always have a spare. So Stuyvesant agrees, but of course when the legs're done and it comes time to pay for both of 'em, he refuses—Stuyvesant was famous for being just, like, a complete dick—so Van der Boss keeps the other one. So but the good part is that it means that the leg he kept was an exact replica of the one Stuyvesant wore 'til the day he died. So—who cares? Well, the common belief is that the pegleg actually fit him really really badly (apparently Van der Boss was a pretty crappy carpenter) and chafed him all over and basically put his whole life into an even worse frickin' mood—and that *that* was actually one of the main reasons for Stuyvesant's super-tyrannical governing style, which ultimately led to him losing his support with the people, which directly led to there being, like, no resistance at all when the British invaded in 1664, took over, and renamed us New York.

Anyhow, the farmhouse has been completely preserved in its original condition. Every year more than 800 visitors come see it; it's home to not just the pegleg but also period carpentry tools, farm equipment, and an interactive butter churn.

So but what do the developers plan to do? Demolish it, as early as September—they've already bought up all the buildings surrounding it—and erect a 30-story condo in its place.

Our neighborhood's under siege. The developers are coming on quicker and quicker, and we're extremely alarmed they're gonna destroy not just this historic site, but the

character of the entire neighborhood—both of which mean a lot to us who live in this wonderful part of Brooklyn. I'll be over here if anybody's interested in more information and would like to sign. Thanks.

(WITCHY sits amongst the audience in Seating Area A. YOUR HOST retakes the stage.)

YOUR HOST

'Kay, just a reminder, I'll be in back if anyone wants to sign up to do something. 'Til then... get a drink, check out some of the art, these're all local artists and they're all for sale. I'll be back in a little bit.

(YOUR HOST leaves. Ambient bar music up. CAKEMAVEN makes his move on WITCHY.)

CAKEMAVEN

Well, here I am. What were your other two wishes? *(waits for her response)* So do you do it on the first date or am I wasting my time on a Jesus freak? *(waits)* Are you from Tennessee? 'Cause you're the only ten I see! *(waits)* No no, you must be Jamaican... 'cause Jamaican me crazy. *(waits)* Sorry, I'm new in town. Could you give me directions to your apartment? *(waits)* Do you have a map? I just keep getting lost in your eyes. *(waits)* No, really—you've got great eyes. Did your mother have sex with a carrot? *(waits)* I'm a magical being: take off your bra. *(waits)* My name's Reilly.

(WITCHY suddenly becomes interested; she turns and stares at him for a while in silence.)

WITCHY

Hell're you waiting for? Bring me booze.

CAKEMAVEN

...Sure! Couple bronsons?

(retrieves two PBRs from his messenger bag)

Do we know each other? We do... don't we?

WITCHY

You a crackhead?

CAKEMAVEN

No.

WITCHY
Red Sox?

CAKEMAVEN
Mets.

WITCHY
Serbian?

CAKEMAVEN
Not bloody likely.

WITCHY
Parsons?

CAKEMAVEN
Cooper Union.

WITCHY
Billyburg?

CAKEMAVEN
Slope.

WITCHY
Omgod you're a *Slopester*.

CAKEMAVEN
(*scoffs*) As if.

WITCHY
Oh no? How's your Grizzly Bear bootlegs? How's the Food Co-op? How's N+1?

CAKEMAVEN
Hey—don't joke about that. It's the bible.

WITCHY
Next you're gonna tell me you got a blog.

(CAKEMAVEN hesitates.)

WITCHY

Oh god, you're a *blogger* too? This's gonna end up on some site?

CAKEMAVEN

(beat) I'm Cakemaven.

WITCHY

...Huh?

CAKEMAVEN

Cakemaven. Number one-viewed blog in Park Slope? I'm, like, the underground voice.
(offers laptop) Check it.

WITCHY

(reads) "Blogging Creeper Bar's open mic. Post more about it later... In better news, HUGE fan of the cute new barista at Tea Lounge. I won't front, I was off the Lounge for almost 3 months cuz it just got too scene-y, but I hafta start going again cuz of her—she is totally crushable. Spent all morning there searching for those Arcade Fire mp3's Jim told me about; couldn't find 'em, then found 'em. Stoked."

(looks up) Are you fucking kidding me with this shit?

CAKEMAVEN

Vintage Cakemaven, baby.

WITCHY

(reads) "Realizing lately how possible—"

CAKEMAVEN

(grabs laptop) Don't read that.

WITCHY

It's all over the Net.

CAKEMAVEN

Yeah but I'm right here—

WITCHY

(keeps reading) "Realizing lately how possible—scratch that, inevitable—it is to live a completely isolated life in this city. People think cuz you blog there's community but trust me, the blogosphere's as lonely as anyplace. It's my fault—I don't use my city."

WITCHY & CAKEMAVEN

“I’m so alone.”

CAKEMAVEN

(takes over) “I know what’s gonna happen. Some day—maybe 5 years from now, maybe 30—I’m gonna get undiagnosed lung cancer cuz I smoke too goddamn much and always will, collapse on my floor and about a week later just die in front of my door. No one’ll have any number to contact my family, so they’ll ship me off to whatever morgue I’m living nearest at the time. Eventually some lame great-nephew or something from what remains of my family, all of whom will probably still be living in freaking Iowa, will figure out I must’ve died cuz of some tax thing, and go claim my body for legal purposes but not be able to find it cuz the city will’ve buried me under some number in Potter’s Field in the Bronx, which would just be the final joke cuz I hate the Bronx with the white-hot intensity of a thousand suns.”

(Pause. Vulnerable moment.)

WITCHY

Wanna sign? *(her petition)*

CAKEMAVEN

That Dutch thing? Why not. *(signing)* Gonna win the good fight, huh?

WITCHY

Kept out Wal Mart, didn’t we? Kept out Cracker Barrel, didn’t we?

CAKEMAVEN

Why you even bothering with this anyway?

WITCHY

’Cause it’s History?

CAKEMAVEN

Oh yeah—cuz the Dutch were soooo awesome. Let’s rip off the Indians, hold slaves and kill homosexuals. God, you people can be so freaking midtown.

WITCHY

What’s that s’posed to mean?

CAKEMAVEN

Oh come on, they’ve been trotting this out for years: the Death of Brooklyn, the Death of

Brooklyn, The Death of My Beloved Fucking Brooklyn. I'm still waiting for the Death of Painting and the Death of the Novel. BK's not going anywhere.

WITCHY

Awfully naïve coming from Corcoran Group's little butt boy.

CAKEMAVEN

Hey I'm nobody's butt boy, thanks!

WITCHY

How can you let yourself be part of that? Don't you see how they're using you? Not even just you in particular, your whole *crowd*—

CAKEMAVEN

Oh yeah, *that's* not drawing gross generalizations...

WITCHY

Everyone knows: hipsters slime their way into a 'hood, cool it up, then Big Mama C swoops in, paves the way for all the yuppie scum, throws out every single last decent regular person, then after a while even drives *you* guys back out—so you just slime on into the next 'hood an' fuck *that* one up too. I don't care how long you've lived here or whatever little fern bar you call home: there's an expiration date on your ass too—so you better wake up. Chelsea, Alphabet City, Billyburg, Dumbo, Red Hook—and now they've hit me. Bushwick. I walked down my block last week and you know what I saw? A motherfucking sake bar. I'm just waiting for the motherfuckin' iPod-slash-Vespa shop to open up next door. I've been there ten years; I'll be great-goddamned if I'm gonna be forced out.

(They suck on their PBR's in silence.)

WITCHY

You *sure* your name's Reilly?

CAKEMAVEN

Only if I been reading my birth certificate right my whole life.

(More sucking in silence.)

CAKEMAVEN

What you got against Parsons?

WITCHY

Parsons guys are trolls. Literally. Trolls dressed up in stolen human skin.

CAKEMAVEN

Makes you say that?

WITCHY

I'm a witch.

CAKEMAVEN

For real? Like Wiccan?

WITCHY

Wiccans worship the earth. Witches work magick.

CAKEMAVEN

Oh you mean like... what you mean like?

WITCHY

I mean like live toads nailed to crosses down in the tunnels of the G train. I mean like scouring Flatbush looking for gutted buildings in which to say backwards requiem Mass during the waning half-moon. I'm talking 'bout drinking water from that well in Gravesend where they throw dead babies.

CAKEMAVEN

(beat) Dude.

WITCHY

Yeah.

CAKEMAVEN

So are you

WITCHY

telepathic too? Pick a number.

CAKEMAVEN

'Kay.

WITCHY

7.

CAKEMAVEN
Deck!

WITCHY
Abracadabra.

CAKEMAVEN
Cheers.

WITCHY
To Peter Stuyvesant.

(They clink and drink.)

WITCHY
Ever have a psychic experience?

CAKEMAVEN
I astralprojected once and saw my girlfriend screwing my roommate.

WITCHY
How 'bout ghosts?

CAKEMAVEN
Don't believe in 'em.

WITCHY
You better—there's like a billion in Brooklyn alone. Pass 'em on the street like twenty times a day.

CAKEMAVEN
Mean to tell me I'm walking down to Thai Kitchen and I walk by a ghost?

WITCHY
Several.

CAKEMAVEN
What do they look like?

WITCHY

You. Me. Only difference is they disappear. We never even notice though cuz the City's trained us to never even look at anybody for more than two seconds. Place's *made* for them, though: the bones. And I don't mean bones like in bedrock, I mean bones like in bones.

CAKEMAVEN

...yeah... lotta cemeteries I guess...

WITCHY

Oh you can't walk ten feet—you just don't know it. 'Cause nobody cares anymore. Not only do we not care, we build banks and chain stores over 'em. There's a cemetery underneath Prospect Park, you know that? There's an African burial ground right underneath City Hall! Con Ed was putting transformers in, started pulling up skulls. There's a potter's field under the Waldorf. There's a potter's field under the New York Public Library. Bryant Park's a potter's field. Madison Square Park the birthplace of baseball's a potter's field. Washington Square Park's a potter's field. Grand Army Plaza used to be

WITCHY & CAKEMAVEN

the hanging place.

CAKEMAVEN

I know, but they cut down the actual tree where they strung people from.

WITCHY

...How do you know that?

CAKEMAVEN

Roommate. Works for the Parks Department. Too bad. Like to've seen that.

WITCHY

Oh I got it. Small piece, anyhow.

(pulls out an ancient little reliquary)

This's some of the oldest wood on the whole island—over 300 years.

(WITCHY opens the box with some gravity. Shift. DUTCH WIDOW appears out of thin air and addresses WITCHY, CAKEMAVEN, and Seating Area A.)

DUTCH WIDOW

Is it precise term?

We are both Dutch, but made our knowledge in Gowanus, where I was in service. We could remind our similar places, it made my advance of time with large freedom. We exchanged locks of our hairs. I said I would follow him anyplace; he said I could never outdistance you.

This summer he enlisted as a sailor in conflict with the British men without informing me. To be based on was lent, lent dishes, but the cake I prepare myself. Furnace pound of flour well-sieved, seven pound redcurrants rubbed, half a pint fair French brandy, and candies to his loving. His officers, honored guests whose names I cannot remember, left midway across. He parted this second day, but I worried not; I tightened the biggest hope of recovering him.

Is this making meaning?

Tenth August. His ship is taken. I am terrified at the beginning, delighted then to hear without a shot they delivered themselves. Towed in the Bay of Wallabout, where the sixteen ships are belayed. He was aboard the Stocking Stitch. I did not fret although; I had the biggest hopes of recovering him.

Do I display all that correctly?

Fifth December. As party of an exchange, five hundred prisoners were delivered of their restriction. I went to the ships where they must be put down. They all looked very poorly. He was not among them.

I was able in question one Reilly but said he was not on his bridge. Reilly showed the Stocking Stitch, hundred yards without rudder in sea; they even did not call it Stocking Stitch, they called it Hell, sinkhole of *vuiligheid* and despair. Warmth so intense they lived bare, steam enough to burn skin. Spent their nights among the *verschrikking* of different sighs: some people asked, a damned God, prayed what, cried what, what raved, some just shuddered with similar ghosts. Silent ones only those had already died and corruption. They do not bury them. Every small hours they curry them up then drop them over the side as though they were nothing. In overseas falling they, thousand thousand thousand. However even I did not fear, but gave hope as always of recovering him. This occupation must finish one of these days.

Next morning under roll of rain they read the long list with high voice of those who had expired. They always had the lock of my hairs and returned it to me; although it has no reason somebody would like to steal it, I always consider a miracle which it survived.

I flounder, outside towards the Stocking Stitch, towards the last sound. The big Bay floods my skirts, my hoop. In a thing of mind I see men below, but so a lot, so dark—
Under me! I see you face to face! I open my mouth, let our Bay fill.

(Partway through DUTCH WIDOW's story, BATHTUB GIN appears and addresses Seating Area B. After DUTCH WIDOW's done, she retreats to a private corner and repeats her story quietly to herself while VICTIM OF UGLY GEORGE appears, takes her place, and addresses Seating Area A. After BATHTUB GIN's speech, she retreats to a private corner and repeats her story quietly to herself while SQUATTER takes her place and addresses Seating Area B. After VICTIM OF UGLY GEORGE's done, she

retreats while SAPPHIC takes her place and addresses Seating Area A. After SQUATTER's done, she retreats while DUTCH WIDOW takes her place and addresses Seating Area B. After SAPPHIC's done, she retreats while BATHTUB GIN takes her place and addresses Seating Area A. After DUTCH WIDOW's done, she disappears while VICTIM OF UGLY GEORGE takes her place and addresses Seating Area B. After BATHTUB GIN's done, she disappears while SQUATTER takes her place and addresses Seating Area A. After VICTIM OF UGLY GEORGE's done, she disappears while SAPPHIC takes her place and addresses Seating Area B. After SQUATTER's done, she disappears. After SAPPHIC's done, she disappears. Each addresses the group she's speaking to as intimately as possible; at no time do the speakers attempt to compete with each other's voices.)

BATHTUB GIN

Before you now: the sweetheart of every hood an' trouble boy from here to Sheepshead Bay. Goes a little somethin' like this:

Born: Jersey—third ward. Pops ran rum—speedboats—he'd load, I'd pilot. Hittin' on all sixes too, 'til comin' back—full load, Irish whisky, musta hit some jetsam 'cuz BOOM, I'm thrown, SPLASH, (*makes the sound of someone being run over by a speedboat*), rolls right over me. Thought that was the big one for sure. Balled up a chunk-a my noggin, croaker said. Plate in here now. (*her head*)

So: so long rumrunning, hello Coney, little brick houses an' homebrewing gin for the local jaspers. Juniper juice, glycerine—duck soup. 'Til one night I'm lightin' up a gasper an' KERBLAM, whole still up n' explodes. Thought that really was the big one. Totally blind now, this eye.

Midsta this don'tcha know I find love. Billy Cloud—Mohawk Indian—cake-eater—rivet man—know what I mean? Flopped down on Schermerhorn. Barclay Vesey Building he was buildin'. Went to visit, took me up, peep the view, gust a' wind, fell right off. 20 stories. Now that really shoulda been the big one. Came down like a cat, lost both feet. (*indicates her feet*) American walnut, buster.

Sued his ass, tribe's, whatever, used the dough to open my very own joint—right here, 209 Bedford. First broad in all Williamsburg. Local degos caught wind: "Our turf—we get a quarter stake." Told 'em go shit on a \$3 bible. Wrong number. Danced me by my tongue off Williamsburg Bridge. Really thought that'd be the big one. But my right guy Reilly got me. Lost half my tongue and all power a' smell.

But my club: Chez Mausoleum (this was a funeral parlor then). "Hey-a, swells! Come in an' get ossified!" Served outta hollowed-out skulls. This whole wall was craniums, like those basements in Rome. Reilly just turned up one day with a truckful—I know better'n to ask. My hostesses: all refugee geishas. My chorus girls: Juilliard-trained. My waiters: tangoed. Jumpin'ist band in Brooklyn too: Sozzle Tom And His Incredibly Generous Orchestra. 'Least 20 cocktails started here: the Pale Gringo; the Moister Looser; the Café Scranton. Just had to know the code word.

(*She picks a single listener she's addressing and whispers "cumquat" into his/her ear.*)

Swells who got scrooched in this room, can't even tell ya. Once when we got raided? A certain aging It girl whose career nosedived after the talkies was here as the fuck date of a certain bisexual Arabian millionaire, and they just happened to be seated nexta a certain mid-level cabinet member who was here with his secret lover, a certain Robins third baseman—and they all ended up in the john hittin' the pipe with a certain hatchetman in the Fanelli Massacre. Cops bust in—Brooklyn lightning everywhere. Some flatfoot sonofabitch gets all in a lather, thinks it's the most hilarious thing in the world to start shootin' his piece off next to my noggin. If I'd heard anything, woulda been me tellin' myself "well, this's the big one." Totally deaf now, this ear.

Only thing gummed me up worse n' that was the graft. Grand a month: DA, feds. Futzed around with more beat cops than your mother. It was me with the Chief that night. They say it was the dark but the straight dope is we're screaming down 9th in his breezer, hopped up outta our minds, I start giving him a handjob for the ages when he swerves us right off the pier and in the drink. Now you tell me why that wasn't the big one. Said so long to both hands in that. (*indicates her gloved hands*) American walnut, buster.

What'll I ever do with myself once all this ends.

Home that night, exhausted, put on some Bix, cuppa tea, sit down... and that's it. Just like that. Sitting down. In my sleep. In a chair.

SQUATTER

Let this never be told without someone learns from it the true nature of the police and Commissioners of this city.

It's my name we gave our settlement, just a group of houses really we lifted above the one hill. Wasted land, they called it, a barren awful place, all rocks and mounds. Too stony to build estates on, of course. So we took it, this place nobody settled, found bounty. Our goats liked it enough; clover's good grazing. We were Russian first; Slavic, Yiddish. This was before their last War even, Between the States. Then Irish—most of all them at the base of the hill. We weren't shiftless. Most worked, 12 hours a day. Nor unskilled neither. Carvers on stone, masons. We staked our claims, brought our families up here.

They descended—ascended?—first light, end of winter beginning of spring. It wasn't like past removals, quiet, the handful of policemen giving everyone time to collect possessions. This time they numbered forty, fifty, on horses some, commanded by a captain whose name I never learned. We formed a barricade before our homes, our men and me. Reilly went forward, offered gin to a policeman in a gesture. "Upon order of the city you'll evacuate," they said. I had the most English. "No offense is here, sir." "Disperse" their response. "Go to hell" ours.

The captain whose name I never learned fixed bayonets, marched his men forward, pushed them through our windows, opened our doors. They will tell that they were civil; do not trust them. They will tell that they did not burn them then; they burned them down.

“Why do you do it,” I begged. The captain said: “Our citizens and leaders have decided: our city needs a great park, to match that of our sister city. These same hills will become quiet, a landscaped pleasure ground, where all classes of our community will escape the strains of city life, and find relief for their minds and bodies.”

Some of our young toughs have started to throw rocks. One hit a policeman. It was then that two or three of them, worth nothing, standing just a few feet away, leveled their muskets directly in the middle of our group and shot. Three have fallen where we stood, Reilly still with his gin.

Silent. Then, no order or warning, as a whole they start another volley directly in us. Knocking down. Something in my mouth. The captain whose name I never learn is on me. He takes out his bayonet, he places it in me. He continues our conversation: “There will be a long rolling Meadow, a rich Wood of maple, pagoda trees from the Far East, a concert house upon a 60-acre Lake.”

VICTIM OF UGLY GEORGE

check it: so i'm walkin' down Fulton—oh, i live in the Stuy, right?, Bed Stuy—okay so i'm walkin' down Fulton 'cause i just did some bumps and i'm goin' to catch *Escape From New York*, Kurt Russell, right?, *he is so fucking fine*, so all-a sudden i hear this foxy! yo! foxy! and i turn and there's this like weird cat with this whole kinda-like movie studio thing strapped to his back, this honkin' big video camera, okay so that's weird enough but plus he's in this like reeeeeally tight silver jumpsuity thing?, with these like tiiiiiny little silver lamé shorts?, and he's joggin' over and his unit is just like totally front and present, disgusting disgusting totally gross and disgusting, so i'm like hey daddy you work for NASA, and he's like which is it and i'm like which is what and he's like are you a model or an actress?, okay so that's kinda charming, so i'm like actually i *am* a performance artist, and he's like ahhh so you're just waitin' to be discovered and i'm like maybe, and he's like well this's your big break, i do a show, ever catch it?, *Ugly George's Hour of Truth, Sex, and Violence?*, Manhattan public access Friday nights?, and i'm like then why ain't you in Times Square, why you out in the frickin' Stuy? and he's like i'm scoutin' new talent, and i'm like groovy, gotta book, miss my flick and he's like let's make our own, and he flicks on the camera and he's like i'm shootin' a spread for a popular men's periodical and i'm like oh what, *Hustler?* and he's like no, *Guns and Ammo*, i can see it now, you wearin' nothing but bandoliers and a smile, and i'm like what's a bandolier is that a mariachi thing, and he's like you Mexican? and i'm like what're you and he's like Pole and i'm like i never seen a Pole before and he's like how old're you and i'm like 20 even though i'm not 20 and he's like you're 20 and you've never seen a pole before? and i look and he's already unbuttoned like two of my buttons! (i was wearin' my peasant thing) and he's like know who you look like?—Bo Derek, and i'm like are you for real? and he's like yeah, you got the same exact nostrils... nothin' much else, but those *nostrils*... come on, let it all hang out mama, show the folks in tv-land what god gave ya, and i'm like well just how many people see this, and he's like 6 million, and i'm like 6 million?, and he's like 6 million!, and i'm like

dig, so i give just a lil' quick flash and he's like sheesh you're so uptight, Bed Stuy sure ain't the Village, you could dance naked in the middle of Christopher Street and no one would notice, and i don't know, the lens or the light or whatever but i take 'em out for real this time and he's like ahhh outta sight outta sight, this, dear students, is what we call a perfect 10, how many boyfriends you got, i bet you got lots of boyfriends, and i'm like maybe and he's like you're a lil' heartbreaker ain'tcha?, and i'm like maybe, and he's like feel like doin' a little more? and i'm like kinda chick you think i am?, and he's like that's what i'm tryin' to find out, i'm a seeker of truth, mama, and i'm like *on camera?* and he's like mellow out, and i'm like where would we even go, and he's like you kiddin', lookit this place it's a war zone, pick an alley, let's flex on in and show each other what's up. (*loses herself a moment grooving to music in her head; snaps out of it*) sorry—so we go to this building nobody goes to 'cause there's this lot out back where these kids found all these bones so they think it's like some kinda mafia graveyard, it's condemned but it's all tagged up and kinda groovy actually, like there's all these ones that say REILLY so i know that guy must live around here, so he sets up the camera and he's makin' a joke like ha, sure this place ain't gonna cave in and i'm like only if you make the earth move daddy so i doubt it, and he strips and i strip and we start goin' at it and all-a sudden he starts like talkin', not like dirty talk but like conversation, like he's like how can you live around here, they're such undesirables, and i'm like well 'less you're gonna be my sugar daddy... things'll get better though, crime's goin' down, i mean it's gotta, right?, and he's like don't get me wrong i ain't down on Brooklyn i'm from here, and i'm like far out so'm i Sunset Park and he's like i went to City College, and i'm like that's sooooo trippy, *i* went to City College and i'm about to say like what the heck was your major, ya' know?, Groping 101?, but he's like hear that and i'm like hear what but then i feel this like shakin' and the walls start cavin' in and i look up and all these bricks're fallin' and i'm like

SAPPHIC

Twenty-ninth July. My Dearest Friend:

Resting—supposed to be—but have raised myself to write.

'Til now they have diligently avoided the word “fever” because of its unspoken consequence, but after last night we must all start admitting it openly. The culprit they suspect is that rotting cotton on the wharf. It must be; District Street is the cleanest in all the town, and our household—well, you've been here—enjoys the greatest of ventilation.

My husband quit town yesterday; he shall return when the Yard resumes business. In fact I hear most everyone is either crowding ferries out, or barricaded up inside their homes. The only one with me here is the black nurse (they're naturally immune to such fevers). Our street is completely deserted—save a single brave boy, one Reilly—I do not know the family—who ventures out for the sole purpose of delivering messages, which is how I intend this to come to you. He's young; it hasn't occurred to him yet he's not immortal.

Superstition rules: last week we hear a farmer was pulling up his harvest and started unearthing muskets and bayonets, not just muskets and bayonets but bones and skulls; left over from the War, they say, the battles for the Heights; even so, it's being taken as a bad omen.

If you had any inkling how constantly you occupy my thoughts: that game we played on the ferry, pretending to be strangers: you asked for directions, I followed... our wonderful chats about the sonnets (though I admit I am still shocked by your interpretation), then putting aside our books and reading your eyes, more eloquent than any conversation... Gray's Baths, where finally I beheld you in all your loveliness... my palm inside yours as we danced. That party was the last place in this world I wanted to be—'til I spied you. "Who is that?" I asked my husband. "A new woman—bluestocking—elegant, don't you think?" "In a way," I shrugged, but of course I already knew you were the fairest thing I'd ever seen. Surely he couldn't have had any idea what he was doing when he bid us, "Waltz together, it will be pleasant." You took my hand, led me. I was completely transported. We understood each other from that instant, didn't we? I worried even then you would just so easily dismiss me: Oh this naïve little thing, I can develop her character a little. But even then I didn't care. This woman, I thought, I would cast my lot with her forever.

I wish I did not have to veil my words, even here, least of all to you. I wish most of all I didn't have to order you you must burn this after you read it. But you well understand what exists between us. There is nothing the least sentimental about it: it is a true thing, a great thing, indeed a sustaining thing. Surely you will come visit, as soon as the city starts to move freely again? I'm sure even just one touch from you, your very presence even, would cure this little matter completely. Sickness must surely stop invading us some day—mustn't it?

I have every confidence of seeing you very soon. There are things much stronger than fevers in this world; that which binds me to you must surely be among them.

My friend. My beloved friend.

(CAKEMAVEN and WITCHY are alone again. He starts getting his stuff together.)

WITCHY

Where you going?

CAKEMAVEN

Home... I gotta... smoke a bowl...

**To read the rest of this play, please contact me at:
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