

# SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

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# Brave Smiles

...another lesbian tragedy

by The Five Lesbian Brothers

Maureen Angelos, Babs Davy,

Dominique Dibbell,

Peg Healey and Lisa Kron

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



**SAMUEL  
FRENCH**  
FOUNDED 1830

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***BRAVE SMILES...ANOTHER LESBIAN TRAGEDY*** was first produced in January 1992 at the WOW Café in New York City under the direction of Kate Stafford. Sets and costumes were designed by Susan Young, lights were by Joni Wong, sound design was by Peg Healey and the fabulous stage manager was Jimmy Eckerle. The cast was as follows:

**MARTHA/THALIA/REPORTER #2** . . . . . Maureen Angelos  
**MILLICENT / MISS GATEAU / PIERRE** . . . . . Babs Davy  
**WILL/FRAU LUDMILLA VON PUSSENHEIMER/  
REPORTER #1/AUDREY** . . . . .Dominique Dibbell  
**BABE/MISS GRETA PHILLIPS/  
WOUNDED SOLDIER/SHIRLEY/BUM** . . . . . Peg Healey  
**DAMWELL MAXWELL/BARONESS** . . . . .Lisa Kron  
And introducing **NIPPER** as herself

This production was also presented at Downtown Art Company, New York City.

***BRAVE SMILES...ANOTHER LESBIAN TRAGEDY*** was subsequently produced March 1993 in the version printed here at One Dream in New York City with the same cast. The director was Kate Stafford. Set and prop design were by Jamie Leo, costume design was by Susan Young, lights were by Diana Arecco and sound design was by Peg Healey. Musical arrangements were provided by Tom Judson and the Brave Smiles Orchestra.

This production has also been presented at Theatre Rhinoceros, San Francisco; Fresh Dish, San Diego; Highways, Los Angeles; New Prospects, Prospect Park, Brooklyn; DiverseWorks, Houston; Next Stage, Boston; Alice B. Theatre, Seattle; New York Theatre Workshop, New York City; Drill Hall, London and P. S. 122, New York City.

## CHARACTERS

**MARTHA** – deaf-mute, though strangely perceptive.

**MILLICENT** – sensitive and poetic.

**WILL** – tomboy butch with bravado.

**BABE** – athletic with good genes.

**DAMWELL MAXWELL** – bossy big boots.

**THALIA** – new girl, Jewess, sad German refugee accent.

**MISS GATEAU** – French cook, possible alcohol problem.

**FRAU LUDMILLA VON PUSSENHEIMER** – scary, embittered headmistress,  
Teutonic accent, forties.

**MISS GRETA PHILLIPS** – beautiful and bewitching teacher, mid-twenties.

**BARONESS** – European lower-caste royalty, loaded.

**REPORTERS #1 AND #2** – fast-talking newspapermen.

**PIERRE** – the Parisian maître d'.

**AUDREY** – Audrey Hepburn-like actress who plays the role of Sharon.

**SHIRLEY** – Shirley MacLaine-like actress who plays the role of Bertha.

**WOUNDED SOLDIER** – guy with bad hole in him, the original Vin  
Marconi.

**BUM** – man with the D.T.'s.

**NIPPER** – Babe's canine companion, a hand puppet.

## SETTING

### ACT I

The Tilue-Pussenheimer Academy, somewhere in Europe, 1920.

Scene One: Mike's Funeral.

Scene Two: Play Practice.

Scene Three: Damwell and Thalia.

Scene Four: Miss Gateau in the Kitchen.

Scene Five: Smoking Club.

Scene Six: Herr Pye.

Scene Seven: Brave Smiles.

Scene Eight: Night Talk.

Scene Nine: Sleeping Girls.

Scene Ten: The Confrontation.

Scene Eleven: Martha Is Dead.

Scene Twelve: Will Leaves.

Scene Thirteen: Frau von Pussenheimer's Farewell.

Scene Fourteen: Miss Phillips's Farewell.

### ACT II

Scene One: Damwell's Wedding. The Grand Ballroom of the Hôtel  
Goldene Gewölbe, Vienna, 1939.

Scene Two: The Disembarkation. New York Harbor, 1943.

Scene Three: Babe on a Plane.

The cockpit of the Grand Dame, a few weeks later.

Scene Four: Vin's Place. A gay Parisian nightclub, 1946.

Scene Five: The Rehearsal. A Broadway theatre, 1956.

Scene Six: The Mission. The Bowery, 1959.

Scene Seven: I Want to Live. Sing Sing Prison, October 12, 1959.

Scene Eight: The Book Signing. Rizzoli, New York City, 1969.

Scene Nine: Southampton. Later that day.

Scene Ten: Southampton. Two years later.

## AUTHORS' NOTES

**LISA KRON:** I'm trying to remember what the initial seed was for this play. I think we might have had the title left over from a title search for *Voyage to Lesbos* (which, by the way, also included the still unused title, *Lunchtime at the Menstrual Hut or Give Me a Slice of That Fur Pie to Go*). The world has changed so much in the ten years since we started working, long before the regular appearance of lesbian characters in the movies or on TV, certainly long before Ellen DeGeneres. If word went around that some TV show might have a secondary lesbian character skulking around the background, all the gay girls would run home to watch it. There were a handful of iconographic images and they all involved a tragic end for the poor sapphic sufferer.

**PEG HEALEY:** We watched, read, listened to, explored and absorbed every possible lesbian icon we could get our hands on and shamelessly used them for our own purposes. If the story of the lesbian is that she was always doomed to suffer an unhappy life and then die a tragic death, then we really wanted to pile it on:

### Reference Materials

<i>Morocco</i> (Marlene Dietrich)	<i>The Children's Hour</i>
<i>Johnny Guitar</i>	<i>Pentimento</i>
<i>The Killing of Sister George</i>	<i>Last Summer at Blue Fish Cove</i>
<i>Walk on the Wild Side</i> (Jane Fonda and Barbara Stanwyck)	<i>I Want to Live</i>
<i>The Well of Loneliness</i>	<i>Julia</i>
<i>The Price of Salt</i>	<i>Maedchen in Uniform</i>
Ann Bannon's Books	

At this early stage in our relationship our time was divided fifty-fifty between doing the work and working on our relationship. We adopted the strategy of using check-ins to periodically clear the air. They served to remind us that we were all working toward the same thing and kept our meetings from dissolving into the miasma of our own personal hells.

**BABS DAVY:** We wrote free-writing after free-writing, some as short as a minute, some as long as an hour. We read them aloud and began making lists of images, possible characters and locations. One of us had recently broken up with her longtime girlfriend and much of the deep sadness and sense of loss that comes through in *Brave Smiles* can be traced to that person's poignant writing during this time. In the end we had piles of writing and Dominique volunteered to write the second act and Peg, who was laid up from sinus surgery and couldn't rehearse, volunteered to write the first act.



**DOMINIQUE DIBBELL:** This was our first play that Kate Stafford directed. She did much to shape our unique performance style with her simple and inventive solutions to the monumental problems we presented her: numerous blackouts, lightning-quick costume changes, a play that wanted to be a movie.

**MAUREEN ANGELOS:** This play is a reflection of love. They are all labors of love but this one in particular manifests what we love about being Brothers and what we love about being lesbians: the tragedy of it all which can be so bitingly and relentlessly funny sometimes. This play asks the audience why they are laughing and are they sure they're not crying.

*This play is lovingly dedicated to our good friend Jimmy Eckerle,  
the bravest smiler.*



## ACT I

### Scene One Mike's Funeral

*(The grounds of the Tilue-Pussenheimer Academy, once a prestigious school for young ladies, now little more than an orphanage with pretensions. Dawn. Lights fade up slowly. MILLICENT, WILL, BABE, DAMWELL and MARTHA stand in a semicircle facing the audience, heads bowed. MILLICENT is at the head of Mike's grave. MARTHA wears a black veil.)*

**MILLICENT.** We offer up all our work this day to the memory of Mike, who fought so hard to survive despite the cruel blows of a hatchet wielded by Dick Moorehead, groundskeeper and a misguided heathen –

**WILL.** And a low-down dog!

**MILLICENT.** Yes, and unenlightened as to the sanctity of all life and limb...

**BABE.** Especially the head.

**MILLICENT.** Yes, which is necessary for mammals if they are to conduct themselves in a spiritual way.

*(DAMWELL starts to leave; BABE stops her. The girls all gasp and exclaim.)*

**DAMWELL.** Sorry. I thought she was finished.

**WILL.** Go on, Millicent.

**MILLICENT.** So now we commend your soul, Mike, to heaven above or to that watery grave in the well from which you emerged.

**BABE.** Fear not, Mike, you will be reunited with your beloved head in the great beyond or below...we're not sure which.

**WILL.** Mike, you gave us many weeks of loyal service as pet of the school, mascot and general chum to all the girls.

**MILLICENT.** We'll keep you in our prayers. Please keep us in your prayers and put some good words in for us poor little orphan girls here at the Academy. We're not really that bad and we did try to put your head back on. We're sorry about it being separated from your beautiful domed body by Dick, but that's Dick.

*(The girls assent.)*

Would anyone else care to say a few words?

**DAMWELL.** Maybe Martha would like to say something.

**WILL.** Shut up, Damwell!

**DAMWELL.** What? Everyone knows Martha's a dummy.

*(WILL shoves DAMWELL.)*

**WILL.** She's a deaf-mute and brighter than you'll ever be!

*(MARTHA runs off. WILL chases her, calling, "Martha! Martha, wait!")*

**DAMWELL.** They make a perfect couple.

**MILLICENT.** Have you no feelings, Damwell? Really. And at Mike's funeral and all...

**DAMWELL.** Mike is a turtle! And we're all sixteen and practically adults although no one would guess it from the way you carry on. Come on, Babe.

*(BABE doesn't move.)*

Babe! *(pause)* I'll see you later at play practice.

*(DAMWELL storms off. WILL enters.)*

**BABE.** I – I just think I ought to say something.

**WILL.** Amen.

**BABE.** Yes. Amen. And, well, sorry about Damwell.

**MILLICENT.** Where's Martha?

**WILL.** In the root cellar. It's OK. She likes it there. That Damwell really galls me.

**MILLICENT.** Don't let her get to you, Will. Her sense of humor is her armor against cruelty and sadness in this world.

**WILL.** Yeah, that and the million dollars she inherited ought to give her pretty good protection.

**MILLICENT.** I believe that money won't be hers until she's twenty-one.

**BABE.** Damwell's okay. She doesn't mean to hurt anyone.

**WILL.** She doesn't try to get at you the way she does with me, Babe.

**MILLICENT.** Maybe Damwell likes you, Will. I mean really likes you.

**WILL.** *(spitting in the dirt)* Curse the day! Take that spell away!

**BABE.** She said she liked me.

**MILLICENT.** I'm sure she does, Babe.

**BABE.** I'm late for kitchen duty. *(runs off)*

*(WILL remains with MILLICENT. There is an awkward silence.)*

**MILLICENT.** It's OK. Go to Martha. I don't mind being alone.

*(WILL smiles, kisses MILLICENT gently on the forehead, then runs off.)*

Dear God, wherever and whoever you are, please help Martha in all her sadness. Will is trying so hard for her. We all want so much to transform people like they will see and understand that little, hard, green, lesson about life – that you have to accept and love yourself.

*(MILLICENT takes out her guitar and sings "Turtles Are Free." [Sheet music for all songs is at the end of the play.] During the song, MISS PHILLIPS enters, smokes a Tiparillo cigar and watches. MILLICENT does not know she's there.)*

**MILLICENT.** *(cont.)*

OH, A TURTLE DIES  
AND A YOUNG GIRL CRIES  
THE WORLD IS CHANGED FOREVER.

WHEN THE DEATH KNELL RINGS  
OH, THE GRIEF! IT BRINGS  
BOTH TURTLE AND GIRL TOGETHER.

TUR-TLES ARE FREE  
TUR-TLES ARE FREE  
TUR-TLES ARE FREE.

OH, A TURTLE'S LIFE  
IS A HARD, HARD LIFE –

*(MISS PHILLIPS clears her throat.)*

Oh, Miss Phillips!

**MISS PHILLIPS.** Don't let me stop you. It's a lovely song.

**MILLICENT.** It's nothing compared to the poetry you read to us in class.

**MISS PHILLIPS.** Perhaps one day you will be as great as Sappho. But you must work at it. Here, Millicent –

*(MISS PHILLIPS hands MILLICENT a doughnut wrapped in a napkin.)*

You missed your breakfast.

**MILLICENT.** Oh! I must get to breakfast. Frau von Pussenheimer will be –

**MISS PHILLIPS.** I explained to her that you weren't feeling well.

**MILLICENT.** But I'm – oh, Miss Phillips...

**MISS PHILLIPS.** Millicent, I need your help.

**MILLICENT.** Why...anything.

**MISS PHILLIPS.** There's a new girl arriving next week. I want you to be kind to her. She'll need a friend. And try to – well, I know you girls have rules about new girls but, Thalia may be in for more difficulty than the rest of us and it is our moral duty to help her.

**MILLICENT.** Thalia...I'll do what I can.

**MISS PHILLIPS.** Good. Eat your breakfast. And don't be late for your French lesson.

*(She exits, giving MILLICENT's rear a gentle pinch.)*

**MILLICENT.** *(opening the napkin)* Oh, Miss Phillips! A sugar doughnut!

*(blackout)*



**Scene Two**  
**Play Practice**

*(BABE duels with FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER while DAMWELL and MILLICENT look on. PUSSENHEIMER attacks ferociously until she has backed BABE into a corner and then flings the foil from BABE's hand, cutting her. BABE cries out.)*

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** Nonsense. It's a slight flesh wound. I'm very disappointed in you, Babe. Romeo is supposed to win the fight.

**DAMWELL.** Yeah, Babe.

**MILLICENT.** Frau von Pussenheimer, couldn't we just *act* like she wins the fight?

*(FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER wheels around to face MILLICENT, whipping her foil through the air.)*

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** Good stage fighting is essential to good theatre!

**DAMWELL.** Shouldn't we practice the scene where I'm a snowy dove showing over crows? After all, isn't Will supposed to be in the fighting scene?

*(The girls gasp in unison at DAMWELL's faux pas.)*

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** Where is Wilhelmina?

*(The girls all sputter different explanations.)*

Never mind. She'll be dealt with later. Millicent – bring the gear to the equipment shed and return at once. No dillydallying under the trees.

*(She goes to DAMWELL and gets uncomfortably close.)*

Now, Damwell. You wish to be a snowy dove trooping with crows, do you? Tell me, have you ever attempted a stage kiss?

**DAMWELL.** Actually...Babe and I have been practicing... every night...I think we...

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** Don't be silly. You and Babe are merely girls. You have no idea how a man might kiss a woman. Whereas I, although I remain an honest woman, have had some experience which might benefit you.

*(DAMWELL and BABE look ill at the prospect of kissing FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.)*

**DAMWELL.** Oh but...I doubt that Romeo kisses anything like Professor Pye.

*(BABE and DAMWELL gasp.)*

Oh, Frau von Pussenheimer, I'm so sorry...

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** *(smiling a crazy smile)* It's quite all right girls. I suppose it's only natural you should talk of such things amongst yourselves. I have taken no offense. Although you'd be surprised at the professor's passion. Why, I must confess, it takes everything I have to resist Herr...Peter.

**DAMWELL.** His first name's Peter? What does he look –

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** *(becoming quite unfriendly)* That's enough of that. Soon you will know all of my secrets and we can't have that, can we?

**MILLICENT.** *(from offstage)* Frau von Pussenheimer! Babe! Come quick. It's Thalia! The new girl!!

*(BABE starts to run off. FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER indicates that BABE is to walk, not run. Then she nods to DAMWELL to go as well. BABE and DAMWELL meet MILLICENT as she enters with THALIA, who is disheveled.)*

I found her out by the river, near the shed.

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** Well, her coat is certainly a mess.

**THALIA.** It's not my fault. I was attacked!

**DAMWELL.** *(thinking it's the coolest thing ever)* Attacked?!

**THALIA.** Yes. I arrived in Schlongbahd on the 12:35 train from Vienna. I'm supposed to look for a Ludmilla von Pussenheimer at the Tilue-Pussenheimer Academy.

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** Well, you've found us.

(**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER** *approaches* **THALIA**. *The other girls instinctively step back.*)

But we weren't expecting you until next week.

**THALIA.** My mother wanted me to leave sooner than planned –

**BABE & MILLICENT.** You have a mother!?

**DAMWELL.** You were attacked!?

**THALIA.** When no one met me at the train I set off to find you on my own. Just past the crossroads by the tall hedges – a band of wild boys jumped out at me.

**DAMWELL.** You were beaten up by a band of wild boys?!

**THALIA.** They didn't beat me – exactly.

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** What did happen? Exactly.

**THALIA.** Their leader-boy said, "We just want to talk to you. You have such pretty black hair." They stood around me. They all laughed. That awful boy walked right up to me and said, "Are you afraid of boys?" "No," I said. "You're not afraid of us?" he asked again. "Why should I be? You're just boys."

**MILLICENT.** How brave...

**THALIA.** And then...then...

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** What happened?

**THALIA.** Then he said, "Then you wouldn't mind if we tried to kiss you?" "Well," I said. I knew I shouldn't. But I didn't want them thinking I was afraid of them. "Then you'd let me kiss you?" And he did. But softly. Not like you would expect from such a rough boy. I began to cry. Then they pushed me into the mud and rubbed it in my hair. They turned my coat inside out. Oh, they weren't boys at all. They were beasts! They were horrible, horrible beasts.

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** Filthy boys! No better than pigs!! Remember that, girls. Boys are pigs. Filthy and disgusting!

**DAMWELL, BABE & MILLICENT.** (*reciting their lesson*) Filthy and disgusting!

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** (*trying to soothe THALIA*) There, there, girl. Damwell, bring Thalia to the dormer in the east wing. Babe, fetch Miss Gateau to tend to her there.

(**DAMWELL, THALIA and BABE** exit.)

Millicent, remain with me a moment.

**MILLICENT.** Yes, Frau von Pussenheimer?

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** Chocolate, Millicent?

(*Tempts her with a giant chocolate bar. MILLICENT takes it.*)

How did you know that Thalia was to be a new student here?

**MILLICENT.** I don't know, Frau von Pussenheimer. I guess... I guess she must have told me so.

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** I see. You found her face down in a puddle and she told you her name was Thalia and she was to be a new student here?

**MILLICENT.** Yes. I'm sure now that she told me.

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** Very well.

(*awkward pause*)

**MILLICENT.** Am I excused?

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** Well now, Millicent, that is between you and your god, isn't it?

**MILLICENT.** Pardon?

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** You see, Millicent, little girls who lie seldom become saints and they invariably end up burning in eternal hell. You may go.

(**MILLICENT** scurries out. *Cross-fade.*)

**Scene Three**  
**Damwell and Thalia**

*(The main hall. DAMWELL is taking THALIA to her room.)*

**DAMWELL.** Well, there's a girl who moos at night. But hopefully you won't be put next to her.

**THALIA.** Such grand halls. Just like Mother said. But why are they so dark?

**DAMWELL.** Things aren't what they used to be. But you'll find that out soon enough. I'm sure if my mother had known what a hellhole this would turn into she never would have sent me here but...well...did you hear about the *Lusitania*?

**Scene Four**  
**Miss Gateau in the Kitchen**

*(The kitchen. MISS GATEAU is cooking and sipping from a bottle of champagne. FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER sneaks up behind her and whacks her on the butt with a wooden spoon.)*

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER** *(playfully)* I'm very mad at you, Miss Gateau. You made a soufflé and it fell. Bad, bad girl. *(goes to whack her again)*

**MISS GATEAU.** Forget it, Ludmilla. I'm not in the mood.

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** *(not so playful anymore)* What are you hiding from me? Sometimes I wonder if you are to be trusted –

**MISS GATEAU.** Me? Whatever – don't be silly!

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** I am never silly, Colette. You would do well to remember that. You will come to see me in my room later tonight?

**MISS GATEAU.** Not tonight. I am busy.

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** You are...teaching one of the students a French lesson?

**MISS GATEAU.** No.

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** Then you are, perhaps, washing your hair?

**MISS GATEAU.** No.

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** You're going to see Dick.

**MISS GATEAU.** Yes. Yes, I am. What of it?

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** Tell me, this Dick – he is a tender lover to you?

**MISS GATEAU.** He is my beau!

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** I am your beau! I am your beau! And your doctor! And your mother! And your father!

**MISS GATEAU.** I am someone else's daughter, Ludmilla. I have a mother already. See?

*(She shows FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER her locket.)*

**MISS GATEAU.** (*cont.*) You cannot possess me like you possess the girls. I am a woman. I am not so naive and fresh for the picking as a herd of fifteen year olds! If I wish to have a beau, I will have a beau. Besides, it is for the best.

(**BABE enters.** *They don't see her.*)

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** That thing. That killer of turtles! He is not your lover. Your diversion. Your barbe, perhaps. But not your lover.

(**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER** *kisses* **MISS GATEAU** *deeply.*)

Now. I have lubricated you for your date.

(**MISS GATEAU** *slaps* **FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** **FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER** *notices* **BABE** *in the doorway.*)

How long have you been standing there, dumb ox?

**MISS GATEAU.** Babe is on kitchen duty, Frau von Pussenheimer.

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER** (*grabbing her by the ear and pulling her into the room*) Don't let her near the knives, Miss Gateau, the girl is clumsy with a blade. We don't want her cutting her precious hands off. And wash these hands before you touch anything. They're filthy. Carry on, Miss Gateau. (*She exits.*)

**BABE.** I wish I weren't so clumsy.

**MISS GATEAU.** Yes, well. Wishes are funny. I used to wish I were my Aunt Elizabeth who used to get into the broom closet and grunt.

**BABE.** Really?

**MISS GATEAU.** Oh my, yes. She used to tell me, "Beware of Tiparillo-smoking women. They will always surprise you."

**BABE.** What did she mean by that?

**MISS GATEAU.** Ha! She said, "Never trust a man in a hat."

**BABE.** But that's ridiculous; all men wear hats!

**MISS GATEAU.** *Exactement!* (swallows a glass of champagne, then pours another) Let me tell you a little something about us French. Once we open a bottle of champagne, we must drink it all at once *parce que* it is all downhill from there. (She swallows another glass.) *Vive la France!* Get the beans.

**BABE.** I wish I could speak French like you.

**MISS GATEAU.** Oh, *merde*.

**BABE.** Maird!

**MISS GATEAU.** No, no, no. (drawing it out) *Merde*.

**BABE.** Mairrrrd.

**MISS GATEAU.** No, no, no. Here, try this. Take a sip of this.

**BABE.** But that's champagne.

**MISS GATEAU.** *Oui.* It will help you to speak the French. Take a small sip.

(**BABE** takes a sip.)

Don't swallow! Now, say *merde*.

**BABE.** (gargling) Merrrrde.

**MISS GATEAU.** *Très bien!*

(They kiss Continental style. Blackout.)



### Scene Five Smoking Club

*(The basement where the girls have their secret club.*

**BABE** and **WILL** play cards. **DAMWELL** sneaks up on them.)

**DAMWELL.** *(imitating Frau von Pussenheimer)* Come, come! Where are your brave smiles?! Remember girls, smile unt za vurld smiles bock!

*(WILL and BABE ignore DAMWELL.)*

What are we waiting for?

**BABE & WILL.** Millicent.

**DAMWELL.** Oh hell, she doesn't even inhale. Come on, pass out the goods.

*(WILL lights a Tiparillo, and they pass it around.)*

What a day it's been. We've got so much to talk about.

**BABE.** I know! I heard Frau von Pussenheimer talking with Miss Gateau about Professor Pye –

**DAMWELL.** Oh that! That's old news. His first name's Peter, by the way, which information I got straight from the horseface's mouth just as she was about to try to plant one on me.

**BABE.** I know. I was there.

**DAMWELL.** But I'm talking about the new girl. Will, you missed rehearsal, for which I'm sure you'll get skinned alive by the way, even though I tried to cover for you, so you haven't seen her yet. But she was attacked by – Hey, don't you even want to hear about her?

**BABE.** Will and I had to get Martha out of the root cellar again.

**DAMWELL.** Oh. Sorry.

**WILL.** Shut up, Damwell.

**DAMWELL.** Really I am. I don't think she's ever been this bad.

**MILLICENT.** *(offstage)* Code of honor, sisters in sin! Open the doors and let us in!

**DAMWELL.** You can cut the secret-club crap, Millicent. I think we're a little old for that.

(**MILLICENT** enters with **THALIA**.)

**MILLICENT.** Hi! Sorry we're late.

**DAMWELL.** What do you mean "we"? What's she doing here?

**MILLICENT.** Thalia, this is Damwell.

**THALIA.** I know Damwell. You brought me to my room.

**MILLICENT.** And this is Babe.

**THALIA.** You fetched Miss Gateau for me.

**MILLICENT.** And this is Will.

**THALIA.** (*a little stunned*) Oh...Oh...

**WILL.** She's not supposed to be here. No offense, but this is a secret club. Members only.

**MILLICENT.** Want a Tiparillo?

(**WILL** grabs the *Tiparillo* back from **MILLICENT**.)

**DAMWELL.** Will's right. Members only. No offense, Thalia. But you would have to be initiated first.

**THALIA.** (*leaving*) Sure. I understand.

**DAMWELL.** (*grabbing THALIA*) Wait! You want to join us, don't you?

**MILLICENT.** Of course she does. All you have to do is take the secret oath. It's nothing. Just repeat after me –

**DAMWELL.** This special circumstance calls for special measures. Since Thalia has already seen our secret place, and she already knows we smoke, the oath alone isn't enough. She must pass the test.

**MILLICENT.** What test?

**DAMWELL.** The TEST. The test of spirit, brains and loyalty. Everyone come here. Thalia, stay there.

**WILL.** This is stupid, Damwell. You said yourself we're too old for this.

**DAMWELL.** Will? What's wrong with you? You're always first in line for a little fun.

**BABE.** Maybe Will's right, Damwell. Why don't we just let her join the club?

**DAMWELL.** We're not gonna hurt her, we're just gonna have a little fun, that's all. It's not like we get a new girl our age every day.

**MILLCENT.** We can't do anything to hurt her. I promised.

**DAMWELL.** Oh, some secret club! Why don't we just invite all the fourteen year-olds over for a smoke. Now. I've got an idea. Babe, get the old wool blanket. We're going to do the desert survival test.

**BABE, WILL & MILLCENT.** (*horrificed*) Ooooohhh!

**DAMWELL.** Come on. It's a fair test, and no one gets hurt.

**MILLCENT.** OK...

(*They all go over to THALIA, surrounding her.*)

OK. It's agreed. If you pass a simple survival test, you can be in our club.

**THALIA.** Well...

**DAMWELL.** Otherwise we can't let you out alive.

**BABE & MILLCENT.** Damwell!

**DAMWELL.** It's a joke!

**WILL.** She's just kidding. It is a simple test, really.

**THALIA.** OK then.

**DAMWELL.** All right. This is a test to see how strong you are mentally and spiritually. Because once you take the oath, we have to be able to rely on you to keep the law of silence about the club – even if von Pussenheimer herself tortures you. Now sit over there.

(*THALIA sits on a crate.*)

**MILLCENT.** Don't be afraid.

**THALIA.** I'm not afraid.

**DAMWELL.** Good. Now, we're gonna put this blanket over you.

(*DAMWELL covers THALIA with the blanket.*)

**DAMWELL.** (*cont.*) And so it begins. Imagine, Thalia, that you're in the desert. It's one hundred and fifty degrees in the shade – if there was any shade, which there's not. You're burning up with heat. You're parched (*She fake coughs.*) with thirst. There's only one thing you can do in this situation to make yourself feel better and that's if you take something off. What are you going to take off, Thalia?

**THALIA.** What?

**DAMWELL.** You're hot. It's a million degrees out. You're boiling up. Take something off!

(*There's movement underneath the blanket.*)

Did you take something off?

**THALIA.** Yes.

**DAMWELL.** Well, what is it?

(*THALIA pushes her shoes out from under the blanket.*)

Good, Thalia. Now, it's hours later and even hotter than before. Don't you think you should take something else off?

(*THALIA's socks come out from under the blanket.*)

You're being a bit conservative here, Thalia. Because now, now it's high noon and the sun is beating down on you...Beating down on you so hard that blisters are starting to form all over your body...pus-ey, bloody blisters. And as the wind blows, the blisters break and sand mixes with the pus and the blood. Don't you think you should take something else off? What would really cool you down?

(*THALIA's frock comes out.*)

Good, Thalia. That feels better. Now you're walking over hills of sand, miles and miles of sand as far as the eye can see...Oh! Look, Thalia! In the distance, a little pond and some palm trees. Run for it, Thalia! Run for it! You're almost there, you can taste the water...Oh, no! It's a mirage! What a cruel circumstance! You'd better take something else off.

(**THALIA**'s underpants come out. **BABE** picks them up. **DAMWELL** grabs them and takes a sniff.)

**DAMWELL.** (cont.) Good, Thalia, good.

(**BABE**, hurt and alarmed, grabs them back. **MILLICENT** tries to comfort her.)

What can you take off now?

**THALIA.** Nothing.

**DAMWELL.** Nothing?

**MILLICENT.** Think, Thalia! Think!

**DAMWELL.** (grabbing **MILLICENT** to make her be quiet) That's right, Thalia, think. Surely there's something else you can take off.

**THALIA.** No, there's nothing. Nothing's left.

**DAMWELL.** Oh, but there is, Thalia! Why are you in the middle of the boiling hot desert wearing a *wool blanket over your head*?

(**DAMWELL** rips off the blanket to expose **THALIA**. **WILL** rushes toward **THALIA** and covers her with the blanket.)

Will! We're supposed to see her naked!

**WILL.** That's enough, Damwell. It's not funny.

**THALIA.** You're all sick. All of you! (to **WILL**) And you're the worst! How can you even pretend to be kind after you tricked me and threw me down in the mud? I should have known the minute I saw you here there would be trouble.

**MILLICENT.** Will, that was you?

**WILL.** We didn't know it was her. We thought she was some rich girl from town.

**THALIA.** So that makes it all right to torture people?

**BABE & MILLICENT.** Will!

**WILL.** We were just having some fun! We were playing field hockey and –

**THALIA.** And you decided to terrorize me! Torturing a person for no other reason than she is a Jew.

DAMWELL. A Jew?

MILLCENT. (*simultaneously*) Thalia! Gosh! We didn't know you were a Jew.

WILL. (*simultaneously*) Geez, I'm sorry, Thalia.

BABE. (*simultaneously*) I never saw a Jew before.

MILLCENT. When I joined the club, they made me wear my underwear outside my stockings for a whole week. I remember now how terrified I was, but looking back it seemed all in good fun. Please forgive us, Thalia.

DAMWELL. Are you really a Jew?

THALIA. Yes, I am. And proud of it, too.

DAMWELL. Well, then.

(*tense pause*)

You're my first Jewish friend, ever.

THALIA. So? Have I passed your initiation?

WILL. (*takes out her penknife*) Come on everyone.

(*They all gather in a circle around WILL. Each girl gasps when WILL cuts their thumbs; THALIA remains impassive. WILL cuts her own thumb, suppressing a cry. They press their thumbs together, mingling their blood.*)

WILL. I swear by this blood oath...

MILLCENT, BABE, DAMWELL & THALIA. I swear by this blood oath...

WILL. To always and forever...

MILLCENT, BABE, DAMWELL & THALIA. To always and forever...

WILL. Until each and everyone of us is completely dead...

MILLCENT, BABE, DAMWELL & THALIA. Until each and everyone of us is completely dead...

WILL. Be a true and honorable blood sister...

MILLCENT, BABE, DAMWELL & THALIA. Be a true and honorable blood sister...

WILL. and never to part...

MILLCENT, BABE, DAMWELL & THALIA. and never to part...

**ALL.** So say we one, so say we all.

*(Each girl kisses her own thumb, then puts it to the lips of the girl on her right. They sing "The T-Puss Fight Song":)*

**MILLICENT, WILL, BABE & DAMWELL.**

OHHHH...WHO'S THE BRAVEST SMILER  
AT TILUE-PUSSENHEIMER  
IT'S THALIA, IT'S THALIA, IT'S THAL...

SHE'S A GREAT BIG DOLL...  
BUT WE LOVE HER ANYWAY...

*(cross-fade)*

**Scene Six**  
**Herr Pye**

*(The grounds of the Academy. Afternoon. MILLICENT  
flagellates herself with a switch. MISS PHILLIPS inter-  
rupts her.)*

**MISS PHILLIPS.** Millicent!

**MILLICENT.** Yes, Miss Phillips.

**MISS PHILLIPS.** What are you doing?

**MILLICENT.** My heart is wicked and full of impure thoughts.

**MISS PHILLIPS.** What thoughts, Millicent?

**MILLICENT.** Bad, nasty things. Things about Frau von Pussenheimer.

**MISS PHILLIPS.** Frau von Pussenheimer?

**MILLICENT.** Yes. She and Professor Pye.

**MISS PHILLIPS.** *Professor Pye?*

**MILLICENT.** Professor Peter Pye.

**MISS PHILLIPS.** Peter Pye is no professor, I assure you.

**MILLICENT.** Oh. Not a professor? But then how would one address him?

**MISS PHILLIPS.** As you would address any man of German extraction, I suppose. Herr Peter, or, if you like, Herr Pye. Millicent, why such concern with Frau von Pussenheimer's friend?

**MILLICENT.** I don't know, Miss Phillips. Frau von Pussenheimer talks about him, little comments here and there about she and her Herr Pye. And they roll over and over in my mind. What if I had a Herr Pye? What horrible things would I do? *(She begins to beat herself again.)* Filthy! Dirty!

**MISS PHILLIPS.** Millicent, please stop.

**MILLICENT.** *(throwing her arms around MISS PHILLIPS)* Oh, Miss Phillips! You're my favorite teacher. Is that wretched of me?



**MISS PHILLIPS.** Caring for someone is never wretched. It often feels wretched, of course, but intellectually we must remember that loving is good.

**MILLICENT.** Oh, Miss Phillips. What an exquisite thing to say. I must write it in my diary.

**MISS PHILLIPS.** I have a better idea. Here. *(removing a necklace from around her neck)*

**MILLICENT.** Your necklace! Oh no. It's so beautiful and I am so plain, so poor and so orphaned, and so full of nasty, nasty thoughts.

**MISS PHILLIPS.** You remind me of myself when I was a girl. This necklace was a gift from a teacher of mine, as a matter of fact. Her name was Frau von Pussenheimer. Seventeen years ago she and I had a talk right here in this very garden when she discovered me wearing a hair shirt. It is a necklace of tears, Millicent. Another bead is added every time crushing disappointment comes your way. When Frau von Pussenheimer gave it to me, it held but a single bead. And now...well, my beloved teacher is a raving lunatic with a drinking problem and the necklace is yours. Perhaps some day you will pass it on as well, my beautiful student with the nasty, nasty thoughts.

*(MISS PHILLIPS kisses MILLICENT on the forehead.  
Lights fade out.)*

**Scene Seven**  
**Brave Smiles**

(*The main hall. MILLICENT, DAMWELL and THALIA sing a choral arrangement, "Brave Smiles," with FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER conducting.*)

**MILLICENT, DAMWELL & THALIA.**

BRAVE SMILES  
TRY TO HOLD YOUR CHIN HIGH  
BRAVE SMILES  
SHOULDERS STRAIGHT AND DON'T CRY  
LIFE IS HARD  
IT MAY BE SO  
IT ALL DEPENDS ON YOU  
A BRAVE SMILE  
CAN HELP TO PULL YOU THROUGH.

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** Beautiful...that was very beautiful, girls. (*gazing at a portrait of Frau Tilue on horseback, which hangs on the wall*) Frau Tilue would have been very proud of you. Frau Tilue loves you girls. You are her sponges. Her sad, beautiful little sponges soaking up the knowledge. Now, I want to see clean hands for dinner! Understood? (*She exits.*)

**DAMWELL.** What did I tell you? "Brave Smiles" again. This is real trouble. She's even been hitting the sauce.

**THALIA.** She didn't seem drunk to me.

**DAMWELL.** Any time she starts talking about Tilue it's a sure bet. The question is: how far into the label is she?

**THALIA.** What do you mean?

**MILLICENT.** She means she wonders how much liquor Frau von Pussenheimer has taken.

(*BABE rushes in, breathless.*)

**DAMWELL.** Babe! Where's Will?

**BABE.** Shhh. I'll explain later.

**DAMWELL.** Great. Now it's curtains for all of us.

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** (*entering*) Line up. Present hands.

(*The girls present their hands. FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER moves along the line, inspecting them.*)

Good, Millicent. Very good, Thalia...Damwell. Babe! Your nails are a filthy mess. I want them scrubbed, do you hear me? Scrub them until they are raw and maybe then you may return to the supper table.

**BABE.** Yes, ma'am. (*scurries off*)

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** How you girls expect to be fed when all day long you are digging in the dirt like little doggies is a mystery to me. Anyway, tonight for after dinner Miss Gateau has prepared a special treat in honor of the new girl. Tell me, Thalia, do you like *hamantaschen*?

**THALIA.** A *hamantaschen*? For me?

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** Yes, that's right.

(*FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER hands out bowls and spoons. BABE enters.*)

I hope you girls appreciate our Miss Gateau. She is a woman of extraordinary talents. (*smiling to herself*) Hmmmm. (*inspecting BABE's hands*) Much better, Babe. Now. You may begin eating. And remember: I want no slurping.

(*DAMWELL slurps her soup. FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER turns and, thinking it's nothing, turns away. DAMWELL slurps again. FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER catches her.*)

**BABE.** Damwell, quit it.

**DAMWELL.** What?! I can't help it.

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** Is the soup to your taste, Damwell?

**DAMWELL.** Lovely, Frau von Pussenheimer.

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** Perhaps it's too much to ask you to enjoy your meal in silence?

**DAMWELL.** No, ma'am. (*She is smiling. It's a nervous reaction that she cannot control.*)

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** Perhaps you would like to share your amusement with the rest of us.

**DAMWELL.** Pardon?

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** What is it that you find so funny?

**DAMWELL.** Nothing.

(*All the girls snicker and try to suppress their laughter.*)

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** Babe?

**BABE.** Yes, ma'am.

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** Where is Wilhelmina?

**BABE.** Who?

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** That's not funny. Where is she? What's going on?

**DAMWELL.** I – I think she was helping Dick Moorehead mend the fence. I think that's what she said. He needed help and Will was the only one strong enough –

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** Liar! Will is not with Dick Moorehead! Where is she? Speak one or you will all suffer! Millicent?

**MILLICENT.** I don't know, ma'am. I haven't seen Will since before –

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** Ha! I already know you're a liar. Babe?

**BABE.** I haven't seen her since –

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** Liars! Liars! All of you! Hiding something from me. Conspiring behind Frau von Pussenheimer's back. Perhaps you are trying to play a practical joke on Frau von Pussenheimer. Is that it? Perhaps you have pinned a humorous message to the back of my frock! (*twists around, trying to see her own back*) After all I've done for you. This is how you show your gratefulness? Well, I won't have it! Go to your rooms! Go!

(*The girls rush out. FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER is left alone with the portrait of Frau Tilue. She talks to it.*)

**FRAU VON PUSSENHEIMER.** (*cont.*) Oh, Emmeline. Why have you leaved me? They used to love me, the girls. They used to vie for my attention. Why, just a look from me would be all a girl could ever hope for or dream of. Now they are lost to me. Someone is stealing them away. Yes. Someone is usurping me. Trouble has come to live at the Academy...and I know just how to root it out.

(*blackout*)

**Scene Eight**  
**Night Talk**

*(The bedroom. Nighttime. From offstage, a girl moos.)*

**DAMWELL.** There goes that horrible mooing girl.

*(The girl moos again.)*

Girl! I'll give you twenty cents if you stop that mooing.

*(another moo)*

Babe.

**BABE.** What, Damwell?

**DAMWELL.** I can't sleep. That girl is mooing again. I need you to rub on me or I'll never sleep.

**BABE.** I can't.

**DAMWELL.** I'll give you three dollars if you come rub on me.

**BABE.** I'm all bloody again. It already happened. I don't know why I'm bloody again.

**DAMWELL.** You dunce! It happens every month.

**BABE.** Every month! You didn't tell me that. What about the match tomorrow?

**DAMWELL.** Well, you can't play. And I don't think you should wash either.

**MILLICENT.** She has to do something. If her sheets are bloody, she'll catch it from Frau von Pussenheimer.

**BABE.** What will I do?

**WILL.** Hold it in.

**DAMWELL.** You'll have to sleep in the washroom.

**BABE.** But I'll be so cold.

**DAMWELL.** Do you want to catch it from Frau von Pussenheimer?

*(BABE exits. THALIA is crying.)*

Shhh! New girl! Shhh!

**WILL.** Leave her alone, Damwell. She's an orphan.

**DAMWELL.** I've got news for you. We're all orphans. Besides, I heard she's got parents.

**MILLICENT.** I have two parents.

*(DAMWELL and WILL groan.)*

I do so. I have a mother and a dad and we live on Strawberry Lane in the village of Hootsville. When I grow up, I'm going to run an orphanage made of toast. Warm, buttery toast. So at night, when you feel like crying, you can take a nibble.

**DAMWELL.** Silly. If you took a bite of toast every time you were hungry or sad you'd weigh in at twelve stone.

*(THALIA continues to cry.)*

Girl, stop that crying. I'll give you twenty cents if you stop that crying. Be sensible. All your people are sensible. That's what our maid used to say. That's why your people have pots of money.

**WILL.** Damwell, you're an oaf. You're the rich one.

**DAMWELL.** Oh! You're right. *(She laughs and laughs.)*

**MILLICENT.** Damwell! Can't you be quieter? What if Pussenheimer hears you?

**DAMWELL.** What if she does? Why, if she came in here right now, I'd say, "I'm so sorry to bother you, Ludmilla. But Wilhelmina was just telling us of how often she dreams of kissing you."

**WILL.** Damn you, Damwell!

*(WILL jumps on DAMWELL. They start wrestling around.)*

**MILLICENT.** Stop it, you two! What if Pussenheimer hears you and comes in instead of Miss Phillips!

*(They quiet down immediately.)*

**THALIA.** Who is Miss Phillips?

**DAMWELL.** You haven't met Miss Phillips?

**MILLICENT.** *(simultaneously)* She's is our guardian angel.

**WILL.** *(simultaneously)* She's beautiful.

**DAMWELL.** (*simultaneously*) She's heavenly. When she looks at you directly in your eyes, you could just faint and die from it.

(**MILLICENT** and **WILL** assent.)

**MILLICENT.** You'll see.

**WILL.** She comes to tuck us in each night.

**DAMWELL.** And sometimes, when the mood strikes her, she gives us each a little kiss.

(*All three girls sigh. There is a pause.*)

**MILLICENT.** Will, tell us a story.

**WILL.** One night, I slipped away from the school. A truck drove by and I hopped on the back. I dozed. I dreamt of the ocean and a night full of stars. An old sailor man found me. He said, "Hey, boy, come here." He felt in my pants. He didn't find what he was looking for and said, "Damn." He shoved me. I fell out of the back and ran. Later I became a star in Paris.

**THALIA.** That's not true!

**WILL.** It is!

**MILLICENT.** She's coming.

(*All the girls scurry into their proper beds.*)

**MISS PHILLIPS.** Good evening, girls.

**GIRLS.** Good evening, Miss Phillips.

**MISS PHILLIPS.** (*kissing each girl on the forehead as she goes*) Good night, Damwell. Will, sleep tight. Millicent, don't let the bedbugs bite. Little Thalia. Welcome to the Academy.

(**MISS PHILLIPS** kisses **THALIA** sweetly on the lips. *Tantalized, she comes in for another, this one turns into an exaggerated, deep, tonsil-licking kiss.*)

I'll see you in the morning, girls.

(**MISS PHILLIPS** exits. **DAMWELL**, **MILLICENT** and **WILL** swoon. **THALIA** is mystified but not complaining.)

(*fade to black*)



**Scene Nine**  
**Sleeping Girls**

*(Silent scene: DAMWELL, MILLICENT and THALIA all  
feel each other up in their sleep.)*

*(fade to black)*

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