

THE BUTCH PROJECT

Part I Excerpt

By

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NOTICE: Neither words in the dialogue nor the sex of the characters in the play may be changed without the express written consent of the Playwright.

The Butch Project is part present-time drama, part non-linear/alternative time, part rants, part performance (dance, music), and other parts not yet conceived.

Butch - late 30s butch; ethnically Jewish, upper middle class, athletic; shorter than KG.

KG - late 30s butch; Black, rising working class, athletic; tall (>5'9")

RaeAllen - mid-late 30s; Black, middle class; high femme, more than striking

The Father/The Ancestor - over 30 but wiser; slightly taller than Butch

The Mother - 60; upper class, Jewish, fixed view of the world; dancers or interns can perform her younger vignettes.

Performers - dancers; play bar patrons, The Others, non-speaking parts (M'Liss); various ages, body types, ethnicities, and abilities.

The Others: The Male Abuser The Dyke (young POC, eager) The Climber

Butch and KG both have two speaking styles: butch/street/jive and "straight up" -- they switch it up any time they want

REFERENCES

G-d, g-d -- written notation only, pronounced normally

The 'Bury -- Roxbury, a predominantly Black section of Boston

Owen (The Brother) means "well-born" in Gaelic

The overarching structure of The Butch Project (an epic of 3-4 plays):

Time is fluid. Gender is fluid. The emotional journey is the structure.

SCENE 1. *Late evening. PERFORMERS are patrons at a Lesbian dance bar. Thumping music: disco, hip hop, house, etc. BUTCH and KG enter from different wings.*
(11/16/2015)

They notice/acknowledge each other, but get busy scoping out the scene. They move off to look to score. Their overtures are declined. They end up next to each other, on the sidelines. Visually cruising the femmes, available or not.

BUTCH

This sucks.

KG

No shit.

Butch sticks out hand. KG shakes it.

KG (CONT'D)

Name's KG.

BUTCH

Butch.

KG

Uh hunh.

BUTCH

Seriously.

KG

Not from your mama.

BUTCH

A fab femme. *(Beat.)* Don't even ask.

KG

Rebecca. Kathleen. ... Sandy.

BUTCH

That would be tolerable. Nope, not telling.

KG

Okaaaay ... (*Beats.*) See anything you like?

BUTCH

Not what I was hoping.

KG

A certain somebody?

BUTCH

A certain (*Snaps fingers*) - my uncle called it "Moxie." Took me a long time to understand what the hell he meant.

KG

"Juice."

BUTCH

Works for me. So what's KG for?

KG

KG.

BUTCH

C'mon ...

KG

(*A look*) Nope, not telling.

Pause. More cruising.

BUTCH

Too early to put this baby to bed.

KG

For sure. Don't wanna get laughed outta the 'Bury. [*'hood, if not Boston setting*]

BUTCH

Wanna hang out?

KG signals for refills. They go to a hightop, quieter. Sit catty-corner, not face to face.

KG

What made you come tonight?

BUTCH

Horny. *(Laughs)* Been a while ...

KG

You looking for serious?

Woman Performer as waitstaff delivers beers in bottles (no glasses).

BUTCH

Chased that long and hard. *(Beats.)* Short version?, not looking to swim in those waters.

KG

Never?

BUTCH

So far. *(Beat.)* You?

KG

I was happy. Lived good together. 'Cept she kept a lot from me ... almost a year.

BUTCH

Ouch.

KG

Tell you one thing: anger's good for a hurting heart.

BUTCH

Got ya there.

Pause. Not uncomfortably.

BUTCH (CONT'D)

I work for a contractor.

KG

Good with tools, yeah?

BUTCH

Absolutely! *(They laugh)* Operations side - bid packages, project management.

KG

I honcho a zine, but tech repair pays the bills.

BUTCH

Lotta miles, doing that.

KG

Yeah, but no one's checking me every step. Nice customers, mostly.

BUTCH

So you have a territory.

KG

(Arm sweep) This be my territory.

BUTCH

(With pleasure) Yeahhhh.

Pause. Cruising.

BUTCH (CONT'D)

Tell me about the zine, like, you do everything?

KG

Another time. Not a bar conversation. It's good stuff.

BUTCH

Look forward to it. *(Beat.)* You shoot hoops?

KG

Volleyball. Spiker.

BUTCH

Not much fun one on one.

KG

You got a court?

BUTCH

At the Y. After the kids and before the desk jocks.

KG

Sounds good. *(Pulls out phone)* Give me the 4-1-1.

BUTCH

You got my name. *(Pulls out phone, types in "KG")*. Here, you do mine, I'll do yours.

KG

(Bristling) Nobody touches my stuff.

BUTCH

Hey, no prob! ... 857-463-eleven eleven.

KG

(Types data) Didn't mean to jump on ya. 617-482-2914.

BUTCH

(Finishes entry, looks at calendar) Tuesday at 5?

KG

That'll work.

BUTCH

I'll text the address. No fireworks, okay?

KG

Unless you start beating the crap outta me.

BUTCH

I doubt it, looking at you. *(Beats.)* Totally makes up for these rude girls.

KG

Their loss.

They shake hands/high five.

SCENE 2. *KG at home, near computer. (2/28/2018)*KG

(To the audience) Just so you know, I don't usually leave the bar with somebody's phone number. Might leave with somebody, but that's a totally different thing. *(Grins)* I don't often click with another butch at the bar. White, especially. This never been a town where the races mixed too well, to put it mildly. I dunno, something about how we talked, running it on top but real underneath. You don't get that every day.

Most folks have white friends, from work mostly. They don't like to come to the 'Bury. Not like I wanna lose my car, phone, watch or get the shit beat outta me either. But that's only in a couple parts. I'm waiting for the day some white family is just going about their business, shopping, walking around. 'Course then I'd probably start worrying about a flood more coming, and we'd get gentrified outta our part of the world. Racism is the biggest bullshit there is. *(Beat.)*

Community's awesome, tight. Spats about who's the better leader, pastor, legislator are pretty mild. People always have some shit - even with the shit outside being twenty times worse. You know who's got your back, and where to go for some daily friendliness. Can't beat that.

Shooting hoops'll be interesting, but why not?! Could start us on a good road, even if there's crap. I'm game, just not for race and class bullshit ... or being the patient teacher. Then again, could be me running my stuff on her. Guess we'll just have to see how it goes, hey?

Damn, been blabbing away to y'all and not watching the time. Gotta finish drafting this piece on the Congressional Black Caucus. Later ...

Walks/turns to computer.

SCENE 3. *Lights down on KG, up on BUTCH at home.
(11/24-25,2015)*

BUTCH

(To the audience) Creating my butch self was not "against the odds" - more like: no odds. Not like your parents send you out with a whiteboard, saying, "Go for it. Put on it whatever you want." *(Pause.)*

My shape and hemline were more important than my brain or my .326 batting average. When I was 13, instead of a *bat mitzvah* like my friends, my mother took me shopping for gloves. "Thirteen button" ones that came way past my elbow. White, short, lightweight ones. Some medium. I kept thinking, how do I get dressed? You put one on, those fingers can't do anything else. Hog-tied.

I wore the short ones once to my grandmother's house, looking and feeling like a girl imposter.

Blackout on Butch, lighting change to watery motif. Three female PERFORMERS waiting in wings, in modest summer tops, shorts, skirts.

I'm six, swimming in trunks just like my brother Owen's. Brown and white Hawaiian foliage, loose in the thighs. Water swirls over my skin, sunfish nibble my chest, my feet squish in the pond bottom.

PERFORMERS enter, hover around Butch.

One day the mothers gang up on me:

PERFORMERS

Cover up!

BUTCH

But I look just like my brother! No breasts for a thousand miles, or at least six years. Each one intones:

PERFORMERS

(Droning) Girls wear bathing suits.

BUTCH

Like a phone line going dead: Click, freedom's over. No more breeze drying my skin. Wet nylon itching my belly, my tiny nipples.

How can I play hard with him, looking like a girl?

SCENE 4. *After work. BUTCH and KG in the bar, beers, background music. (10/31,11/2/2015)*

KG

You chicken out about hoops?

BUTCH

Nah, I got something later. Didn't want to get sweaty and have to shower and all. 'Sides, something I've been dying to ask you.

KG

Nothing personal, now. "We've only just met."

BUTCH

Thinks she's funny ... okay, here goes: "Which lesbians want you to be butch?"

KG

I'm always butch.

BUTCH

Okay then, a butch.

KG

If they were hip to what's happ'nin' between their legs, it'd be every one.

BUTCH

C'mon, be serious.

KG

100% be feeling it, I'm telling you.

BUTCH

Yeah, but some of them, you wouldn't wanna hear their thoughts. *(Beat.)* So, answer my question.

KG

(Beats.) There's the ones who know ... and the ones who don't, but they do, somewhere in they selves. Femmes on the prowl working it hard, then soft. Doing whatever they have to, to get that butch. They know just what they're after. Don't matter if the dyke's with somebody - she out in public?, she's fair game. That femme don't stop 'til she gets her prize, or the text that the store ain't open.

The clueless ones be running that 90s thing, "no butches." They afraid if they get what they want, it'll take them out ... and what kinda control they got then? Being against the butch thing, means they don't really know the femme thing: you gotta know how to use the control you got - and when using it totally messes up any chance for fun. *(Short pause.)* Yeah, that's it.

BUTCH

A veritable treatise! *(Beat.)* Anything else?

KG

Stay away from those straight girls. Beyond bad.

BUTCH

Scars of experience?

KG

Either they playing - getting off, a public hand job - or testing how far they can tease you out before you make a complete ass of yourself. Far as I'm concerned?, complete definition of a bitch.

BUTCH

BUT - no harm in looking.

KG

That's some hard-up self talking.

BUTCH

No! Equal opportunity, why not?

KG

Don't be stupid. Only trouble there. Not to mention, they all look alike. And so damn predictable. Strike one, two, three. So not worth the time.

BUTCH

Guess if they're holding on to whatever they were taught, not much you can do. But I'm telling you, a good-looking butch is a straight woman's dream.

KG

You are hard up.

BUTCH

Listen: it's a total rush for them with none of the risk, 'cause they're not playing for keeps. They give up super strokes while letting down about every thing. You should try some.

KG

Yeah, and when their home life calls? No thanks.

BUTCH

I'm not talking a steady diet here. Fine, you hate kale, doesn't mean skip the vegetable aisle.

KG

Batshit. You are totally batshit.

BUTCH

Besides, kale is good for you.

KG

(Pretends to lunge at Butch) AAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHH!