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SF PERUSALS

Body Awareness

by **Annie Baker**



SAMUEL FRENCH

FOUNDED 1830

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BODY AWARENESS was developed at the 2007 Bay Area Playwrights Festival, a program of the Playwrights Foundation, Amy L. Mueller, Artistic Director

World Premiere
Presented by
Atlantic Theatre Company
New York City, 2008

ATLANTIC THEATER COMPANY

Neil Pepe
Artistic Director

Mary McCann
School Executive Director

Andrew D. Hamingson
Managing Director

presents

BODY AWARENESS

by
Annie Baker

with
Jonathan Clem, Peter Friedman, Mary McCann, JoBeth Williams

sets
Walt Spangler

costumes
Bobby Frederick Tilley II

lights
Jason Lyons

sound
Anthony Gabriele

casting
MelCap Casting

production stage manager
Jillian M. Oliver

assistant stage manager
John Randolph Ferry

production manager
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Christian Parker

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Boneau/Bryan-Brown

directed by
Karen Kohlhaas

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CHARACTERS

JOYCE - 55
JARED - 21, her son
PHYLLIS - 45, her girlfriend
FRANK BONITATIBUS - 59

SET

Stage left is Joyce and Phyllis's kitchen. There's a sink and a stove, a table with chairs, and a bookshelf with a multi-volume set of the OED.

Center stage is a queen-sized bed. This is Joyce and Phyllis's bedroom.

Stage right is a blackboard.

The characters should wander freely in and out of the sets during the scene transitions, turning on lights, removing props, etc.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

BODY AWARENESS should be played as naturalistically as possible. Forget that it's a comedy. I've found that the play works best (and is actually funnier) when everything is played in earnest, and everyone stops worrying about getting the audience to laugh.

Feel free to draw out the pauses, and make them really agonizing.

This play is dedicated to Linda Baker.

(Lights up on **PHYLLIS** *standing in front of the blackboard, clutching a microphone and a few index cards. She is nervous. Written across the blackboard is the word "Monday".* **PHYLLIS** *takes a deep breath.)*

PHYLLIS. The goal for Body Awareness Week is threefold.

(pause)

One: it's a catalyst for discussion.

Two: it's a chance for everyone here at Shirley State to just kind of *check in*: first with ourselves, and our own bodies, and then with our thoughts and judgments about other people's bodies. We live in a very harsh culture, a culture that encourages a real obsession with appearance, and, um, healing from this culture, healing ourselves, can only really take place once we're able to step back and examine the culture itself from a critical viewpoint. Deepak Chopra uses a, what I think is a really great example of flies stuck in a jar: if you keep the lid on for long enough, when you finally take it off, only a few flies are actually brave enough to leave the, ah, *confines* of the jar. The rest just keep flying around inside.

(she takes a deep breath)

Three: we've invited some really fabulous guest artists to campus this week, so it's a great opportunity for all of us to really look at art in a new way. I mean, if you think about it, so *much* of art is about body awareness, or at least gaze awareness…so faculty members, if any of this is applicable to your class work…don't make it a source of stress or anything, but there is just *so much* potential discussion surrounding these issues.

(after a pause, peering out)

Wow. It's really snowing out there.

(she smiles nervously)

I guess that's it. It's Monday! We've got five very eventful days ahead of us. I'm, ah…I'm really excited about this.

(Blackout on **PHYLLIS***.)*

*(***JOYCE** *and* **PHYLLIS***'s kitchen.* **JOYCE** *and* **JARED** *sit at the table.* **JARED** *wears his McDonald's uniform. After a long silence:)*

JOYCE. We're fine with you masturbating, Jared.

*(***JARED** *does not respond.)*

JOYCE. This is not about the fact that you masturbate.

(another silence)

The thing is…you can't rack up those charges. We see them on the bill.

JARED. Okay.

JOYCE. You're free to use the internet, or purchase whatever yourself…

(another awkward pause)

…We just can't afford the Pay-Per-View.

JARED. This is really gross.

JOYCE. What's gross?

JARED. Talking about this.

JOYCE. Yeah, well, I think women with no body hair? I think that's gross.

*(***JARED** *is silent.)*

JOYCE. You know people don't really look like that, right? It will be extremely hard for you to find a real person who looks like that.

*(***JARED** *refuses to look at her.)*

JOYCE. Those women have had extensive plastic surgery and really painful hair waxing procedures. I assume you know that we all have pubic hair for a reason.

(a long pause)

What are you thinking about?

JARED. Why do you care?

JOYCE. I love you…? I think you're fabulous…?

JARED. OED stuff.

JOYCE. Any specific word?

JARED. I was thinking about the definition for "imbecile."

JOYCE. That sounds like a fun one.

*(***JARED** *gazes at her suspiciously, then continues.)*

JARED. Nowadays "imbecile" just means someone stupid. But it used to mean "physically weak." It originally comes from the Latin for "without a supporting staff."

JOYCE. Huh.

JARED. What's weird is that this implies there was a time when "physically weak" and "stupid" were synonymous.

JOYCE. Yeah. I avoid using the word "stupid" whenever possible. It's kind of judgmental, don't you think?

*(***JARED** *abruptly stands up, takes a book out of his backpack, and puts it down on the table.)*

JOYCE. Wow. You read the whole thing?

JARED. Yes. Well. I perused it.

JOYCE. And?

JARED. It was extremely well-written.

JOYCE. It's a fast read, right?

JARED. I don't really care about whether something is a "fast read."

JOYCE. No, I just meant…Phyllis says he's an incredible psychologist. Like, renowned.

(A pause.)

JOYCE. Do you think –

JARED. I don't have it.

JOYCE. …Okay. We don't need to jump to any conclusions right now. I…Phyllis and I just wanted you to think about it, and then –

JARED. I can tell you with 100 percent certainty that I don't have it.

JOYCE. That's great. That's great.

(after a pause)

I just think that if we all went and met with a psychologist he or she could give us a more definite –

JARED. I AM NOT FUCKING RETARDED.

JOYCE. Tone Of Voice.

JARED. I am not fucking retarded.

JOYCE. It doesn't mean you're retarded. It's a social –

JARED. I don't have it.

JARED. They give that example. If an Asperger's person walks in the front door and sees a loved one crying they don't stop and ask What's Wrong?

JOYCE. Uh huh.

JARED. I can say with 100 percent certainty that I would stop and ask What's Wrong.

JOYCE. Really? The last time you saw me crying you told me to stop and make you a snack.

JARED. You were crying for a stupid reason.

JOYCE. I was crying because you threatened to stab me in the eye.

JARED. I just…I'm obviously a really smart person.

JOYCE. It doesn't mean you're not smart. It just means you have trouble relating to people.

*(***JARED** *picks up his backpack.)*

JARED. I have to go to work.

JOYCE. I love you. Hey. Don't forget. Our guest artist is coming tomorrow. So keep things neat.

JARED. Is it a man?

JOYCE. I don't know.

JARED. I would prefer that it not be a man.

JOYCE. I really don't have any control over that, sweetheart.

*(***JARED** *walks out of the room. After a few seconds, he walks back in.)*

JARED. Maybe you have Asperger's.

JOYCE. Jared.

JARED. Because you're kind of an idiot.

JOYCE. I'm not an idiot, honey.

JARED. You've never read "Crime and Punishment." You're fifty-five and you've never read "Crime and Punishment."

JOYCE. Have *you* ever read "Crime and Punishment"?

*(***JARED** *roars in frustration and takes an electric toothbrush out of his pocket. He turns it on and starts passing the toothbrush back and forth between his hands.* **JOYCE** *watches him.)*

JOYCE. If you're angry at me just say it. You don't have to insult me. You can say: I'm feeling really angry right now, Mom.

JARED. I'm not angry. I'm surrounded by imbeciles. You don't even…you don't even read the dictionary!

JOYCE. You're going to be late.

*(***JARED** *stops and stares at her, seething with rage.)*

JARED. I could kill you.

JOYCE. Warning One.

JARED. I could kill Phyllis.

JOYCE. Warning Two.

JARED. I could garrote both of you in your sleep.

JOYCE. …Warning Three. If you make one more physical threat I will call the police.

JARED. I have First Amendment Rights.

JOYCE. You are not allowed to physically threaten people and you know that.

JARED. First Amendment says I can physically threaten people.

JOYCE. No it doesn't.

JARED. Yes it does.

JOYCE. No. It doesn't.

JARED. BABBLING CRETIN!

*(***JOYCE** *collapses onto the table and buries her face in her arms. It's unclear whether or not she's crying.* **JARED** *stands there and watches her for a while. He turns off the toothbrush.)*

JARED. I won't kill you.

(Silence.)

JARED. I was joking.

(Silence.)

JARED. What's wrong?

*(***JOYCE** *does not respond.)*

JARED. See? I asked.

(Blackout.)

*(***JOYCE** *and* **PHYLLIS***'s bedroom.* **JOYCE** *and* **PHYLLIS** *sit up in bed together, lit by the bedside lamp.* **PHYLLIS** *is reading the Asperger's book.* **JOYCE** *is clipping her toenails and depositing them on the nightstand.)*

JOYCE. There's this weird *crud* all over my toenails.

PHYLLIS. *(not looking up from her book)* What color is it?

JOYCE. Gray-ish?

PHYLLIS. Ew.

(After a pause, **PHYLLIS** *puts down the book.)*

PHYLLIS. If he doesn't think he has it how does he explain the fact that he still lives with his mother?

JOYCE. There are lots of cultures where children live with their parents through adulthood.

PHYLLIS. And rack up porn bills?

JOYCE. America is very strange. We're so focused on independence. It's like, you can't need anybody. You have to be this totally autonomous…*person.*

PHYLLIS. Hey. Speaking of other cultures. I finally met the Palestinian Dance Troupe kids.

JOYCE. Oh! Cute!

PHYLLIS. They were amazing. They've been living in these

refugee camps since they were babies? And they were /all –

JOYCE. Wait. I don't get it. How do they relate to Body Awareness?

PHYLLIS. Well. They're a dance troupe. For one thing.

JOYCE. Huh.

PHYLLIS. And they're very political.

JOYCE. Right.

*(***JOYCE** *goes back to clipping her toenails.)*

PHYLLIS. Hey. My eye is twitching. Can you tell?

*(***JOYCE** *looks at her.)*

JOYCE. Where?

PHYLLIS. Left one.

JOYCE. Nope.

PHYLLIS. I can feel it, um…it's sort of pulsing? Just like this little pulsing –

JOYCE. I don't see anything.

*(***JARED** *yells from offstage:)*

JARED. *(O.S.)* I CAN HEAR YOU GUYS TALKING AND I'M ATTEMPTING TO FALL ASLEEP!

*(***PHYLLIS** *and* **JOYCE** *look at each other, amused.)*

JARED. *(O.S.)* I HAVE TO GET UP AT SIX IN THE MORNING!

JOYCE. *(calling out)* Okay, okay, we hear you!

JARED. *(O.S.)* I ACTUALLY HAVE A JOB!

PHYLLIS. *(yelling back good-naturedly)* We have jobs too!

JARED. *(O.S.)* IN ACADEMIA!

PHYLLIS. *(laughing)* YOUR MOTHER'S JOB DOES NOT COUNT AS ACADEMIA!

*(***PHYLLIS** *grins at* **JOYCE**. **JOYCE** *stares at her for a few seconds, then:)*

JOYCE. What do you mean, it doesn't count as academia?

PHYLLIS. A high school teacher is not an academic.

JOYCE. Why not?

PHYLLIS. An academic has a PhD.

JOYCE. Who says?

PHYLLIS. Um. It's common knowledge?

JOYCE. I've never heard that before.

PHYLLIS. Joyce. A public school teacher is not an academic. An academic publishes articles. An academic –

JOYCE. You are such a snob.

PHYLLIS. What? No. I'm the *opposite* of a snob. How am I a snob?

JARED. *(O.S.)* WILL BOTH OF YOU KINDLY CEASE SPEAKING!

*(***PHYLLIS** *and* **JOYCE** *fall silent. After a short pause, the buzzing sound of the electric toothbrush is heard from offstage.)*

PHYLLIS. *(softly)* Oh please. He's not sleeping. He's sticking his toothbrush up his ass.

JOYCE. Phil.

PHYLLIS. What?

JOYCE. He likes rubbing it against his gums. He finds it soothing.

*(***PHYLLIS** *holds up the Asperger's book.)*

PHYLLIS. Did you read the part where it says that they get really dependant on certain objects and rituals?

JOYCE. Yeah.

PHYLLIS. Also they have an unbelievably sensitive sense of smell. *Totally* Jared.

(after a pause)

I can't get over the fact that you never made him see a therapist.

JOYCE. He refuses to go.

PHYLLIS. Yeah, but with certain kids you just have insist / on –

JOYCE. *(defensively)* For a while it seemed like he was gonna be fine.

*(***PHYLLIS** *sighs.)*

JOYCE. For a while it seemed that way!

PHYLLIS. I'm gonna turn off the light.

JOYCE. He had friends in elementary school. This little clique of boys?

*(***PHYLLIS** *reaches over and turns off the lamp. They're barely visible in the moonlight. After a pause, quietly, out of the darkness:)*

JOYCE. He was a *very* cuddly baby.

PHYLLIS. Okay, okay.

(A pause.)

JOYCE. Will you spoon me?

PHYLLIS. Mmm.

(The sound of sheets rustling. They settle into a comfortable position. After a few seconds:)

JOYCE. God. I can't stop thinking about this girl in my B period class. Loreen? I told you about her.

PHYLLIS. I'm really tired, sweetheart.

JOYCE. She's so *makeup-y*. I don't know. It's weird. There's something really nervous and sexualized about her.

PHYLLIS. Mmhm.

JOYCE. I think maybe she was molested.

PHYLLIS. You think everyone was molested.

JOYCE. Well, 1 out of 4 /women –

PHYLLIS. Yeah, but you think EVERYONE was molested.

JOYCE. That's not true.

PHYLLIS. You thought I was molested. When you met me.

JOYCE. Well, you seemed kind of…molested.

(after a long pause)

Will you do it again?

PHYLLIS. Oh my god. I'm so tired.

(There is a rustling underneath the covers.)

JOYCE. Higher.

(after a pause)

Yeah. There.

PHYLLIS. Okay.

JOYCE. Is that weird?

PHYLLIS. Yeah, Joyce.

JOYCE. Is that thigh? Or is it crotch?

(after a long silence)

Is it weird for someone to put their –

PHYLLIS. It's weird.

JOYCE. It could have been nothing.

PHYLLIS. It's weird, honey.

JOYCE. He could have just…

(**JOYCE** *trails off.)*

PHYLLIS. Your father was *definitely* a bastard. Can we go to sleep?

JOYCE. Yeah. Yeah. Sorry.

(The two women shift around in bed and embrace each other. Slowly, morning light comes through the window.)

(**PHYLLIS** *gets up out of bed and walks over to the blackboard. She writes "Tuesday" on the board, then turns to the audience and speaks into a microphone.)*

PHYLLIS. It's an honor just to stand here and introduce the next performers. They've flown across oceans, and, um, continents to perform for us, and they're an unbelievably strong, brave group of children. People. They came together in a refugee camp in Palestine, where, well…the word that comes to my mind is "hopelessness." In a place of hopelessness they formed a community, and they created this work of dance… it's pretty mind-blowing. So without further ado –

(she hesitates)

Oh. Sorry. One more thing. Just a nomenclature issue. This week, um, February 20th to the 27th, is, officially, National Eating Disorder Awareness Week. But

I wanted to reiterate that here at Shirley State College we've chosen to call it Body Awareness Week. There's still gonna be the roundtable discussion on eating disorders, but we feel it's important to take a more positive tack and make the whole thing about the larger issue of Self Image in general. And this way we get to see incredible groups like Idbaal perform! So just a reminder, it's not Eating Disorder Awareness Week at Shirley State, it's *Body Awareness* Week. If we could correct the mistake on any posters or publicity materials, that would be great. Okay. Prepare to be…very moved. I'd like to welcome Idbaal!

(She steps aside. Pounding Palestinian music starts playing. Blackout.)

*(***JOYCE** *and* **PHYLLIS***'s kitchen.* **FRANK BONITATIBUS** *stands in the middle of the kitchen, playing the recorder.* **JOYCE** *is sitting at the table and watching him, utterly enchanted. He finishes, lowers the recorder and smiles at her. After a pause:)*

JOYCE. Oh. My. God.

FRANK. You enjoyed it?

JOYCE. That was *otherworldly.*

FRANK. Mmm.

(They grin at each other for a while. Finally **JOYCE** *shakes her head, as if to clear her thoughts.)*

JOYCE. I should start making dinner.

*(***JOYCE** *gets up from the table and starts getting vegetables out of the fridge.* **FRANK** *trails her around the kitchen while she prepares the meal. He continually munches from a bowl of baby carrots on the kitchen table.)*

FRANK. So you teach high school?

JOYCE. Yup.

FRANK. What do you teach?

JOYCE. Cultural Studies.

FRANK. Is that like Social Studies?

JOYCE. It's a little different.

FRANK. How?

JOYCE. Um, well, we sort of take more of an anthropological perspective?

(She starts cutting up the vegetables. **FRANK** *peers at some of the pictures on the refrigerator.)*

FRANK. How long have you and your girlfriend been together?

JOYCE. Three years.

FRANK. Wow. Great.

JOYCE. It is great.

FRANK. Do you call her that? Your girlfriend? Is it okay? To call her that?

JOYCE. Um, well, some people –

FRANK. Do you prefer "partner" or something?

JOYCE. Oh. I don't know. Well, actually, /yes. I –

FRANK. "Partner" sounds so DIPPY, though. You know what I mean?

JOYCE. Um –

FRANK. Have you always been… ?

*(***FRANK** *makes a vague gesture.)*

JOYCE. Uh. No. I have a son. You'll meet him. Yeah. I was married. To a man. Years ago. Phyllis was actually my first, um, female partner.

FRANK. What about her?

JOYCE. Oh, Phyllis. Yeah. Phyllis knew she was gay when she was in kindergarten.

FRANK. Three years together. Huh.

(after a pause)

You really feel like you know each other after three years.

*(***JOYCE** *nods.)*

But then one day the person says something really weird and you're like: DO I actually know you? Or are you this total stranger?

*(***JOYCE** *doesn't respond. She finishes chopping vegetables and starts putting them into a pot on the stove.)*

FRANK. Anyway.

JOYCE. Are you in a relationship?

FRANK. No. I'm actually incredibly happy to be single. Just taking stock of things.

*(***JOYCE** *nods.)*

You live here. That's so strange.

*(***JOYCE** *nods again.)*

"Shirley, Vermont." This is a weird town.

JOYCE. It's small.

FRANK. Yeah. Small and weird.

*(***JOYCE** *starts stirring and seasoning.)*

Is everyone really P.C.? Are people like, don't say "black person," say "person of color"?

JOYCE. Oh. Well. I don't know. I /think –

FRANK. Don't say "retarded," say "mentally disabled"?

JOYCE. Actually –

FRANK. People in towns like this always seem to find my work threatening.

JOYCE. But your pictures are so moving!

FRANK. It's like you're not allowed to do anything involving naked women anymore. If a woman is naked, you're a misogynist.

JOYCE. But you have so many *types* of women –

FRANK. I know –

JOYCE. – that one photo of the old lady? With the mastectomy?

FRANK. Yeah.

JOYCE. It was gorgeous. The way she was smiling?

(The buzzing sound of **JARED***'s toothbrush is heard from offstage.)*

FRANK. Do you hear that?

JOYCE. My son must be home.

FRANK. Yeah, but what's that sound?

*(***JOYCE** *hesitates.)*

JOYCE. Um. You should probably know. Jared is kind of… special.

*(***FRANK** *looks at her.)*

FRANK. Special meaning what?

JOYCE. Um. I think he has something called Asperger's? I'd like him to see a therapist about it. He refuses to, /but –

FRANK. I've heard of that. It's like lack of empathy, right?

JOYCE. There are less negative ways to put it.

FRANK. No, I just –

JOYCE. There's this thing called Theory of Mind? It's our ability to know that other people don't know what we're thinking…that we each have these independent mental states? People with Aspberger's have a hard time –

*(***JARED** *enters the kitchen, sucking on his toothbrush.)*

JARED. The whole house smells like meatloaf.

JOYCE. No one's making meatloaf.

JARED. It smells like meatloaf.

JOYCE. Jared. This is Frank Bonitatibus.

*(***FRANK** *extends his hand.* **JARED** *lifts his hand up in a limp salute, but doesn't touch* **FRANK**. *After a second, he turns off the toothbrush.)*

JARED. I don't have Asperger's.

JOYCE. You were eavesdropping.

JARED. Stop telling everyone I'm retarded.

JOYCE. I never said you were retarded.

JARED. *(to* **FRANK***)* She made me take classes with the retarded kids in high school.

JOYCE. I made you take one Organizational Skills class.

JARED. *(to* **FRANK***)* I'm incredibly smart –

FRANK. *(nervously)* Of course –

JARED. – and she made me take this class with the Special Ed kids. This one guy kept going like this:

(he bobbles his head back and forth)

"You owe me three dollah. You owe me three dollah."

*(***JARED** *starts laughing.)*

JOYCE. Okay. Enough.

FRANK. Are you a student at Shirley State?

JARED. College is stupid. Buncha frat girls and guys having sex with each other.

FRANK. That's not what my college experience was like.

JARED. People do drugs and go to parties.

FRANK. Where is he getting this stuff?

JOYCE. I don't know. I told him how much I loved Brandeis.

JARED. It doesn't really matter anyway. I'm an autodidact.

FRANK. Oh yeah?

JARED. Do you know what that means?

FRANK. I think so.

JARED. It comes from the Greek.

FRANK. You know Greek?

JARED. I know etymology.

FRANK. What's that?

JARED. Ha.

(to **JOYCE***)*

He doesn't know what etymology means.

JOYCE. It's a big word, Jared.

FRANK. Wait. I think I know what it means. The beginning of things? /The –

JARED. WRONG.

JOYCE. Why don't you tell him?

FRANK. I don't need him to tell me.

JARED. The origins and histories of words.

FRANK. Sure. Of course.

JARED. It's my strength. It's proof that I'm not a retard.

JOYCE. Please stop saying retard.

FRANK. *(to* **JARED***)* You ever seen "Rain Man"?

JARED. No.

FRANK. Dustin Hoffman is this retarded guy, but he's like a genius in certain subjects. He's always freaking out and doing these little flappy –

JOYCE. *(getting upset)* That's autism. I think you're talking about autism. Jared has Asperger's. It's on the autism spectrum, but it's actually a much milder –

JARED. I DON'T HAVE IT. FUCKING SHIT!

*(***FRANK** *looks at* **JOYCE***, expecting her to say something.* **JOYCE** *goes back to stirring the soup.)*

FRANK. *(to* **JARED***)* Uh…if you don't go to college what do you do?

JARED. Lots of things. I'm an autodidact.

JOYCE. I think he means where do you work.

JARED. I work at McDonald's.

FRANK. Oh, hey, good, great. Hard-workin' man!

JARED. Everyone there is an idiot.

FRANK. I'm sure that's not true.

JARED. It smells like meatloaf in here. Also like glitter. That glue and glitter smell?

*(***JOYCE** *ignores him.* **JARED** *takes a volume of the OED off of the bookshelf, sits down at the kitchen table, and starts reading it.)*

FRANK. This is an interesting family.

JOYCE. Mmm. We're very open.

*(***PHYLLIS** *enters through the backdoor.)*

JOYCE. Phil! This is our guest artist!

PHYLLIS. Hey! Oh great! I'm Phyllis. I'm one of the, ah, many organizers.

(They shake hands.)

FRANK. Frank Bonitatibus. It's incredibly generous of you to let me –

PHYLLIS. Oh, no! Please. Thank *you.*

*(***PHYLLIS** *beams happily at him, then walks over to* **JOYCE** *and kisses her.)*

PHYLLIS. Hey, ladybug.

FRANK. *(inserting himself back into the conversation)* …It's just so nice to stay in an actual *house.* Usually I just end up sitting alone in a hotel room and drinking beer.

PHYLLIS. We don't drink in this house.

FRANK. No, that's fine, that's not /what –

JARED. *(looking up from his book)* Yes we do. We drink milk. We drink water.

PHYLLIS. I mean alcohol, Jared.

JARED. We drink Cranberry Raspberry Cocktail.

FRANK. *(nervously)* Sounds fine, sounds fine.

JARED. We drink our own urine.

(a horrible pause)

Just kidding.

FRANK. Great.

JARED. I was being ironic.

(to **FRANK***)*

The book said people with Asperger's don't know how to be ironic.

PHYLLIS. What's your medium, Frank?

FRANK. I'm a photographer.

PHYLLIS. Oh! Wonderful! I've just been working with the performance artists, /so –

JARED. Do you make daguerreotypes?

FRANK. Ah. No.

JARED. Do you know what a daguerreotype is?

FRANK. Yes.

JARED. Do you know the etymology of daguerreotype?

FRANK. No. I –

JOYCE. *(pointedly ignoring* **JARED***)* Tell Phyllis about your photographs.

(to **PHYLLIS***)*

I saw them this afternoon. They're amazing.

FRANK. Uh. Well. I take pictures of women.

JOYCE. *(giggling)* Naked women.

*(***PHYLLIS** *looks at* **JOYCE***, confused.)*

PHYLLIS. I'm sorry – ?

JOYCE. They're actually incredibly moving. You have to see it. Everyone was /just –

PHYLLIS. *(ignoring* **JOYCE***, to* **FRANK***)* Wait, why? Why do you take pictures of naked women?

FRANK. Why does anyone take pictures of anything?

JOYCE. Explain it her. It's actually wonderful.

(to **PHYLLIS***)*

He goes around –

FRANK. I go around the country. I don't pay anyone. Women volunteer to pose for me. It's a way for them to, uh, reclaim their own body image.

PHYLLIS. Why don't men pose for you?

JOYCE. It's not just, like, model types. He takes pictures of old women, little girls –

PHYLLIS. Excuse me?

FRANK. With parental permission.

(A pause.)

JARED. The word "daguerreotype" actually comes from the French inventor of the daguerreotype himself. Louis Daguerre.

PHYLLIS. Sorry. I just –

JOYCE. Phyllis is very sensitive.

PHYLLIS. Um, I don't think I'm that sensitive, Joyce. You're the one who's, like, the language police.

(An awkward pause.)

JOYCE. You know, Sally Humphries loves his stuff. She's really crazy about it.

PHYLLIS. Uh huh.

JOYCE. *(to* **FRANK***)* Phyllis was on the search committee that brought Sally Humphries into the psychology department. It was such a white-male-dominated little boy's club, and Sally is this like fabulous *fiery* African-American woman. She's actually part Native-American, too, I think…

FRANK. Oh yeah?

JOYCE. …and she's just fabulous.

(A defeated pause.)

PHYLLIS. *(to* **FRANK***)* How do you know it isn't just exhibitionist? Or exploitative?

FRANK. It's neither.

PHYLLIS. How do you know?

FRANK. Because I'm not exploiting them, and they don't do it for exhibitionist reasons.

PHYLLIS. *(trying to sound light-hearted)* Well, I'm not posing for you.

FRANK. Don't worry, honey. I'm not asking.

PHYLLIS. Did you just call me "honey"?

JARED. *(looking up from the OED)* I refuse to get naked in front of anyone.

PHYLLIS. Frank wouldn't be interested anyway, Jared, because you're a man.

JARED. I don't want anyone to see me naked. Even if I get a girlfriend. I don't want her to look at me.

*(***JARED** *goes back to reading.)*

JOYCE. *(after an awkward pause)* Okay! Let's eat! I made this great winter soup.

JARED. It smells like meatloaf.

JOYCE. Please try to be polite. We have a guest.

(Everyone sits down at the table.)

JOYCE. *(to* **JARED***)* Can you put that away?

*(***JARED** *puts the OED volume on his chair and sits on it. He's perched about five inches higher than everyone else.* **JOYCE** *ladles out soup.)*

FRANK. Sorry. Do you all say grace?

PHYLLIS. We're not religious.

JOYCE. I'm actually Jewish. Well. I'm half-Jewish. Phyllis / is –

FRANK. Fantastic. That's so great.

JOYCE. But I'm not observant.

FRANK. No, that's wonderful! Jews are wonderful. My parents are Greek.

JOYCE. Very nice!

FRANK. …But I personally take a sort of non-religious Buddhist view of things. Still. Judaism is so beautiful. It's such a dialectical religion, you know?

JARED. I never got a Bar Mitzvah.

JOYCE. He just wanted one so people would give him money. I thought that probably wasn't the right reason to go through with it.

FRANK. Hey. You know what? We should do a Shabbas.

JOYCE. Oh. Um. We don't really do that kind of thing.

PHYLLIS. Also it's not Friday.

FRANK. It would be such a treat for me.

JARED. Religion is stupid.

JOYCE. Jared! That's a close-minded thing to say.

FRANK. Come on.

JOYCE. It's a little embarrassing. I just…I don't think I even know how to do Shabbas.

PHYLLIS. Why is that embarrassing?

FRANK. Ah ha. See, I do. You got any red wine?

PHYLLIS. We don't drink.

JOYCE. We have grape juice…

FRANK. Perfect.

PHYLLIS. Sorry. I…um…no one else thinks that doing Shabbas on a Tuesday is a little disrespectful? Possibly sacrilegious?

*(***JOYCE** *gets some grape juice out of the cupboard and puts it on the table. She gets out four wine glasses.)*

JARED. Booze. Goody.

(He laughs.)

PHYLLIS. I don't want any.

JOYCE. Oh, come on.

(She grins happily at **PHYLLIS**. **PHYLLIS** *shakes her head.* **JOYCE** *pours her a glass of grape juice.)*

FRANK. Okay. Now sit. Please.

*(***JOYCE** *sits.* **FRANK** *takes his recorder out of his pocket and plays an "A."* **PHYLLIS** *looks on in disbelief.* **FRANK** *puts his recorder back in his pocket, takes a deep breath, and closes his eyes.)*

FRANK. *(singing)* Baruch ata adonoi
eluhaynu melech hahlom
borey pree hagofen.

*(***FRANK** *opens his eyes and smiles serenely.)*

FRANK. That was the prayer for wine.

PHYLLIS. How do you know the prayer for wine?

FRANK. I was married to a Jew for ten years.

JOYCE. Me too!

(He and **JOYCE** *burst into giggles.* **PHYLLIS** *and* **JARED** *are unamused.)*

PHYLLIS. Why is that funny?

JOYCE. *(ignoring her, to* **FRANK***)* That was gorgeous. Thank you.

FRANK. It's not over. Do you have any candles?

JOYCE. I actually do!

*(***JOYCE** *gets up and gets out two candles and two candlesticks. She puts them on the table.)*

PHYLLIS. This is great. A goy teaching a Jew how to do Shabbas. On a Tuesday.

FRANK. I hope I'm not being presumptuous.

JOYCE. No, no. Not at all.

FRANK. Okay. Light the candles.

*(***JOYCE** *lights the candles.)*

FRANK. Wave your hands around.

*(***JOYCE** *jiggles her hands.)*

FRANK. No, like you're bringing the heat towards you.

(He mimes. She obeys.)

FRANK. Good.

JOYCE. Oh yeah! It's like that scene from "Fiddler on the Roof"!

JARED. I hate musicals.

FRANK. Now put your hands over your eyes.

*(***JOYCE** *puts her hands over her eyes.* **FRANK** *takes out his recorder, gives himself another "A," and then sings the following in a pleasant monotone:)*

FRANK. Baruch atah adonai
eloheinu melech ha-olam…

JARED. You said that before.

FRANK. …this one is different…
Asher kid-shanu
b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu
l'had'like neir shel shabbat. Amein.

(a pause)

FRANK. *(softly)* Can we all sing that last word together?

PHYLLIS *(reluctantly)* /**JOYCE**/**FRANK.** *A-a-a-a-mein.*

FRANK. Now take your hands away.

*(***JOYCE** *takes her hands away. They all look at her.)*

PHYLLIS. You're crying. Jesus Christ.

JOYCE. It's just…

(to **FRANK***)*

Thank you.

(she sits down, shakily)

My Bubbie used to sing like that.

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