Brosef Learns to Dance

by Jayme Kilburn

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Description:
Brosef Learns to Dance is a dark comedy about a call center worker whose court-mandated therapy unexpectedly leads him into the world of YouTube dance tutorials—and, gradually, healing. As Brosef unlocks long-buried trauma through movement, his therapist Babs faces her own unraveling in a journey full of awkwardness, absurdity, and unexpected connection with a woman named Peggy. Meanwhile, Wendy works on her solo performance desperately hoping to "be seen." The play blends dance, memory, and humor to explore how we find our way back to our bodies and to one another.

Act and Scene Breakdown:

<u>Act I</u>

Scene 1: Therapy
Brosef and Babs meet via telehealth. Brosef resists opening up until Babs assigns him a dance video for homework.

Scene 2: Dancing
Brosef follows a YouTube tutorial and writes an unexpectedly vulnerable journal entry.

Scene 3: In-Person Therapy
Brosef recounts the workplace outburst that led to therapy and begins revealing his deeper emotional wounds.

Scene 4: Babs at the Bar
Babs visits a queer bar, meets Wendy and Peggy, and awkwardly begins confronting her own identity.

Scene 5: Interpretive Dance
Wendy performs a monologue while Brosef interprets it through dance.

<u>Act II</u>

Scene 1: Online Therapy
Brosef and Babs meet for their final session. Brosef reflects on childhood trauma while Babs navigates the aftermath of her night with Peggy.

Scene 2: Brosef and Mom
Brosef writes a letter to his late mother and imagines a conversation that helps him find a form of peace.

Scene 3: Wendy's Solo Performance
Wendy performs her solo performance.

Scene 4: Brosef's Final Dance
Brosef and company dance.

Scene 5: The Talkback
The play's creative team discuss the show.

Character Descriptions:

Brosef
A defensive but emotionally vulnerable call center worker in crisis.

Babs
A well-meaning but neurotic therapist.

Wendy
A bartender and part-time performer with a dry wit and a rich inner life.

Peggy
Wendy's ex, bold and flirtatious.

Actor Mom
A gentle spirit worn down by trauma, depression, and disillusionment.

Actor Dad
A menacing, hypermasculine figure haunted by his own bitterness.

Director
Director of the play. Mostly pretentious.

Playwright
Playwright of the play. Neurotic. Partly pretentious.

Audience Member(s)
They just watched this play and are like…huh?

Doubling is encouraged

Scene 1: Therapy

A bro is sitting in front of his computer. Let's call him, Brosef. A therapist is sitting in front of her computer. Let's call her, Babs. This is a teletherapy appointment. When the play begins there is a lot of quiet. Like, an uncomfortable amount. Neither is speaking.

Babs

Last week you told me that sometimes you feel like other people are...I think the words you used were "winning at life." Is that something you would like to talk about?

Brosef

I never said that.

Babs

I wrote down that you were looking at a former friend's Instagram who had recently had a baby and you said it felt like people were "lapping you." That you haven't accomplished as much as you had expected. Does that sound familiar?

Brosef

No.

Babs

I am feeling some resistance from you today. Do you want to talk about what's going on?

Brosef

Nothing is going on. I just don't feel that way. I'm doing great. Things are going great. I don't want a stupid baby or whatever you think I said.

Babs

It seemed like what you were yearning for was more of a sense of belonging...you indicated that it was hard for you to find a sense of validation or accomplishment in your day to day activities and there was something about seeing your friend with a baby that made you feel...I guess a bit sad? Or, disconnected? I think the phrase you used was "like a waterbed with no water in it." Why do you think you were feeling that way?

Brosef

Dude. I literally never said that. I have a slight interest in waterbeds so maybe you misheard. Maybe, MAYBE I said something about how weird it was that Dan has this baby or whatever because he was always such a douchebag in school so like how did someone decide to marry him

and grow a whole human for him or with him or whatever but I NEVER said that I wanted one. A baby.

Pause.

I would be interested in a waterbed. Your boy likes to FUCK!

Pause.

No offense.

Babs

Why would that offend me?

Brosef

I just know sometimes people get offended by words like FUCK, or whatever. Or like, think that fucking is bad or something. Or assume that just because I like to fuck that I don't think about other people's feelings or whatever.

Babs

Why do you think that is?

Brosef

What?

Babs

That other people don't think you think about their feelings.

Brosef

I don't know. 'Cause a few have said it to me, I guess.

Babs

What have they said?

Brosef

What do you mean? Like their exact words?

Babs

Yes. Who said it? What was the context? What were their exact words if you remember?

Brosef

I don't know. I don't like keep a diary of when someone says they don't think I care about them. I just know that people think that. Like, my ex totally thought that. Or, that's what they told me. Or like, screamed at me. Like, when we were fighting.

Babs

What did you fight about, do you remember?

Brosef

This one time I got a text from someone and they saw it and I guess they thought it was like sexual or something but it was just like a friend who was saying "hi" or something. I don't know. It was super dumb and my ex totally blew it out of proportion but then it turned into like a bigger conversation about like how I wasn't emotionally available and how I don't ever put them first or some shit. And I was like, I do put you first! And I got really mad so I just went to go play some video games or something and they like used that against me like that's how I avoid things and stuff and I was like "no, I just don't want to get all upset" or whatever you know, because my dad used to get really upset and like go off so like I don't want to do that to anybody but like if I'm upset I still need to like go off but in like a way that won't hurt anybody so I just play videogames but that doesn't mean that I don't like care or anything. Fuck.

Long pause.

Babs

How did it feel just now? To get a little upset?

Brosef

I don't know. I'm not upset.

Pause.

Bad, I guess.

Babs

It's okay to get upset when you're feeling triggered.

Brosef

I'm not "triggered." Gawd.

Babs

If you bottle up your angry emotions, you may end up bottling up other emotions as well. The important thing is to be careful not to funnel all your emotions into anger. For men…cis men.

People who identify as men and who have been socialized as men…sometimes, anger can feel like a safe emotion and so other emotions like fear, disappointment, shame, guilt, and even more positive emotions such as joy, hope, desire…they can be twisted into anger. Or, you could shut yourself down so you don't feel anything at all. I really want you to allow yourself to feel these emotions when they come up in our sessions. Describe them to me. Sit with them for a moment, if you can.

Pause. Brosef seems upset again, or shaken, something. He's emoting.

Brosef

I don't really even have emotions soooooo…

Babs

Emotions are a good thing. They're what help us relate to each other. Connect with each other.

Brosef

That's stupid. Sorry.

Babs

It's okay. What are you feeling right now?

Brosef

Nothing. Just frustrated, I guess because you keep trying to make me say something that I don't feel. I just don't feel anything and whatever I was feeling last week I don't feel anymore so we don't even need to talk about it, okay.

Babs

We're almost out of time so I'd like to give you some homework if that's alright with you?

Pause. No answer from Brosef.

Babs

I would like you to go to YouTube. Sorry, do you have a computer? I shouldn't assume.

Brosef

(Offended) Yeah, geez. I have a computer…I'm on one right now.

Babs

Oh. Right. Yes. Of course. It's just that computers are costly. I try to remind myself that not everyone can afford a computer. I'm just trying to check my privilege. Sorry. Anyway, type in

"How to Dance for Men." The teacher's name is Brian B. He calls himself the "dancefloor bro." Or, he used to. I think he is part of something called "West Coast Swing" now. Anyway, I'd like you to try one of his tutorials.

Brosef

(Offended again) You think I'm a bro?

Babs

Is that a bad thing? I mean…no. Nevermind. He's just really good at relating to men. Dancing… it's, it's…it's a way of using your body to communicate a desire. Something unspoken. Primal. Instinctual.

Pause. Brosef shifts uncomfortably.

I want you to think of this homework as putting emotion into your body. I want you to tap into something, whatever it is. You have emotions, I know you do. They live in your body. Dancing may help you unlock them, even if you can't articulate them yet.

Brosef

This sounds weird.

Babs

Maybe it is. But, so what?

Brosef

I guess.

Babs

I want you to do one of the tutorials. There's one called "introduction" or "beginner" I think. It's short. Fifteen minutes. Do it and then write a few sentences about what you felt in your body.

Brosef

Like muscles?

Babs

I'm sorry, what do you mean?

Brosef

Like what muscles I felt in my body?

Babs

No, no. Like if you feel good after dancing, where does that "good" feeling originate in your body?

Brosef

I don't know what you mean?

Babs

Whatever you feel after dancing, write it down. And if you can locate that feeling in your body, write that down. Maybe you have a warm fuzzy feeling in your chest. That's the kind of thing you can write down. If not, don't worry about it. Just write down anything that comes to mind.

Brosef mumbles something but ultimately just says "yeah" and shuts the computer before Babs can say anything else. Babs sits there for a moment and then does a full body shake out, similar to an acting warm-up. It is clear this is something she does when the session is very hard and she needs to get "back into her body." Babs goes back to her computer. We hear a ding. She hesitates for a moment and then presses a button on her computer.

Babs

Hi Karen, how are you doing today?

She nods and nods and nods and nods and nods. Lights out.

Scene 2: Dancing

Brian B's YouTube video plays. Brosef is dancing along with it. These are very simple moves. Brosef is clearly enjoying himself. This lasts for as long as you want but definitely a few minutes. Afterwards, Brosef sits down to write in his (very new) journal.

The words of Brosef's journal are a voiceover. This is his inner voice. Perhaps his inner voice is different from Brosef's "normal" voice. Maybe it is how Brosef imagines himself or maybe reflects his insecurities or how he'd like to be viewed or maybe it's a child's voice. You decide!

Brosef (V.O.)

Today I danced…or whatever. Right now I feel fine. The dance felt kind of easy and stupid. I guess guys need to dance? This guy Brian B. seems cool. Or dumb. I don't know. Sometimes I don't know what's cool or dumb. Sometimes things I think are cool other people tell me are dumb so then I get worried that something I think is cool is actually dumb so I don't say to anyone what I like in case they don't like it either. I usually just say something is dumb because then no one will make fun of me. Usually they'll agree it's dumb. Sometimes I worry that maybe

I am saying something is dumb that I actually think is cool and the other person just says it's dumb because I said it's dumb and they're worried I'll make fun of them.

(Pause)

I wouldn't make fun of them.

(Pause)

Anyway, Brian B. is very committed to his craft or whatever and I think it must be nice to really commit to something with your whole heart. Maybe that's why I want a baby. Or wanted one on that day I told this dumb therapist about it. I don't know. I think my mom had a baby to solve her empty feelings but I don't think it worked since she killed herself.

(Pause)

I think everyone thinks I'm going to kill myself but I've hardly ever thought of killing myself except a few times. I think everyone has thought of it at least a few times but they just don't say anything about it. I just have impulse control issues so I'm the sucker who tries it but really if I had thought about it more I probably wouldn't have so like, it's just dumb. This whole thing is dumb. I'm not doing this again. The end.

(Pause)

Sincerely, me.

Scene 3: In-Person Therapy

Brosef and Babs sit in chairs across from each other. Babs intently watches Brosef. Brosef avoids looking at Babs.

Babs

Do you feel like talking today?

Brosef

I don't know. I never really feel like talking but I guess that's what I'm here for. You won't sign the paper otherwise.

Babs

I don't want you to feel like therapy is a punishment. It's really an opportunity…

Brosef

But it is punishment. It's my punishment for being too angry. My job can't just fire me so they're giving me therapy before they find another reason to fire me.

Babs

…it's an opportunity for you to explore new parts of yourself. To open yourself up to things that make you happy.

Long pause. Brosef fidgets.

Brosef

Yeah. Whatever.

Babs

Do you want to talk about the incident that led to your "punishment," as you put it?

Brosef fidgets. He considers this. As he does an actor moves onstage to reenact the offending incident. It is hyper realistic. Actor 1 (as Brosef) is at a call center, on the phone.

Actor (as Brosef)

Ma'am. Ma'am. I can't help you if you don't let me talk. Ma'am. Sorry, Ms. No, I'm not trying to age you. I can't see you over the phone and I was raised to call everybody ma'am. Yes, not men. You're right. Men have it easier than women. Society is not built for women…I understand. I can't. I can't help you if you don't let me talk. Okay. Yes. Thank you. So, your insurance has a fairly high deductible: $9,000. Yours is more of what we call disaster insurance. Yes. I understand. This is a disaster. *(Brosef references a binder of things to say when costumers escalate).* Unfortunately, you are required to pay up to the amount of your deductible before the insurance will kick in, so to speak. No, I'm not trying to be flippant with you. I know this is a big deal. Everyone who calls me is having a big deal situation, ma'am. Ms.

Brosef

I just got angry at a costumer and yelled a little bit.

Babs

How long have you worked at…? *(looks through her notes)*

Brosef

…Worldwide Insurance Corps. A year or so. Before that I was with International Healthcare and before that Worldwide International Health Insurance. It's funny because all three places only

serve the United States, mostly the Midwest. None of them are actually "worldwide." I get some calls from the southern states. A few from the east coast. I've only had one from California. Isn't that weird? I have a map that I mark every time someone calls. I'm trying to get all fifty states. Well, I guess not Hawaii and Alaska. They kind of have their own thing going on. And Puerto Rico is a territory and we don't offer insurance there anyway soooo. Anyway, call centers have a pretty high turnover.

Babs

That sounds like a difficult job.

Brosef

I think people think it's an easy job because you don't have to have any special degree to do it. But really, I think people get special degrees so they *don't have to* do this job.

Babs

Had you ever gotten angry talking to a costumer before the incident?

Actor (as Brosef)

Your grandfather has cancer. I understand. No, I haven't had cancer. I don't know my grandfather. *(Frantically flips through binder)* Ms. my health history is not your concern. No. I wasn't trying to be argumentative it is just that you are asking me personal questions that don't have anything to do with your situation. I hear about people with cancer all the time so I think if anything I am *more* sensitive to the situation than you are.

Brosef

Yeah. It's hard not to. Get frustrated. Usually when they call me they're already mad about something so it doesn't really matter what I say. I can't make them happy.

Actor (as Brosef)

(Reading from binder) I empathize with your situation, Ma'am and providing you with excellent service is my utmost concern. Can you please tell me the full name of the patient? Your grandpa. And his date of birth? *(Actor as Brosef types)* I know you gave me this information already but I don't like write it down and keep it, I have to enter it every time and I am going to check again to see if there is something I overlooked in regards to his coverage. Please hold. *(Actor as Brosef takes off headset and screams, loud).*

Babs

It must be hard to talk to people who are already upset. Or, desperate. Insurance companies are not really set up to help people, are they? I'm sorry. I just read an article about late stage capitalism and I've been thinking a lot about my role in the system and how to

resist…capitalism. At this stage. The late stage. But, anyway. That's neither here nor there. It sounds like your job is really difficult and it makes sense that your emotions would become heightened.

Actor (as Brosef)

(Actor as Brosef puts his headset back on.) Ma'am. Ms. Lady. Listen to me. There is nothing I can do. I am just a customer service representative. Okay? I don't have any power. I listen to people in your situation day in and day out. It is not my fault that you chose the absolute cheapest tier of insurance we offer for your old grandpa. *(Pause. Vague shouting on the other end of the line.)* As a matter of fact…I don't even have insurance. I would kill to be in the situation you're in right now. No. Not the dying grandparent part. Most of my family is dead already. But at least you have some options. If I got cancer right now I'd just have to die. That's it. I couldn't even go on a big last chance adventure like to some cool national forest or something because even a cool national forest costs money to go to so I would still need to work. I'd just slowly die from cancer while working at some insurance company and listen to other people whose loved ones are dying from cancer and then I'd eventually not be able to work anymore and maybe someone would take me in but probably not because I don't have a lot of close relationships with people so maybe I would just become a squatter in my own apartment until I die or like go to a shelter or maybe I'll just go live on the fucking streets. So, you don't really need to be cussing me out because my life already fucking sucks and at least you have family around even if they are dying from cancer. Or maybe your grandpa will be fine and you'll just go into debt like the rest of us. We're all in debt, lady! I just keep getting new credits cards every time I max one out so like don't talk to me about debt. *(More muffled screaming on the other end of the line).* I fucking wish you'd come here and shoot me. PLEASE. COME. KILL. ME. I fucking WANT. TO. DIE. Okay?!?!?!?!?!?!?!

Actor Brosef stops. Looks around the room. Slowly sits back down.

Actor (as Brosef)

I'll transfer you to my supervisor.

Babs

How does it feel when a client gets angry with you? Can you tell me where you feel that in your body?

Brosef

It's not anywhere in my body. It just is. I just feel it. I don't know why you're so obsessed with my body. Is this like a therapist thing?

Babs

As I said during our last session, our emotions live in our body. For example, when I get anxious, my cortisol level spikes and that gives me the physical sensation of stress. I feel that in my chest tightening. I feel it in my breathe, it becomes shorter. Sometimes I feel it in my stomach. It will gurgle and churn. *(Pause)* When a customer gets upset with you, how do you respond? Where is that response located in your body?

Brosef

I guess sometimes I get red. Like my face gets hot. Like I'm embarrassed I can't help them and then I'll keep thinking about them all day. So, my face I guess.

Babs

Sounds like you are very empathetic. You care a lot about your clients.

Brosef

Yeah. I guess. It just sucks that I can't help them. But that's not really my job. It's just to get them off the phone so it can be frustrating. So I guess it's like embarrassing and frustrating.

Babs

That's great. Obviously, it sounds very difficult but you're identifying some other emotions besides anger. That's very good. Were you able to take some time to dance over the week?

Brosef

Yeah. I brought the journal. I didn't think I'd like it but it was kind of fun.

Babs

Would you like to share with me anything you wrote after you danced?

Brosef

(Brosef opens his journal and starts to read it to himself then shuts it). It just says that it was kind of fun. That's it mostly.

Babs

Would you be willing to try this exercise again? Dancing?

Brosef

Sure. Yeah. I don't mind it. My ex thinks it's pretty funny that I'm dancing. *(Pause)* We've been talking a little bit.

Babs

Is that something you're happy about?

Brosef

…Yeah.

Babs

And what is she like? Your ex?

Brosef

They're nice. They bartend at Applebee's so when we were together it was pretty sweet because they'd give me free drinks. I think I tried all the drinks there. Even those over the top fruity ones in the big glasses with extravagant names. But now that we're not seeing each other it's kind of weird and I can't hang out at Applebee's anymore which sucks because it's a cool place to hang out. *(Pause)* Also, they're non-binary.

Babs

Oh. I'm sorry. I shouldn't have assumed.

Brosef

It's okay. It happens a lot.

Babs

(Weirdly) Well, I'm not weird about it. I'm very pro-trans people. I've gone to protests.

Brosef

Non-binary. But yeah, that's cool. Good for you. People your age aren't always cool.

Babs

Sorry. Yes. Of course. I know that there's a difference. I was just illustrating a point. Some people think of me as an expert in all things gender. It was my minor at Vassar. I'm just a little thrown. I guess I was assuming. Which of course makes an ass out of you and me. *(She chuckles. Then is awkward).* I'm sorry.

Brosef

Sooo…yeah. They like to cook. Skateboard. Read magazines. They're really into books about dragons which at first I thought would be dumb but they're actually kind of cool. They really like the sunshine. Like when it's sunny out they have to go out. We always have to find something to do when it's sunny. But they also like rainy days watching movies. They love animals. I almost got a pet hamster once because we went to a pet store and they said it was cute but like all the stuff would have cost too much and I got worried I'd neglect it so I didn't get it. But I kind of regret that. It might have been nice to have something to take care of.

Babs

You don't know this about me but I'm practically a lesbian. I'm probably bi. I understand the complexities of the gender spectrum. It's really all made up. Gender. I mean, putting ourselves into gender categories based on biology. It's actually quite primitive. Not like indigenous primitive. Indigenous people are not primitive, that was just what white people used to say to excuse genocide. Primitive like antiquated, I guess is what I meant. What gender do you think this table is? It's an exercise I did in my gender studies class. Like, we think dolls are for girls and tables are for boys. Something like that. But obviously they are materials objects and don't have a gender but we kind of assign a gender to all things which is strange.

Brosef

Uh. Totally.

Babs

Harvard's Implicit Association Test shows us that even if we don't really think something, like maybe if we don't think we're racist, you might take the test and show a slight or even strong preference for white people because our culture is racist and it's not really possible to not be racist in a racist culture…even for Black people. *(Pause)* I don't know why I brought that up. A professor of mine in undergrad made us take one of those tests in front of the class which was like, really kind of exploitative. Maybe that's too strong a word but it definitely wasn't right. We didn't know we were being set up to be shown how racist we all are. *(Pause)* I need a second. Can you just give me a little space? I need a moment to collect myself.

Brosef

Do you want me to leave?

Babs

No. Or yes. I need to leave. Apologies. Dance. Do the dancing thing. We'll talk next week.

Babs grabs all her stuff and hurries off. Brosef sits there for a beat. After a bit he takes out a phone or computer and starts to google dance videos. We may or may not see this on a screen.

Voiceover (V.O.)

As Babs hurries out of the room to collect herself, Brosef searches for other, more rigorous dance routines on the inter-web. Brosef suspects he has a penchant for dance, and although still reluctant, is curious to explore this newfound gift. Movement has indeed helped Brosef in a small way get in touch with his emotions and he is eager, though slightly embarrassed, to follow this path to its natural conclusion.

Scene 4: Babs at the Bar

Babs walks into a bar. There are many rainbow flags around indicating that it is a queer bar. She is wearing some sort of t-shirt that indicates she is a feminist. She sits down at the bar. The bartender, Wendy, notices her and walks over.

Wendy

Tough day?

Babs

No. Why? Why would you say that?

Wendy

You just look stressed. No disrespect. What can I get you?

Babs

I'll take a manhattan. No. An aporal spritz.

Wendy

You got it.

Babs

(Suddenly and too loudly) I changed my mind. I'll take a beer. A cider. And a shot. Of whiskey. No. Is that gross? Cider and whiskey? I'll have a gin and tonic. Vodka soda. No. A dry dirty martini.

Wendy stops and waits.

Babs

I have this cocktail of the day app on my phone and it calculates the best drink to have in your area at any given time. Like, if it's snowing it says to have a hot toddy or something like that. You can put in your astrological sign, personality type, geography, age, marital status…really all kinds of data points…and it determines the exact drink you want at that exact time, even if you don't know you want it. Anyway, it isn't loading right now so I'm having a hard time deciding. Can I use the wifi here?

Wendy

The owner uses a jammer.

Babs

The owner jams cell phones? Why? Is that legal?

Wendy shrugs. Waits for Babs to order.

Babs

I'll take a gin and tonic. House gin is fine. No. Something mid-level. Surprise me. No. Tanqueray.

Wendy makes the drink and sets it in from of Babs.

Wendy

Do you want to start a tab?

Babs hands Wendy a credit card. Takes a drink.

Babs

This is good. Thank you. I never know what to order. I'm bad at making decisions. That's why I like the app. Sometimes you just want someone to tell you what to do, you know? *(Pause)* Weird question. It doesn't matter to me or anything but I couldn't help notice all of the rainbow flags. Is this a (*whispers)* queer bar?

Wendy

Is that a problem?

Babs

I'm an ally. (*She shows her feminist t*-shirt) I was just wondering. I could be queer. Bi, probably. If anything. I like women. Not all of them, of course. But I've been attracted to some. Mostly masculine women. I think I'm attracted to masculinity on either gender. Or, any gender. I know it's not a binary. Did you know Romans distinguished between the binary? They had words for people who did not fit neatly within "male" and "female." Sorry. I'm feeling out of sorts about a conversation I had with a client. Sorry.

Wendy

No worries. Let me know if you need anything.

Wendy starts reading a book behind the bar.

Babs

It's just that I thought this client was one type of person but he was not what I thought. I know we don't all fit into perfect boxes but I guess I kind of put him in one and that's a pretty dangerous thing for me to do. *(She says proudly)* I'm a therapist.

Pause.

Is it always this quiet?

Wendy

It gets busy later. You're early.

Babs

I talk for a living so I'm not good in the quiet. Well, I listen for a living. I'm a therapist. As I said. You probably couldn't have guessed that since I am acting so crazy. Sorry. That's actually not a word we use. I try not to be flippant about people's behaviors. Most behaviors are diagnosable but crazy is really reductive and of course stigmatizing. That's why people don't seek help because of how stigmatizing it can be. I think our culture is moving in a different direction though. Younger people seem really good at talking about mental health and illness in a really open and accepting way. Not even accepting just like…it is. You know? Anyway, you shouldn't say "crazy."

Wendy

I didn't.

Babs

Right. Of course. I did. Just reinforcing the general rule. It's kind of my default. I'm always ready to say something. I won't just sit back. That's my philosophy. If you need an ally, I'm your ally.

Wendy

(Not looking up from her book). I'm good.

Babs

I bet you hear a lot of interesting stories as a bartender, huh? I do too, of course, but I am bound by confidentiality. Sometimes I talk about my clients but I use pseudonyms. I shouldn't even do that but I'm human, you know. *(She trails off)* …I'm human.

Wendy sighs deeply. She puts down her book. Walks over to Babs and grabs her hands, standing directly in front of her. She looks Babs in the eyes for a long moment.

Wendy

You will be okay. Okay?

Long pause.

Babs

I'm sorry, I don't mean to make you have to take care of me.

Wendy

Look at me. You'll be okay. Okay?

Long pause.

Babs

(uneasy) Thank you.

Wendy

You need to breathe, honey.

Babs

Of course, yeah. I just feel like I'm doing everything wrong lately.

Wendy

Maybe you are. Who cares.

Babs

I just don't think I can afford to make mistakes. I deal with people at the lowest point of their lives and I just feel like I'm blowing it.

Wendy

If it makes you feel any better, most people don't take therapy that seriously. At least the people I know. They're kind of like…*(Wendy shrugs).*

Babs

That…hmmm.

Wendy

Let it be a gift. People don't care about you as much as you think. For me, that's liberating.

Babs

I don't know. Makes me feel kind of sad.

Wendy

Maybe you are just sad. Right now at least. My philosophy is everything will be fine and if it isn't, that's fine too.

Long pause.

Babs

You're beautiful.

Wendy

Thank you…

Babs' Voiceover (V.O.)

Today's the day. I'm going to flirt with a woman.

Wendy's Voiceover (V.O.)

I think I'll get Indian later.

They smile at each other. Wendy goes back to reading.

Babs' Voiceover (V.O.)

I need to sleep with a woman. Then I would really be a lesbian. I think I really want to be a lesbian. Like, I'm cool enough to be a lesbian. Woke enough. etc etc etc etc. I think I give off a lesbian vibe. Sometimes clients assume I'm a lesbian. I like patterns and flowy skirts. etc etc etc etc. I think I'm pretty much a lesbian except for the sex part. But really, how much does sex matter? I don't have sex now so like, I could be an asexual lesbian. Honestly, taking clothes off, putting them on. Touching a new body. Seeing all their sloppy, slimy bits, and all the flesh and mounds and pink and brown and feet. The feet. I hate it. Well, I hate a lot of it. Not all of it. But a good deal of it. But maybe sex with a woman will unlock something in me? Maybe then I can be a part of the community. I'll have my bona fides. Yes. Yes. Mounds and flesh and gooey things. Aren't all genitals gross? It's really just getting used to one set of genitals versus the other. I might know too much about the vagina at this point to find it sexy. It's so wet and mucous-y and clear liquid and sometimes brown stuff. Maybe it will grow on me. Yes. Like a beautiful Georgia O'Keefe flower.

During Babs' v.o. Wendy has walked to the makeshift stage in the corner of the bar. She opens a notebook and looks out into the crowd.

Wendy

Hello everybody. This is our third pre-happy hour open mic night. This is a time we can all share our work when no one else is here. I know, it's kind of wimpy but we can embrace our wimpy selves. I appreciate you all coming out. I am going to start with some stuff that I've written. Some of its revisions from last week and some of it is new stuff. Okay. Here we go. So, last week I was talking about how much I play Candy Crush.

A woman (Peggy) "woots" when Wendy says "Candy Crush" then sits next to Babs.

Wendy

Thank you, Peggy. Yes, I play a lot of Candy Crush. She knows…Okay. here we go. *(Wendy looks at her notes)* When I lived in New York City I would play it – Candy Crush - on the subway but so did everyone else. It was a really cool game back then. Literally, everyone on the subway was playing candy crush and it was like really novel. Or at least popular. Almost expected. Anyway, I started playing it again because I've been really stressed and I thought maybe it would soothe my anxiety like it used to. So, I play it every night for like 3 hours. I tallied it up and every month I spend like $30 on candy crush. One month I spent $150. Which, of course, makes me feel like, well, not good. Like maybe there's a big hole in me that Candy Crush is trying to fill but like how could it…it's Candy Crush. I don't have enough money to be spending money on Candy Crush like that. Time, sure. I have plenty of that. But I'm the type of broke where I have a spreadsheet of expenses because I need to see how broke I will be each month and I inevitably am broker than even the spreadsheet expresses. Anyway, I really like collecting the gold coins and like, the stuff. The stuff. I like the UFO blasters that can win a game for you in a pinch and the stripe-y thing that can turn a candy into one of those stripe-y candies and then you combine that with a chocolate candy thing and you got yourself a party. I mean, it's total obliteration. If you don't know Candy Crush it's mostly about blowing up stuff. You collect stuff and then you blow it up. Sometimes I get to pair a chocolate bomb thing with one of those blow up bomb candies and just everything blows up. Everything. I find it deeply satisfying…blowing shit up. It actually gives me a little tingle in my downstairs. As I think of it, Candy Crush might be deeply capitalist nihilism. Ooo. Maybe something is there with that? Hold, on. Writing that down *(Wendy writes a note in her notebook). (Pause)* Sometimes I fantasize about blowing up my life. I guess everyone does or there wouldn't be such a big "blow up my life" market. I watch a lot of YouTube videos of van life and car life and just living off the grid but still kind of on the grid I guess because you have to get a Planet Fitness membership apparently to do this so you can shower and stuff. I saw one person who lived out of their Camry. Like this was a very small car but – spoiler - they had this beautifully appointed storage facility where they kept all their stuff. Like, the storage facility looked like a really nice apartment and they would hang out there but then go sleep in their car. I thought about that for a long time. In the storage place she had a bed – that was made – and a TV and even a rug down to pull the whole room together…in the storage facility. And then she piles into her shitty little

Camry at night where she has to sleep with her feet on the steering wheel. I just couldn't wrap my mind around it. I still can't. I grew up in a lot of chaos so if I could get it together to make a beautifully appointed room I'd want to live in it.

Peggy

(To Babs) She's my ex.

Babs

Oh. That's nice. She seems nice.

Pause.

Wendy

I need you all to be a bit more vocal to tell me if any of this is anything. I'm trying to shape this into a solo performance. Or standup. Or a new category of public talking…I don't know. That might be ambitious but any and all suggestions are welcome.

Babs

I like her joke about Candy Crush. Is it a joke? I guess it's more of an observation.

Peggy

She seriously loves Candy Crush. She used to play it before bed and she would just get lost in it. Staring at her phone for hours…in the zone.

Babs

Is that why you broke up?

Peggy

Candy Crush? Um. No. I cheated.

Babs

Oh.

Peggy

Yeah.

Babs

It happens.

Peggy

It did. Yes.

Babs

I'm bi.

Peggy

I'm Peggy.

Babs

Right, of course. I'm Babs. I don't know why I said that. You're very striking. Intimidating.

Peggy

Is that a compliment?

Babs

I think so. I like it. I think. The striking-ness. I've actually never been with a woman.

Peggy

Slow down, Babs. We're just talking.

Babs

I'm sorry. I assumed you were picking me up. I just wanted to be transparent.

Peggy

What are you drinking?

Wendy

I wrote a poem the other day I'm going to share with you. It's called Junk Drawer. Please clap afterwards.

I don't get much use anymore
I've been discarded to the junk drawer
In my cluttered home, I reside in the dark
It is quiet and lonely and the edges are sharp
I lay in this place and I long for more
Perhaps it's been forgotten what I was for
At one time I had lots of clout
You make cool things, everyone would shout
I'd zing and I'd zag and I'd do what I do
And I'd turn to the people and say I do this for you

But then I got tired and was put in the drawer
And I started to wonder what all the doing was for
What is my purpose, what is my drive?
If no one says that I'm useful can I survive?
I beg and I beg to be taken out of the drawer
To be placed on the countertop where I can't be ignored
I promise I'll make and I'll make and I'll do it with glee
Just please tell me I'm good and have a reason to be

Moderate clapping. Someone yells "are you okay?"

Okay, thanks. Great. I appreciate the encouragement. I know the poem – or whatever it is – was kind of sad but I'm not sad. This is just a performance.

Babs

Is she non-binary?

Peggy

Who? Wendy? No. She's very binary. She really embraces her womanness.

Babs

How so?

Peggy

She just does. Her politics are very female-forward. She is all about women's right to choose, reproductive rights, equal rights, etc. etc. She can REALLY talk your ear off about politics. I'd also call her a cultural feminist. She's very into nurturing and community but also, like, destabilizing these ideas. She created a zine about ethical acts of care. She got a whole bunch of different types of caretakers to contribute to the zine. Like people you would think of as caretakers like nurses, residential living facility workers, but then also people you wouldn't think of as caretakers like bartenders, tattoo artists, community leaders. It was really interesting. *(Pause)* She even wears dresses sometimes…if you can believe it.

Babs

Oh. That surprises me.

Peggy

Which part. The dresses?

Babs

She just didn't seem…into caretaking.

Peggy

She'll do this thing where she looks you deeply in the eyes and tells you "you're okay" with customers sometimes. It's like, weirdly comforting.

Pause.

Peggy

Was she short with you?

Babs

I was bringing a weird energy to our conversation. I think I still might be.

Peggy

She strongly believes in self-care so if she decides you're more energy than you're worth, sometimes she just disengages.

Babs

Oh. Okay. Cool.

Peggy

Sorry. That wasn't very nice. I think I am trying to neg you. Like that old pick artist guy used to do on MTV or something like that. To be clear, I am flirting.

Babs

I knew you were trying to pick me up.

Peggy

She may also have just been nervous about presenting her work. She gets really nervous about sharing what she's written in front of people. She kind of shuts down before she goes onstage. Surprising since she seems so put together, but we all have our anxieties.

Babs

What are your anxieties?

Peggy

Now you're flirting with me

Wendy

This next piece is called "Ashes."

During Wendy's monologue, Brosef comes onstage and does an interpretative dance that coincides with the story. Perhaps there is music underscoring this or perhaps it is in time with the words. Your choice. No matter what, Brosef takes it very seriously. He is very much in flow state.

Wendy

I can never find good movies on Netflix. I guess I watch too much tv because when it takes me to the section of recently watched there is always a lot of stuff in it. So I guess maybe the problem is that I can't find anything new to watch. Sometimes I look for actors I like and then I find movies that way. That's a good way to find movies. Lots of times the movies I like only have one or two stars. I guess other Netflix users don't like the things I like. That's okay. I feel like the Netflix rating system is rigged anyway. I recently watched a movie where some fat lady got skinny and then carried around her burnt up skin in a vial around her neck. It wasn't as creepy as it sounds. But the whole time I was thinking…that's not a very big vial. I mean, for a whole bunch of loose skin. I watch a lot of weight loss shows so I feel pretty confident about my assessment. Then at the end of the movie some other lady spread her dead husband's ashes in the ocean. They made it funny and the dead husband was an asshole but I guess she put his ashes in her friend's Tupperware and the friend was kind of mad because it was part of a set. But when my mom died the funeral home put her ashes in a box for us. It was a shitty box because we were broke and inside the box was a plastic bag and when my sister and I spread her ashes we had to put them in something more aesthetically pleasing but we didn't think about it until the last minute so we had to put them in a birthday gift bag we found in my sister's car. And we transferred the ashes into the gift bag in the parking lot and some of them flew onto the sidewalk. So I guess a little piece of my mom is still there. But in the movie she put them in a Tupperware container which means that either she transferred her husband's ashes from one shitty box to another or the funeral home just handed her a bunch of ashes. Like with their hands. Into her hands. I thought about it a lot. And then I wondered what I'd like to happen to me when I die. I feel like it would be silly to bury me in a box that will eventually just have some building over it or something. And I don't think I am going to have any kids to visit my grave or anything. The thought of burning sounds pretty awful and I think they mix you up with other people. I think I'd like to decompose in the woods and just be brought back into the cycle of life. But probably a hiker would find me and they'd think I was murdered and then there would be an investigation into my murder and eventually someone would go to jail for dumping me in the woods. So I guess I'll take being burned. And then hope I have someone who wants to spread my ashes.

Brosef concludes his dance. He sits and writes in his journal.

Brosef V.O.

I am powerful.

I am stillness and the storm.
I am the breath before creation and the echo after destruction.
I am stardust remembering itself.
I am what was, what is, and what could be.
I bend time with my presence.
I am the question and the answer.
I am the fire behind every sunrise.
I am not bound—I am becoming.
Yours truly, the dancing bro.

Peggy

Wendy is really special. I feel like she's a fully realized person who doesn't know she's a fully realized person. Maybe you can't be a full realized person unless you know you are fully realized? But who's going to go around proclaiming they are fully realized? Gay men, sure. But not us lesbians.

Babs

I'm bi.

Peggy

Are you worried I'm going to erase your bi-ness or something?

Babs

Sorry, no. I have never said it before to anyone else. That I'm bi. I have always said I *think* I'm bi. In my mind. Not out loud. But in this moment, I feel like I *know* I'm bi and I guess I just wanted to say it again, out loud.

Peggy

Okay. Well, you know what would really make you bi…*(she touches Babs flirtatiously).* Do you want to come back to my place?

Babs

Would Wendy mind?

Peggy

I don't think she wants to come too, if that's what you're worried about.

Babs

I just don't want to be the straight girl you try to turn. I'm not a kink. It's clear Wendy didn't like me or think I was worth her time, which is fine, but just because I am questioning my sexuality doesn't mean I'm not a fully realized person either.

Peggy

I thought you had it figured out.

Babs

Yes, I'm bi. I am living in this moment and embracing my bi-ness.

Peggy

Honey, I think you're cute and I want to go back to my place. That's all.

Babs

Okay.

Peggy

Okay.

Babs and Peggy leave the bar.

Wendy

I'm gonna be famous. I know some famous people. I see them on Facebook. They used to be friends of mine. Our lives went in different directions I guess. Maybe they took bigger risks. Maybe they could afford to. But there's still time for me. I'm gonna be famous. I'm gonna be so famous that people are going to stop and stare at me on the street. I'm going to be so famous that people are going to say "hey…there…I know you!" No. I'm going to be so famous that people will know me by name and ask for my autograph. And I'll be stuck posing for pictures for hours and I'll miss my reservations at the newest hottest restaurant because I just couldn't leave my fans. My hand will be cramped. Disfigured. Deformed almost after the marathon session of signing my name. "To Dot. You have a great smile." "To Ted. Keep on shooting for the stars." "To Sally. Get well soon. I know you're a fighter!" Better yet. I won't stop and talk to my fans. I'll wear large sunglasses and pretend I'm someone else. I'll push around a baby carriage and I'll get into physical altercations with paparazzi who try to take my fictional baby's picture. I'll ask for my privacy. I'll beg for it. I'm a human being too godammit! I'll have sex with all my co-stars. I'll pick up a drug habit. I'll spiral out of control. I'll punch a cop. I'll shoot an ex. I'll rob a liquor store. No. A Macy's. More security cameras. I'll go to rehab. Not celebrity rehab. That's too trite. Overdone. B-List. I'll disappear for 2 weeks. Any longer and people will forget about me. I'll make sure a family member keeps my name in the press. Maybe I try and leave sooner than I am supposed to? No. I have a full recovery and go on Ellen. No. Whatever her equivalent

is now. That woman who can sing well. She was on American Idol? Then I start to pick projects that matter to me. I create real art. I adopt a few kids. I don't want to lose my figure. I marry someone who is in the biz, but not an actor. Or director. Maybe some kind of designer. I'm gonna be famous. Because. It's important to me.

End Act 1

Act 2

Scene 1: Online Therapy

Babs and Brosef are both at their computers facing each other onstage (or the audience, these are just suggestions). During the scene, separate playing spaces emerge on either side of the stage. A "Babs" side and "Brosef" side where reenactments occur.

Babs

I apologize for how I left last week. That was very unprofessional.

Brosef

Don't worry about it.

Babs

I've been struggling with my own identity or, something like that, and I misdirected some of my confusion onto you.

Brosef

Ain't no thing.

Babs

Thank you. So, how are you feeling today? This is our last session. Are you feeling prepared to go back to work?

Brosef

I don't think I'm going back.

Babs

They can't legally fire you. You know that, right?

Brosef

I know. I just don't think I want to work for insurance places anymore. It makes me sad.

Babs

That's great. I mean, not great that it makes you sad but definitely great that you are able to identify an emotion it makes you feel. Do you feel that emotion in your body?

Brosef

Yeah. It's kind of here. *(Brosef points to his chest)* and kind of here *(Brosef waves his hand over his stomach)* and a little here *(Brosef points to his arms).* Are those weird places?

Babs

No, no. Those are great places! Great places! What does it feel like in your body? Like, what does it feel like in your arm, stomach, and chest?

Brosef

My stomach is like rumbling, sort of sick feeling. My arms are like restless…like they've fallen asleep. And my chest is like a pointy pain.

Babs

That's fantastic. I am so impressed by your progress.

Brosef

Well yeah. I can learn things.

Babs

Of course. I hope you know I didn't mean it like that. It's just not everyone does the work. You are clearly doing the work.

Brosef

I'm trying. To get better. I don't want to end up like my dad. Or mom, I guess.

Babs

Do you want to talk about your parents?

Brosef

I don't know. My dad was pretty mean.

Actor dad comes onstage.

Babs

Can you describe him for me?

Brosef

Typical bully. Liked to yell a lot.

Babs

What kind of things did he say, when he was yelling?

Brosef

He would call me a…

Actor Dad

Little pussy.

Brosef

And…

Actor Dad

Bitch boy.

Brosef

And sometimes…the F word.

Actor Dad
Faggot.

Babs
Fuck?

Brosef

No, the other one. I'd prefer not to say it.

Babs

Yes, I know it. Go on.

Actor Dad

Hon, where's that shit stain you gave birth to?

Actor mom enters.

Actor Mom

Your son is playing at a friend's house.

Actor Dad

Well who the fuck said he could leave this house? We got chores today. Call that lazy piece of shit and tell him to come back.

Actor Mom

I will not. Our boy deserves to have some fun. Make friends.

Actor Dad

You coddle him. You're making him soft.

Actor Mom

The world could use some softness right now.

Actor Dad

What kind of philosophical bullshit is that? The world could use some real fucking men right now. Not whatever kind of sissy shit you are doing with our son.

Actor Mom

Can you hear yourself? Sissy shit? He is at a friend's house. That is normal 11-year old boy behavior.

Actor Dad

I don't know this fucking kid. They could be playing with dolls or dressing up as women or some other bullshit. I have to meet and vet whoever he is going to "play" with. You know queers will try and infiltrate you anywhere. There're queers working at the goddamn auto shop for christ sakes. I saw them rub each other's backs.

Brosef

He was really concerned with manliness. Being a man. Not showing any weakness. He was sort of obsessed with it.

Actor Mom

We need to talk.

Actor Dad

Oh god. About what? I'll lay off, okay. I don't want a whole thing about this.

Actor Mom

I think we need to take some time apart.

Actor Dad

Not this again.

Actor Mom

I mean it this time.

Actor Dad

Just drink a beer or something.

Actor Mom

That's mean. You know that's mean. I'm going to quit.

Actor Dad

I just mean, you always get this way when you're jonesin for a beer, or vodka crystal light or whetever the fuck is always in your tumbler all damn day.

Brosef

Mom escaped with alcohol. That's how I saw it at least.

Babs

Did your parents fight?

Brosef

Not really in front of me. I could tell my mom was scared sometimes. She would usually just leave the room if he started laying into me. I don't remember everything.

Babs

Do you feel like when your parents fought you checked out? Disassociated?

Brosef

I don't really know. I was young so I figured that's why I don't remember much. Seems like a blessing to forget.

Actor Dad

You're easier to deal with when you're drunk. Sue me.

Actor Mom

I drink because I'm trying to escape. I can't keep self-medicating this way. I need to leave and figure my own life out.

Actor Dad

I thought I was your life. Me and your son.

Actor Mom

I need more.

Actor Dad

That's dumb. You're being dumb.

Actor Mom

I want a good life. This isn't one.

Actor Dad

I literally do fucking everything for you. I break my fucking back at work for you, lifting all these fucking toxic chemicals for these fucking x-ray machines working around fucking doctors who talk to me like I'm a fucking piece of shit breathing in these toxic fucking fumes all day for you and our son.

Actor Mom

I appreciate that but I can't make myself happy.

Babs

Remembering things can be a blessing too.

Brosef

I don't see how.

Babs

If you could say something to your dad today, what would you say?

Actor Dad

This is bullshit. You are treating me like bullshit.

Actor Mom

I'm not trying to treat you badly. I wanted us to be alone so we could really talk about this.

Actor Dad

So this was your whole fucking plan to send the boy away and totally gaslight me? What the fuck.

Actor Mom

That's not what gaslighting means. I'm just trying to have a conversation with you. Gaslighting is when you call me stupid for trying to talk with you about my feelings.

Actor Dad

Excuse me queen shit of fuck mountain.

Actor Mom

I'm going to my dads.

Actor Dad

The dad who molested you?

Actor Mom

He got into my bed once when he was drunk and left immediately. Stop throwing that in my face.

Actor Dad

He's a bad guy.

Actor Mom

You're a bad guy.

Actor Dad grabs Actor Mom by the arm. Actor Dad may or may not be physically violent with Actor Mom but this is certainly a gesture towards physical violence.

Brosef

I'd rather talk to my mom.

Babs

What would you say to her?

Brosef

I'd ask why she left. Why she didn't bring me with her.

Babs

Was that possible for her?

Brosef

I guess I don't really know. That's why I'd ask.

Babs phone pings. Peggy walks onstage.

Peggy

I wanted to check in. You okay?

Babs sends a text back. Her lines can be displayed on a projection or said out loud. Whatever works for you!

Babs

Fine. With a client. Can't talk right now.

Peggy

The other night was intense so I wanted to check in.

Actor Babs walks onstage. Peggy and Actor Babs have just entered Peggy's apartment.

Actor Babs

(A little awkward) This is a nice place.

Peggy

I grew up in a lot of chaos so when I got old enough I made my home my sanctuary. It's one of the small ways I've learned to re-parent myself. Me and Wendy had that in common.

Actor Babs

You sound like a therapist.

Peggy

Just self-aware. Take off your coat.

Actor Babs

(Still awkward) Where should I put it.

Peggy

Here. I'll take it.

Peggy takes Actor Babs' coat and hangs it up.

Peggy

Do you want something to drink?

Actor Babs

What are my options?

Peggy

(Flirtatiously) Anything.

Actor Babs

I have a drink app so don't tell me anything.

Peggy

(Even more flirtatiously) Try me.

Actor Babs

(Actor Babs pulls out her phone and swipes the app). How about an Old Fashioned?

Peggy

Honey, that's easy.

Babs

(Babs is distracted but tries to shake it off) So what would you say to your mom, exactly?

Brosef

Just what I said. I'd ask why she left me with him when she knew he wasn't a good person. I'd tell her it was her responsibility to take care of me and she didn't and now I don't know how to take care of anything, not even myself. I'd call her selfish. I'd tell her she should have stuck with us. Or me, at least. She could have taken me. Then she wouldn't have gotten so depressed. She could have had a good life. We could have left him and moved someplace else, anywhere else, and just been normal people with a normal life.

Babs

That was really good.

Actor Dad

If you want to leave, leave, but you're not taking my fucking son.

Actor Mom

He's my son, too.

Actor Dad

Then cut him in half King Solomon style.

Actor Mom

You don't even care about him.

Actor Dad

Don't fucking say that to me. Don't ever say that to me. I am teaching my boy how to be a man like my dad did and his dad did before that. You coddle him. You want him to be your little pussy man. A fucking baby forever. I bet you want to fuck him like your dad fucked you.

Actor mom walks offstage and comes back with a suitcase.

Actor Mom

Don't follow me.

Actor Dad takes the suitcase from Actor Mom and dumps the contents onto the floor. Actor Mom and Actor Dad stare at each other for a long time. Actor Dad leaves. Actor Mom slowly puts the contents back into her suitcase.

Babs

Can you tell me how you're feeling right now?

Brosef

I feel angry. I know I'm not supposed to say that, but I am.

Babs

Anger is a totally valid emotion. My concern at the beginning of our sessions was that it was the *only* emotion you were feeling. I don't want you to be afraid of being angry. Being angry is okay.

Brosef

I just don't want to be like him.

Babs

Even from the short time I've known you, I don't think that's possible.

Peggy walks out from the scene to send Babs a text. A ping is heard. Babs looks at her phone.

Peggy

Let me know if you want to talk.

Peggy puts away her phone and goes back into the scene with Actor Babs. Peggy finishes making the Old Fashioned and hands it to Actor Babs.

Peggy

Let me know if it's too sweet or anything. I can add more bitters.

Actor Babs

I don't even know what bitters is. *(Takes a sip)* That's good.

Pause.

Actor Babs

I'm ready to make out now.

Peggy

Oh. Okay.

Peggy walks over to Actor Babs, takes her drink out of her hand and puts it down, and kisses her. Peggy clearly knows what she's doing. She is suave. Actor Babs doesn't do anything at first, then kisses her back. Maybe too eager. This might last a while. Peggy starts to remove Actor Babs' shirt. Actor Babs squirms away and grabs her drink.

Peggy

Sorry, was that too much for you?

Actor Babs

I just need a little more liquid courage. *(She laughs awkwardly and downs her drink).*

Peggy

If you have to be drunk to make out with a woman, you might not be a lesbian. Sorry, bi.

Actor Babs.

I went to Vassar. I've made out with women before. I just. I hate to even say it because it sounds stupid but I have body issues like every other American woman. Sorry, woman in the United States. America is a continent. *(Pause)* I should be compassionate towards myself but even saying it makes me feel…basic. *(Pause)* Can you make me another one?

Peggy

(Looks at Actor Babs like "you're only getting one more, young lady.") One.

Actor Babs

Okay. Okay. If I wanted to be policed I'd go home with a man.

Peggy

Excuse me?

Actor Babs

Sorry. That was supposed to be funny. It didn't sound funny though, did it?

Peggy

I'm happy to be your experimentation buddy. I've just…Wendy always had to be drunk to have sex so it's kind of a trigger for me.

Actor Babs

Thank you for telling me that.

Peggy

My therapist suggested I start doing that.

Actor Babs

She sounds smart.

Peggy

The last woman I was with…well, almost with…just couldn't quite get there – you know – and she kept saying it was because she was drunk and I kept trying stuff to – you know – get her there. Anyway, as I was working tirelessly to please her, she fell asleep and that sent me on a whole shame spiral of how I wasn't a good lover and how she probably wasn't attracted to me and was just being nice which is, not the person I want to be. I can be really confident. Like tonight. I thought I did a great job of picking you up with a robust confidence.

Actor Babs

Very robust.

Peggy

So when I get into my head with these not-so-confident thoughts they stay with me for a while and really kind of fuck me up. Anyway, I mostly have a trigger about Wendy but now a little bit of that as well.

Actor Babs

Understandable.

Peggy

I'm realizing I probably shouldn't have told you that about Wendy. That's her shit. I'm also realizing I've mentioned her way too much.

Actor Babs

You know what I took from that story? You don't like to say the word "cum" do you?

Peggy

Oh. My. God. Gross. I do not like that word.

Actor Babs

You just don't seem like someone who uses a lot of euphemisms so I put two in two together. I don't really like the word either. It's kind of spelled dirty.

Peggy

With a "u."

Actor Babs

Yeah. Gross.

Pause.

Actor Babs

Well, I don't need another drink.

Peggy makes another drink and gives it to Actor Babs

Actor Babs

Thank you.

Pause.

Peggy

Sometimes I get a little too intense. Sorry about that.

Actor Babs

You say how you feel. I like it. I try and get people to connect the dots between their behavior, actions, and feelings all day. It's refreshing. Believe me.

Peggy

I've been trying to figure out if my dad is dead recently, so it's gotten me pretty heightened with the feels. He's – I think – a transient, homeless person.

Actor Babs

Unhoused.

Peggy

I don't actually know where he is. The last time I heard he was in a hotel somewhere in the midwest. Maybe one of his old friends took him in? I'm not really sure. He was…let's say difficult…growing up. I haven't talked to him in ten years or so and I really don't want to but I do kind of want to know if he's alive. Part of me just really wants this monster of my childhood dead. I haven't been back to my hometown for twenty years just avoiding my dad. So, it would be nice to know I can go back home and just…look around, see how it's changed, visit my old haunts. Reminisce. As I get older that seems to be something I want to do more and more. But another part of me is glad to know that he's still alive simply from a genetic perspective. My mom's side of the family all died from addiction and my dad's side of the family died of cancer so I'm really interested in how long a non-addict, person with health insurance could live. Not that my dad has health insurance but he must be 70 now and everyone else in my family seems to die in their 50s or 60s, so the longer he lives the more hope I have for myself.

Actor Babs

My parents are still alive. Sometimes I wish they were dead. They're nice enough, I guess. I'm worried I'll have to take care of them someday. That thought makes me feel like a monster but I can't shake it.

Peggy

I hate when people get all serious and tell you to cherish all the time you have with your parents because one day blah blah blah. It's okay to let toxic people go, even your parents. I think at least. Anyway, I have a friend who works for family and social services and she thinks she can access the database of, dead people, essentially. She's going to look it up tomorrow so I'm a little nervous. I don't know which thing to hope for.

Actor Babs

Maybe it's neither?

Peggy

That feels like a real deep dive into submitting to one's lack of control. At least with hope there is a perceived will to move something into occurring.

Actor Babs

We call that in the biz "raw dogging" a decision.

Peggy laughs.

Actor Babs

Because of the reels of men raw dogging flights and stuff…

Peggy

No. I know. I know.

Pause

Peggy

I am happy for people with nice parents though. I understand cherishing the nice ones.

Actor Babs

Mine are pretty nice, I guess.

Peggy

That's nice.

Actor Babs moves closer to Peggy. This time, she initiates a kiss. More kissing. Actor Babs takes off her (own) shirt. Peggy slowly touches Actor Babs' stomach, softy, gently. Actor Babs looks as if she wants to shrink away but instead she stands tall and allows herself to be touched intimately.

Peggy

Bedroom?

Actor Babs

Bedroom.

Actor Babs exits. A ping from the text is heard.

Babs

With a client. Not too intense. We good.

Peggy looks at the text. She gives a look like "what does this mean…does she like me or not?" She looks let down and bewildered. She repeats the "we good" part of the text to herself. Then, leaves.

Babs

(To Brosef) Do you think you have a sense now when an angry outburst might be forthcoming?

Brosef

I mean. I guess. I've been trying to let myself feel all the emotions so when I've felt anger rise up, I ask myself what other feelings might be present. Like we talked about.

Babs

I don't want to sound too maternalistic, but I'm really proud of you.

Brosef

Yeah. It's good. It's good.

Babs

I have one last homework assignment for you. I want you to write a letter to your mother. We didn't get to talk a lot about her and I think it would help to ask her some of those big questions you've been pondering.

Brosef

Like what?

Babs

Like why she unalived herself for starters.

Brosef

She can't answer me.

Babs

No. But you're still here and you deserve to ask those big questions. It can be a way of confronting someone who has passed.

Brosef

I don't think I want to confront her. I just wish I knew more about her.

Babs

Writing to a her might help you process some of those bigger emotions, like grief. Say the things you wish you could have said to her when she was alive. Give yourself permission to really go there.

Brosef

I guess.

Babs

I think that's as much enthusiasm as I can hope for from you.

Brosef

Savage, doc.

Babs

Sorry, was that too mean?

Brosef

No. I just didn't think of you as having, like, a sense of humor.

Babs

I have a personality. And so do you. A good one. You deserve a happy life. I hope you will keep doing the work.

Brosef

I will. You too.

Babs

(Laughs) Of course. Take care.

Brosef

Bye, doc.

Brosef and Babs close their computers. Babs pulls out her phone. She sends a text to Peggy. A ping is heard.

Babs

Sorry for the short text earlier. I was in a session. Last night was great. You can't scare me off that easily. I want to hear about your possible dad's death. That was today right? Dinner tonight?

Babs puts her phone away and smiles. She exits.

Scene 2: Brosef and Mom

Brosef takes out his journal and starts to write.

Brosef V.O.

Dear mom. How are you? What's it like being dead. No. This is stupid. Dear mom. Why did you kill yourself? I'm so pissed at you about that. Dear mom. Fuck you. You should have stayed alive for me. Fuck you so hard. No. I'm sorry mom. I love you and miss you. A lot.

Actor Mom from the previous scene is still onstage.

Actor Mom

Son?

Brosef

Mom?

Actor Mom

Come here. Sit with me, son.

Brosef moves into the scene with Actor Mom.

Actor Mom

I'm sorry you had to hear me and your dad fighting.

Brosef

It's okay. I'm used to it.

Actor Mom

That's not something you should get used to.

Brosef

It's a survival mechanism. Getting used to those things. That's what my therapist would say at least.

Actor Mom

I'm glad you're in therapy. You know I tried therapy. It didn't work for me.

Brosef

Clearly.

Actor Mom

That's fair.

Brosef

I'm sorry. That was mean. You know, I'm kind of mad at you. For killing yourself. I really needed you back then.

Actor Mom

What about now?

Brosef

I've learned not to wish you were still alive. If I wished you were still alive I'd also have to wish you didn't suffer from depression. Or like, I guess enough depression that you married my dad still but didn't kill yourself. Or you got better at some point? And I'd have to wish you stopped drinking. It's just a lot of wishing.

Actor Mom

I'm sorry I couldn't be the mom you needed.

Brosef

Yeah.

Actor Mom

You're stronger than me. You're a survivor. I just couldn't…do it.

Brosef

Was it my fault?

Actor Mom

Oh my god, no. No no no no no. Please don't ever think that. If I thought you would blame yourself I just…no. *(Pause)* I never felt like I fit, you know. Even as a kid. There wasn't a place where I clicked. It always felt like everything about me was wrong. I existed but slogging through the day was…tough. I felt like I wasn't made for this place. I don't know how to explain it.

Brosef

I know you had a bad childhood. Dad told me about your father.

Actor Mom

Grandpa drank a lot but he wasn't the monster your dad made him out to be. He made mistakes but he tried.

Brosef

Then why did you do it?

Actor Mom

When I was sixteen I met a boy and fell madly in love with him. I mean, head over heels in love. He was tall and strong and funny and smart and he loved me so much. I couldn't believe somebody could love me the way he did. He made me feel…whole. You know? But he had his own demons and he took drugs and so I did too. And for a year or so that's just how we were. We were sublimely happy and then when he was sad we'd get sublimely high and that worked pretty well for us. But around us, things fell apart. My relationship with my parents kind of deteriorated. I couldn't keep a job. Me and this boy, we had things figured out. But the world around us didn't jive with what we needed to live in it. We needed time to be in our bad place together. To ride it out. I know drugs are bad but we needed them for those moments when life was just too much. Anyway, one day he took too much and died. That's when I lost my anchor.

Pause.

Brosef

Why did you marry dad then? Why did you have me? If you were so untethered.

Actor Mom

I met your dad and he loved me. I didn't love him but he told me he didn't care. He told me he could love me until I felt the same about him and that even if that never happened, he would be happy. I tried to warn him that I wasn't built for love anymore. I had my chance and that was it. I always felt that. You don't get infinite chances to fall in love, remember that. So I tried as hard as I could to go through the motions. To be what I thought was normal. Eventually, I couldn't anymore.

Brosef

Why did you leave me with him? Being alone with him was horrible. You could have tried harder to be normal for me. Or waited until I was grown up. You just left me with him and I had to just deal with it.

Actor Mom

You were so strong. Much stronger than me.

Brosef

Well I'm not strong anymore. He took that from me. I don't even remember that me.

Actor Mom

I should have waited. I'm sorry.

Brosef

You shouldn't have done it all.

Actor Mom

I watched this tv show once and they showed a woman who sort of sunk into her couch. The couch opened up and swallowed her and she lived her life from inside that couch. She watched as her loved ones pleaded with her to come out from the couch. She watched as they gave up and went about their lives. She watched as her children grew up and her husband grew older and lonelier and angrier until there was nothing. Just darkness. Everyone finally left and there was just darkness. I wanted the darkness. The peace. But I wanted to spare you from the rest. The pleading and anger and loneliness. I thought when I was gone, those things would disappear with me.

Brosef

That was stupid. *(Pause)* Sorry.

Actor Mom

If loving someone more than yourself fixed people, then I would have been fixed. I love you. I love you so much. Bigger than anything else. Bigger than that 16-year-old boy, bigger than your father, bigger than any happy memory I've ever had. I love you.

Brosef

I love you too, mom.

Brosef crawls into his mom's lap. He lets himself be held by Actor Mom. He sighs deeply. A release of sorts. During the next scene, at some point, Actor Mom leaves Brosef by himself.

Scene 3: Wendy's Solo Performance

A spotlight on Wendy. She is the bar performing her solo performance.

Wendy

This next piece is called "Normal Fucking Person." Please enjoy.

I'm a totally normal person. You don't even know.

I mean, I hate myself…naturally.

I drink too much. Please don't tell anyone that though.

See, I'm kind of sad. But not like I need pills sad just like I have a sort of demon inside of me sad. Like, I don't know how to BE sad. Like, I see other people on Facebook and they seem really put together. Like, they have lots of friends and they take pictures of themselves with their friends and they are in relationships with people and sometimes I can watch one friend have like 2 or 3 relationships meanwhile I haven't had sex with anyone for like three years.

I want love like everyone else. I think it would be cool to find someone and settle down or whatever people do who don't want kids equivalent to settling down is. I don't know. Travel and shit? Raise dogs and shit? I love dogs.

I mean, I just want normal fucking things that people have. Like to get up in the morning and feel happy about the day and not go through a checklist in my mind of all the dumb shit I need to do so that I can ultimately come home and watch TV. Like, that's the only reason I go to work. So I can come home and watch TV. And I watch so much fucking TV. It's actually kind of a problem. Sometimes I imagine I'm the characters in the shows I watch. I go to sleep and I say… "Wendy, dream that you're this person and everyone loves you."

Listen, I'm pretty great. Don't get me wrong. People really fucking like me. I mean, yes, sometimes I wonder if my whole personality is a constructed personality that was designed as a defense mechanism for a shitty childhood where my parents never told me they were proud of me so now I seek it out from other people by going above and beyond in every motherfucking situation. And, of course, being overweight so I had to be funny so I wouldn't get picked on…you know, you're basic who the fuck am I sort of question. Like, if I had nice parents and a nice body who the fuck would I be?

But anyway, so sometimes I drink a little bit and it makes me feel kind of good. Like, oh, this feels pretty nice and then I want to feel even nicer. So you know, I drink some more. My mom was an alcoholic, that's what she died from, and my grandpa, I guess he died from it too.

So anyway, it runs in the family. But I do okay. I am aware of my proclivity to drink and drink and fucking drink and never stop once that sweet sweet liquor hits my lips so I try to avoid it. I don't drink casually. Like I can't have one or two so I don't even try. Well, sometimes I try but I never succeed. I pretty much know if I start it's going to be a shit show so I save it for times I don't have anything else to do. And for the most part, no one seems to care if I drink too much and get too happy. People like it I guess. They like it when I'm happy. Which sort of makes me feel like what the fuck? Why don't you like me as much when I'm not drinking? Because I'm not fucking happy? Well excuse the fuck out of me. Life is hard. So, fuck you.

I think about everything I do all the time. Like, I'll talk to some shmuck, sometimes people I don't even care about, and then I'll replay that interaction in my mind all day. Thinking about

this goddamn shmuck and what I said to this guy and if it was dumb or okay or what he thinks of me. And I'll re-read emails all the time that I sent. Like, they're sent already! Why are you reading a fucking already sent email over and over again?!
I guess I care a lot what people think of me. Anyway, so then when I drink too much I hate myself for like three solid days. The first day, I'm hungover. My hangovers range from incapacitating to a general malaise. Like an overall fucking tiredness that makes my eyes burn. Like, if I have to do something if I'm hungover I just won't do it. I'll quit a job before I go in feeling like shit. So, that might really be the only thing keeping me relatively cool with the drinking. The hangover. Somewhere during this first day I start to really hate myself. The beginning of the day I feel like, fuck it, I deserve to have some fun. That was my mom's attitude as well. She was always like, fuck it, I had kids too young. I'm gonna party. But then at the end of the day I'm like…what the fuck is wrong with you? Why did you drink so much? Everyone saw you act like an idiot and everyone hates you. You should pack up and move away. Like extreme shit. Like get the fuck out of dodge before the fucking witch mob gets here shit. Then, I'll send a few texts to people I've hung out with kind of hinting around at the situation. You know, see if they respond. See if they hate me. See if shit's weird. Sort of a general temperature taking measure type of thing. Second day. Pure self-hatred. I've had time to think about it. I've resolved never to drink again. And, it's a basic slow burn of shitty feelings. Third day, I wanna drink again! I feel great and I want to keep that good feeling coming. And then that opens up a whole new slew of shitty feelings. Like, why can't I feel good without trying to dull it with alcohol? What kind of fucked up childhood trauma weird ass fucking shit is that? Anyway, I drink like once every two weeks since that's all that I think my self-worth and body can handle. I wonder sometimes though when the demon will really come out. Like, when did my mom say fuck it and start drinking every day? When did she say fuck it and start drinking in the morning? Like at what point are you like…FUCK IT.

So, I keep myself busy. Lots of projects. Lots of doing this and that and tv and holding myself to a crazy standard and being funny and making sure people like me and doing everything really well so that everyone knows that I am a **normal fucking person.**

Clapping is heard. Wendy bows. She is proud.

Scene 4: Brosef's Final Dance

Brosef opens his computer and watches a clip from Brian B's YouTube channel. Perhaps the one where he talks about how he got into dancing. He does this for a minute or two and then puts on a song. Whatever you think his most favorite song would be. Maybe something unexpected. I'm thinking "Tusk" by Fleetwood Mac. He stretches a bit. Then, dances. This should be an immaculately choreographed dance. It begins with Brosef alone. As momentum builds, other

actors come onstage to dance with him. The dance is a celebration of movement, healing, and being together.

At the end of the dance all the actors bow.
This final voiceover can happen before, during, or after the bow.

V.O.
In the end, Brosef became the man he hoped to be. He reunited with his non-binary partner, got a job at Buc-cees – they pay really well if you didn't know – and had a couple kids that he only yelled at occasionally.

Peggy stopped trying to flirt with existential dread. Babs learned that freaking out is sometimes just another kind of dance. A dance with sexy results.

Wendy found her spotlight in a small bar that no one really goes to.

Turns out, none of us are as alone as we think. We're all tangled up in this weird, wonderful mess, trying to figure out what the hell we're doing. And that's kind of beautiful.

They're all still out there. Probably overthinking something. But in the words of Wendy, they're okay.

And hey—you will be too

Scene 5: The Talkback

After the bow all the actors come out and wave to the audience. They bring out chairs and sit in a line. The director and playwright come out last. The director takes the moderator seat. You may want the real director of the show to play the director or double cast it with someone else. I like the idea of the playwright being played by someone we haven't seen onstage yet but do what works best for you.

Director
Hello everyone. Thank you so much for staying for the talkback.

Actor Playing Babs
Yes, thank you all so much.

Director
I think we should start with everyone introducing themselves. I'm _____, the director.

Actor Playing Brosef

I'm _____. I played Brosef.

Director

Did the audience ever know your name though?

Actor Playing Brosef

Ha ha. I don't think so. Maybe that's a playwright question.

Playwright

I like to keep things ambiguous. *(Laughs)*

Actor Playing Brosef

Well, I played Brosef. In the play and real life. *(Laughs)*

Actor Playing Wendy

My name is _____ and I played Wendy.

Actor Playing Babs

I'm _____, and I played Babs.

This repeats with actors playing Actor Babs, Actor Brosef, Voiceovers, etc, etc, until it gets to the playwright.

Playwright

Am I the last one? Oh. Of course. I have to make a spectacle of myself. *(Laughs)* My name is _____ and I suppose I played the playwright. *(Laughs).*

Director

It's so great to have you here, _____. Or, should I call you Dr. _____, I read you have your doctorate?

Playwright

Yeah, I have some imposter syndrome around that still so _____ is perfect for me.

Director

Well, _____, how did you like the performance?

Playwright

Wow. Right out of the gate, huh? *(Laughs)* I mean, I thought it was great. The writing especially. No, no. I'm kidding. You know, you never know how a show will turn out. By the time I get to the end of writing a play I truly kind of hate it. I think it's well, frankly boring and doesn't make sense. When I finished reading this play I was like "is this just a trauma dump? Should I change the name to Brosef Learns to Trauma Dump?" Ha ha. But I also had a conversation with a mentor recently about trauma and doing trauma-informed theatre and he asked me what I considered constitutes trauma and frankly, I think we're all traumatized. To be alive is to have trauma. So in some ways I think the play is about that as well. But, yeah, I loved the play. I loved what you all did with it.

Director

I promise I wasn't fishing for compliments.

Playwright

Of course not. *(Gives the audience a funny look, like of course you were fishing)*

Director

So, you said this play is about trauma.

Playwright

Partly.

Director

One of the characters I love so much is Brosef. I think we all know a Brosef that we don't take too seriously. Why did you want to include this character?

Playwright

Well I think that's it exactly, right? We don't take the Brosef's of the world seriously and yet, they often take themselves waaaaay too serious. I started writing this play from a place of kind of like Young Jean Lee's *Straight White Men,* wanting to get to know this particular bro. To humanize him. And then kind of surprise the audience – and maybe ourselves – with his depth. I think we need to remind ourselves that even the most bro-ey of bros is a person formed by their life events. I was talking to a friend the other day and they were making fun of men and I reminded them that men have the same brains as we do. They have the same potential to learn, to be compassionate, and empathetic, and care about community just like women. It was a joke when I said it but it's true. This might be controversial to say but men need attention. Or at least the construct of men need attention.

Director

_____, you played Brosef. Do you agree men need attention?

Actor Playing Brosef

I don't know about all men, but I sure do. *(Laughs)* I think what _____ said is right on. I was really glad Brosef wasn't one dimensional. It would have been really easy for him to be one dimensional and it probably would have been really funny, but _____'s choice to make him almost the hero of the play is more…interesting.

Playwright

Hero. Okay…ha ha.

Actor Playing Brosef

You know what I mean.

Director

That's great. Really great. So, Babs…

Actor Playing Babs

Yesss….

Director

How did the theme of trauma manifest in your character?

Playwright

Sorry. I don't mean to interrupt, and I know I made the joke about the play being a trauma dump, but it's not just that. It's about healing. I think.

Director

Definitely.

Playwright

But also just that we're messy people. People are messy. I guess if I were to channel my inner Babs, I'd say what's coming up for me right now is that I'm worried people will think this is a play about exploiting trauma. And it is. But it isn't. I tried to tease out some trauma, like with Brosef, and have some that was just sitting right on the character's shoulder, like with Peggy and figuring out if her dad was still alive. Sometimes people walk side by side with their trauma, grief, and sometimes it's something to be excavated. I don't know. I guess I've talked myself into a circle. I suppose it is about trauma.

Actor Playing Babs

Thank you, _____. I think that was really beautiful. You're right. It's about trauma but it isn't. It's this beautiful amalgamation of neurosis, trauma, healing, and utter humanness. *(She pauses to think)* I think with Babs she could, too, have been a one-dimensional almost hyper liberal "Karen" character. When she ended up being the almost sexual aggressor with Peggy at the end of their scene, it really surprised me. I had to sort of put the pieces of Babs together at that point. I think what I discovered was Babs had a lot churning under the surface and when she could kind of detangle her neurosis from her desire, she became more…fully realized.

Playwright

That's very interesting. I hadn't that of that.

Actor Playing Babs

I could be wrong of course. *(laughs awkwardly).* You mention that Wendy is a fully realized person in the play but yet she is still struggling with being seen by others – hence the solo performance – so I sort of took that as a gesture towards the idea that we can be fully realized while still holding onto some of our neurosis or trauma…or something like that.

Playwright

That's a profound insight. Thank you.

Director

I agree. Great insight.

Playwright

Yes…totally. Hmmm. I just. Sometimes I don't think I know the characters as well as the artists working on the play. That was a really great insight. I concur.

Actor Playing Wendy

Well, if I can chime in. I loved playing Wendy. She's sort of this butch icon. I love how she's kind of mean at first but then we realize she's kind of nice.

Playwright

Yeah, but that's sort of a simplification of her, don't you think?

Actor Playing Wendy

Sure. Yeah. I guess.

Playwright

She also doesn't have to be butch. You played her that way…which is great. That choice made sense for this particular production. But her desperation to be seen transcends gender. I think. Or

how we communicate our gender. Her self-assuredness may come off as "mean" – as you said – but it's really just her setting boundaries around her time while balancing her customer service job – bartending. I actually did some research for this role and tended bar at a friend's establishment and it's terribly difficult. You have to be firm but also inviting – fun even. She would only let me do it during a slow period so that's why the scene with Wendy takes place during pre-happy hour but I think I really got the essence of this really complicated dichotomy of push and pull the bartender must do.

Actor Playing Wendy

Totally.

Actor Playing Brosef

Totally.

Actor Playing Babs

Totally.

All Others

Totally.

Long Pause.

Director

Why don't we open this up to the audience. Any questions? Yes…you.

Audience can be played by one of the actors, voiceover, or some other creative thing you think of.

Audience Member

Soooo…what is this play about?

(Pause)

Director

Ha ha. Great question. _____?

Playwright

Yeah. I think we sort of covered that. Yes? Anxiety and such.

Audience Member

But what is it about? There wasn't much of a plot.

Playwright

The plot is human growth. I guess. How we grow. Anxiety. As I said. Development of humans and such.

Audience Member

Okay. Thanks.

Director

How about you.

Audience Member

I had a similar question. What is this play about?

Actor Playing Brosef

If I could jump in here…

Actor Playing Peggy

I actually have something to say. I haven't said anything yet.

Actor Playing Brosef

Of course. Ladies first.

Actor Playing Peggy

Please don't call me "lady", Carl.

Actor Playing Brosef

I thought lady was okay?

Actor Playing Peggy

(To Brosef) We're not doing this. *(To audience member)* For me, my character, Peggy, she comes across as self-assured and we think she's going to be some sort of vehicle for Babs to unlock something in her – her sexuality, etc – but she has her own problems. She hates her dad which is its own kind of death, I suppose. We're all told we have to love our family but what if your family is bad for you? What do you do then? So really, for Peggy, we see the two sides of a coin. For Babs, she unlocks a desire she didn't realize she had, or at least had never acted on before, but for herself, she needs her own kind of support. So I guess we all need support even if we seem…put together.

Audience Member

So the play is about being put together?

Actor Playing Peggy

In a way.

Actor Playing Babs

Well, I think it's the opposite. That none of us are put together. Or, we're put together in some ways and not in others?

Director

Yes, we are all put together but all broken pieces. We are, all of us, improbable patchworks—stitched together by memory, rupture, and fleeting tenderness. Beneath the skin we wear like armor, there's a cathedral of broken glass: shards of childhood echoing in the rafters, the soft hum of inherited sorrow, the refracted light of every moment we almost fell apart but didn't. Isn't it exquisite? This mess of contradiction—how we carry both the wound and the thread? Trauma doesn't just mark us; it mosaics us. We are less "healed" than artfully rearranged, like gold filling the cracks of shattered porcelain, not in spite of the breaking, but because of it. To be human is to be an unfinished gallery of grief and grace, staggering forward in communal isolation. We look at each other and say, "Same," even when our stories diverge like wild rivers. And in that resonance—imperfect, tender, incomplete—is something achingly beautiful.

Playwright

Hmmm mmmmmm mmmmmmmmmmm.

Actor Playing Babs

Mmmmmmmm. Yes.

Actor Playing Brosef

Exactly.

Actor Playing Peggy

Right.

Actor Playing Babs

Exactly.

Actor Playing Brosef

Right.

Actor Playing Wendy

Exactly.

Actor Playing Babs

Right.

Actor Playing Brosef

Exactly.

Playwright

Did anyone here like the play?

Maybe a mumbled "sure, yeah" from the audience.

Playwright

Any feedback you'd like to offer? I am always open to feedback. This is a new work, after all.

Director

When does a new work just become a "work" I wonder?

Playwright

Good point…yes, I suppose I am still tinkering. A work is never finished but we can always tinker. Hmm. Maybe that's what this play is about. *(Playwright laughs)*

Actor Playing Babs

I have some. Notes.

Playwright

(Terse) Oh. Terrific.

Actor Playing Babs

I'm curious why Babs polices everything people say. I'm just wondering if that's necessary. I think it makes her less likeable.

Actor Playing Peggy

Like the way I asked Carl not to call me lady?

Actor Playing Babs

(Flustered) I was really trying to connect with Babs but I felt like that one aspect of her personality was really off-putting. Unnecessarily off-putting.

Playwright

Some people are off-putting. Unnecessarily. That's kind of the point.

Actor Playing Babs

Yes, but people come to the theater to escape real life.

Playwright

That's quite reductive.

Actor Playing Brosef

Meow.

Actor Playing Peggy

What the fuck?

Actor Playing Wendy

Don't do that.

Actor Playing Babs

What does that mean?

Actor Playing Peggy

Carl is suggesting you two are cats…having a cat fight.

Actor Playing Babs

Oh. Gross. Carl…what the hell?

Playwright

You know, we've talked a lot about what this play is about and frankly, I don't fucking know I just wrote it. I didn't have a plan or some grand design I just wanted to write a play so I could feel like I did something…accomplished something. I wrote some other plays before this one and some people thought I should write another so I fucking wrote another play even though theater is dying and there's no market for anxiety plays because we're all anxious and as Babs said no one wants to see someone else being anxious onstage. I guess I thought maybe reflecting real life would be like cool or something but I don't even think I did that. It's just a weird fucking play that copies techniques from other writers and honestly parts of this play were written with ChatGPT because I got fucking tired of it. So thank you for your feedback and thank you for seeing this and how much longer does it run…?

Director

We have 13 more performances.

Playwright

Jesus Christ. Okay. Well, great.

Director

Any other questions?

Audience Member

How do you all memorize your lines?

Long pause. All actors look at each other.

Actor Playing Babs

We study them.

Blackout. End of Play.