

Week 2 - Reviewed by Shelley Molad

Saguaro: When Wren reluctantly shows up dateless to her boss's wedding, she meets Saguaro, and the two hit it off. And never for a moment does it faze her that her new love interest is... a cactus. An absurd rendition on the challenges of dating, *Saguaro* delights viewers by treating an outlandish situation with utmost sincerity, never failing to miss a comic beat. Julie Fitzpatrick convincingly engages in conversation with the life-sized cactus. When best friend Kira, played by Amelia Randolph Cambell, inquires about plant life in bed, writer Philip Dawkin's sharp and fast-paced dialogue results in a hilarious scene. *Saguaro* will make you think twice about how far a woman will go to find the right partner, even if she must forego the human genus.

Kid Sister: Once Iris uncovers her sister's bulimia, she is both concerned and fascinated by the disturbing behavior. Told from 12-year-old Iris's perspective, *Kid Sister* shows us how easily young girls give way to the pressures of fitting in, even if it means engaging in harmful activities. As the sisters, Zazie Beetz and Dominique Fishback share moments that are touching and disconcerting. Fishback embodies both the innocence and naivete of the kid sister, though at times she comes across as babyish for a preteen. This vignette by Carrie Louise Nutt deals lightly with a life-threatening illness, but allows us to see it from a child's perspective.

I Have It: George and Lady meet for a blind date, after learning they are both victims of an unspecified sexually transmitted virus. Seated on opposite ends of a park bench, Thomas Rowen and Caroline Parsons elicit a stage picture that is both uncomfortable and touching. The rhythm of this piece could be likened to a dance; Rowen and Parsons treat the text delicately, allowing for spontaneity, while living through moments that are absent of dialogue. Though they never name the virus, it looms above them, like the red balloon Lady has tied to the end of the bench—a seemingly metaphoric yet subtle touch that may or may not have been intentional. The beauty of this piece stems from playwright Bekah Brunstetter, who has taken a mundane concept and added a dimension that brings with it a subtle sense of urgency—as if time is running out and only love matters. Brunstetter achieves a certain fullness, touching on life questions that are both commonplace and rare.

Parents of Typical Children: Expectant parents Mr. and Mrs. Downer learn that their son may turn out to be a typical child. Michele Markarian's play is a pertinent commentary on American society, in a world where average is no longer acceptable. The premise is funny, but because it is a glaring satire, at times it comes across too strong, forcing humor on us. For instance, when Dr. Laurel reveals that her own son is typical, she overacts a meltdown on stage. William Kozy nicely manages to mask his true fears until the very end, putting an interesting spin on an otherwise typical ending.

The Curse of the Horned Babby: A cobbler's wife, a baker's wife, and a crone huddle over a large burlap sac filled with loot from the town's disappearing men, all of whom have been eaten by the cursed, horned babby (Irish slang for baby). When a minstrel appears in town, the women warn him of the cursed babby. Their tale seems nothing more than a crazy fable—that is, until the cursed babby returns. Amy Dickenson is straight out of a story book as the hunched back, haggled crone. Franny Silverman is compelling as the cobbler's wife, particularly when she retells the story of the cursed babby. Superbly directed by Heidi Handelsman and written to our fancy by Lisa Dillman, *The Curse of the Horned Babby* takes us to the theater of our childhoods, to the art of storytelling and magic, where all we need is imagination.