



DISGRACED

BY **AYAD AKHTAR**



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DISGRACED
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DISGRACED had its world premiere at American Theater Company (PJ Paparelli, Artistic Director), Chicago, Illinois, in January 2012. It was directed by Kimberly Senior; the set design was by Jack Magaw; the costume design was by Janice Pytel; the lighting design was by Christine Binder; the sound design was by Kevin O'Donnell; the properties were designed by Nick Heggestad; and the stage manager was Katie Klemme. The cast was as follows:

EMILY Lee Stark
AMIR Usman Ally
ABE Behzad Dabu
JORY Alana Arenas
ISAAC Benim Foster

The New York premiere of DISGRACED was presented by LCT3 at Lincoln Center Theater (Paige Evans, Artistic Director [LCT3]; André Bishop, Producing Artistic Director [Lincoln Center Theater]), on October 7, 2012. It was directed by Kimberly Senior. The set design was by Lauren Helpert; the costume design was by Dane Laffrey; the lighting design was by Tyler Micoleau; and the sound design was by Jill BC Du Boff. The cast was as follows:

EMILY Heidi Armbruster
AMIR Aasif Mandvi
ABE Omar Maskati
JORY Karen Pittman
ISAAC Erik Jensen

DISGRACED was developed in part at the New Writers. New Plays. residency at the Vineyard Arts Project (Ashley Melone, Founder and Artistic Director).

DISGRACED was originally produced on Broadway by the Araca Group, Lincoln Center Theater, Jennifer Evans, Amanda Watkins, Richard Winkler, Rodger Hess, Stephanie P. McClelland, Tulchin/Bartner Productions, Jessica Genick, Jonathan Reinis, Carl Levin/Ashley De Simone/TNTDynaMite Productions, Alden Bergson/Rachel Weinstein, Greenleaf Productions, Darren Deverna/Jere Harris, the Shubert Organization, and the David Merrick Arts Foundation. It was directed by Kimberly Senior; the set design was by John Lee Beatty; the costume design was by Jennifer von Mayrhauser; the lighting design was by Kenneth Posner; the sound design was by Jill BC Du Boff; and the fight direction was by UnkleDave's Fight-House. The cast was as follows:

EMILY	Gretchen Mol
AMIR	Hari Dhillon
ABE	Danny Ashok
JORY	Karen Pittman
ISAAC	Josh Radnor

CHARACTERS

EMILY

AMIR

ABE

JORY

ISAAC

SETTING

A spacious apartment on New York's Upper East Side.

TIME

2011–2012.

The first two scenes take place in late summer of 2011.

The third scene takes place three months later during fall.

The fourth scene takes place six months later during spring.

The play should be performed without intermission.

NOTE TO DIRECTORS

Although *Disgraced* has many “ideas” in it, playing the “ideas” leads, invariably, to a stilted and stentorian quality. Odd as it may seem, the play was written as an entertainment. Something of a situation comedy that becomes an office thriller that becomes a comedy of manners that becomes a play of romantic intrigue and finally ends in domestic tragedy. The surefire sign that the actors are “playing ideas” — and not the relationships — is a slackening of the pace. *Disgraced* was written to be performed *allegro con brio* — light and bold. If, at times, the performers err on the side of briskness, it is still a preferable error than to fall into the trap of feeling obligated to do justice to the ideas by slowing down.

DISGRACED

Scene 1

Lights come up.

High ceilings, parquet floors, crown molding. The works.

Upstage — a dining table. Behind it, a swinging door leads off to a kitchen. Upstage right — an open doorway leads to a hall that disappears from view. Upstage left — a terrace and windows looking out over further buildings in the distance. Through which the season will show in each scene.

Downstage — a living room. A couch and chairs gathered together around a coffee table.

The stage left wall is covered with a large painting: A vibrant, two-paneled image in luscious whites and blues, with patterns reminiscent of an Islamic garden. The effect is lustrous and magnetic. Below, a marble fireplace. And on the mantle, a statue of Siva. To one side, a small table on which a half-dozen bottles of alcohol sit.

Downstage right — a vestibule and the front door.

(The furnishings are spare and tasteful. Perhaps with subtle flourishes of the orient.)

Onstage: Emily — early 30s, white, lithe, and lovely — sits at the end of the dining table. A large pad before her and a book open to a large reproduction of Velázquez's "Portrait of Juan de Pareja."

Emily sketches, assesses her model ... Amir — 40, of South Asian origin, in an Italian suit jacket, with a crisp, collared shirt, but only boxers underneath. He speaks with a perfect American accent.

Beat(s).

AMIR. You sure you don't want me to put pants on?

EMILY. (*Showing the Velázquez painting.*) I only need you from the waist up.

AMIR. I still think this is a little strange.

EMILY. (*Sketching.*) Yeah ...

AMIR. That you want to paint me after seeing a painting of a slave.

EMILY. Juan de Pareja was Velázquez's assistant, honey. And a painter in his own right.

AMIR. And his slave.

EMILY. Until Velázquez freed him. (*Beat.*)

AMIR. No idea what that has to do with what happened last night.

EMILY. A man, a waiter, looking at you.

AMIR. Looking at us.

EMILY. (*Continuing.*) Not seeing you. Not seeing who you really are. Not until you started to deal with him. And the skill with which you did that.

AMIR. It's not the first time —

EMILY. You made him see that gap. Between what he was assuming about you, and what you really are.

AMIR. The guy's a racist. So what?

EMILY. It got me thinking about the Velázquez painting. And how people must have reacted when they first saw it. They think they're looking at a picture of a Moor. An assistant.

AMIR. A slave.

EMILY. Fine. A slave. That portrait has more nuance, complexity, life than his paintings of kings and queens. And God knows how many of those Velázquez did. (*Assessing her sketch.*) Anyway — I don't know what you're so worried about. It's not like anybody's gonna see this.

AMIR. Baby. Jerry Saltz loved your last show. That review was —

EMILY. (*Coming in.*) Jerry Saltz liked it. He didn't love it. It didn't sell.

AMIR. Selling's not everything. (*Amir's cell phone rings.*)

EMILY. Selling's not everything? You really believe that? (*Emily grabs the phone and tosses it to him.*)

AMIR. I have to get this ...

EMILY. Fine. Just ... stay where you are?

AMIR. (*Into the phone.*) You enjoying your Pop Tarts? I don't give a fuck that it's Saturday morning. You're paid six figures to return my calls. (*Breaking away and going to a contract on the table.*) Paragraph 4, Subsection 3. Last sentence. Why are those three words still in there? You missed that? No. What actually happened is I told you to fix it and you didn't. Then behave like it. Fucking career paralegal. (*Amir hangs up.*)

EMILY. Wow.

AMIR. I don't catch his little fuck-up? It costs the client \$850 grand.

EMILY. (*Sketching.*) It's actually kinda hot.

AMIR. Is it? (*Pointing at the picture of the Velázquez painting.*) What's his name again?

EMILY. Juan de Pareja.

AMIR. It's a little fucked-up. Give me that at least.

EMILY. (*Sexy.*) I happen to know you like it a little fucked-up. (*They kiss. Kiss again. The phone rings. Amir ...*)

AMIR. That's Mort. I need to get it.

EMILY. Fine. You're done. You want more coffee? (*Amir nods. Emily exits.*)

AMIR. (*Into the phone.*) Hey, Mort ... Good, good. You? Contract's done. We'll have it to them first thing Monday. I spoke to Paolo. Seller's remorse. But it's a moot point. His board's gonna vote against him. I'm just going to keep feeding him the line on litigation. He doesn't play ball? They're going to rip his guts out. So you should expect him to call you after I'm through with him. Good cop, bad cop. (*Emily returns with coffee.*) She's right here ... (*To Emily.*) Mort says hi.

EMILY. Tell him hi.

AMIR. She says hi ... We have plans for Labor Day, Mort. Don't worry about it. Enjoy the weekend ... Okay, bye.

EMILY. Hamptons?

AMIR. Bucks County.

EMILY. I know.

AMIR. Jory and Isaac.

EMILY. It's got me a little freaked out.

AMIR. It's taken forever to make that happen.

EMILY. Isaac is a big deal.

AMIR. And he is going to love your work. (*Beat.*)

EMILY. (*Changing the subject.*) How is Mort?

AMIR. Obsessed with the idea that meditation is going to lower his cholesterol.

EMILY. Haven't seen him in ages.

AMIR. I barely see him. He hardly comes in. I mean, basically, I'm doing his job. Not that I mind.

EMILY. He loves you.

AMIR. He depends on me.

EMILY. He spent I don't know how much on that birthday present for you?

AMIR. Couple grand at least.

EMILY. Excuse me?

AMIR. Honey, I really am pretty much doing his job.

EMILY. So he gets you a book. Or a bottle of scotch. Or takes you to dinner. Why'd he get you that statue of Siva? (*Beat.*) He doesn't think you're Hindu, does he?

AMIR. He may have mentioned something once ... You realize I'm going to end up with my name on that firm?

EMILY. Leibowitz, Bernstein, Harris, and Kapoor.

AMIR. My mother will roll over in her grave ...

EMILY. Your mother would be proud.

AMIR. It's not the family name, so she might not care, seeing it alongside all those Jewish ones ... But *proud*, my mother would not be. (*From the kitchen: The intercom buzzes. Amir looks over, surprised. Emily heads for the kitchen.*)

EMILY. That'll be Abe.

AMIR. (*Surprised.*) Abe?

EMILY. (*Disappearing into the kitchen.*) Your nephew.

AMIR. Right. Abe.

EMILY. (*At the intercom, offstage.*) Yes? Send him up.

AMIR. Abe Jensen. I'll never get used to it ... From Hussein Malik, he goes to Abe Jensen ... I can't take it seriously.

EMILY. I don't like what's happening.

AMIR. You're not gonna let this thing go, are you?

EMILY. Somebody's gotta do something about it.

AMIR. I went to see that Imam in prison. What more do you two want?

EMILY. Please just talk to him? *(There's a knocking on the door, as Amir starts putting on his pants. Amir's gotten to the door. Opening, it shows ... Abe — 22, of South Asian origin. But as American as American gets. Vibrant and endearing. He's wearing a Kidrobot t-shirt under a hoodie, skinny jeans, and high tops.)*

ABE. Should I come back?

EMILY. No, no.

ABE. You sure?

AMIR. Come in, Hussein.

ABE. Uncle.

AMIR. What?

ABE. Could you just call me —

AMIR. *(Finishing his thought.)* I've known you your whole life as Hussein. I'm not gonna start calling you Abe now. *(Abe shakes his head. Turning to Emily.)*

EMILY. Hi, Abe.

ABE. Hi, Aunt Emily. *(Abe turns to Amir, lighthearted. Pointing.)* See? How hard can it be?

AMIR. Abe Jensen. Really?

ABE. You know how much easier things are for me since I changed my name? It's in the Quran. It says you can hide your religion if you have to. It's called *taqiyya* —

AMIR. *(Coming in.)* I'm not talking about the Quran. Just lay off it with me and your folks at least.

ABE. It's gotta be one thing or the other. I can't be all mixed up.

EMILY. *(To Amir, off his reaction.)* You changed your name, too.

ABE. You were lucky. You didn't have to change your first name. Could be Christian. Jewish. Plus, you were born here. It's different.

EMILY. *(To Abe.)* You want something, sweetie? Coffee, juice?

ABE. Nah. I'm good.

AMIR. So what's up?

EMILY. I'll let you two gentlemen talk.

AMIR. No need. Everybody knows you're in on this. *(To Abe.)* So you've been calling her, too?

ABE. You weren't calling me back.

AMIR. Why are we still talking about this? I'm a corporate lawyer. In mergers and acquisitions —

EMILY. Who started in the public defender's —

AMIR. That was years ago.

ABE. Imam Fareed didn't do anything.

DISGRACED

by Ayad Akhtar

WINNER OF THE 2013 PULITZER PRIZE

3M, 2W

Amir Kapoor is a successful Pakistani-American lawyer who is rapidly moving up the corporate ladder while distancing himself from his cultural roots. Emily, his wife, is white; she's an artist, and her work is influenced by Islamic imagery. When the couple hosts a dinner party, what starts out as a friendly conversation escalates into something far more damaging.

"... a continuously engaging, vitally engaged play about thorny questions of identity and religion in the contemporary world, with an accent on the incendiary topic of how radical Islam and the terrorism it inspires have affected the public discourse. In dialogue that bristles with wit and intelligence, Mr. Akhtar ... puts contemporary attitudes toward religion under a microscope, revealing how tenuous self-image can be for people born into one way of being who have embraced another ... Mr. Akhtar's cut-crystal dialogue is so stimulating. Everyone has been told that politics and religion are two subjects that should be off limits at social gatherings. But watching Mr. Akhtar's characters rip into these forbidden topics, there's no arguing that they make for ear-tickling good theater."

—The New York Times

"... blistering social drama about the racial prejudices that secretly persist in progressive cultural circles ... Akhtar knows how to build a scene and maintain suspense, so there's a sense of inevitability about the damage that's done over the course of the evening. But because of the artful construction, it still comes as a shock when the two couples go into attack mode."

—Variety

"What makes DISGRACED impressive is that Akhtar, having invented four educated, intelligent adult characters, lets the burgeoning mess articulate itself through their interaction ... you rarely feel the playwright nudging them in the right direction."

—The Village Voice

Also by Ayad Akhtar

THE INVISIBLE HAND
THE WHO & THE WHAT

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