

**TWO THINGS  
YOU DON'T TALK  
ABOUT AT DINNER**

**BY LISA LOOMER**



**DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
INC.**

## TWO THINGS YOU DON'T TALK ABOUT AT DINNER

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Originally produced at the Denver Center Theatre Company  
Kent Thompson, Artistic Director

Commissioned by  
The Oregon Shakespeare Festival  
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TWO THINGS YOU DON'T TALK ABOUT AT DINNER received its world premiere at the Denver Center Theatre Company (Kent Thompson, Artistic Director) in Denver, Colorado, on January 26, 2012. It was directed by Wendy C. Goldberg; the set design was by Kevin Depinet; the costume design was by Anne Kennedy; the lighting design was by Charles R. MacLeod; the sound design and original music were by Jason Ducat; the dramaturg was Doug Langworthy; and the stage manager was Rachel Ducat. The cast was as follows:

|             |       |                      |
|-------------|-------|----------------------|
| MYRIAM      | ..... | Mimi Lieber          |
| JACK        | ..... | Lenny Wolpe          |
| NIKKI       | ..... | Karen Pittman        |
| CHRISTOPHER | ..... | Ben Morrow           |
| KIMIKO      | ..... | Sala Iwamatsu        |
| RACHELLE    | ..... | Shana Dowdeswell     |
| MABLE       | ..... | Sophia Espinosa      |
| GINNY       | ..... | Catherine E. Coulson |
| JOSH        | ..... | John Hutton          |
| DAN         | ..... | Sam Gregory          |
| ALICE       | ..... | Caitlin O'Connell    |
| LUPE        | ..... | Gabriella Cavallero  |
| SAM         | ..... | Nasser Faris         |

## CHARACTERS

MYRIAM — Late 50s, funny, self-deprecating, sexy, warm, loving, smart, furious, a great big personality. Most of what she says, she says with a smile, lightly and with good humor ... except when it comes to Israel.

JACK — Late 60s, a lawyer, a good, decent man, even wise. The kind of host who likes things to go smoothly.

NIKKI — 30s, half African American, half white, a theater director, bright, politically correct, idealistic and earnest.

GINNY — Early 50s, Christian, likes to laugh, says what she thinks, no filter.

CHRISTOPHER — Early 20s, Ginny's son, trying to be a Buddhist.

JOSH — Early 50s, son of Holocaust survivors, a no-nonsense lawyer.

KIMIKO — Josh's wife, late 30s, Japanese, a converted Jew, anxious to do it right.

RACHELLE — Late teens or early 20s, Josh's daughter, bright, open, but a mess.

DAN — Late 40s or 50s, a wry Secular Humanist, TV writer, and member of Narcotics Anonymous.

ALICE — 50s, Dan's wife, a feminist, warm, a person of peace.

MABEL — 10, Alice and Dan's Chinese daughter, sensitive but direct.

LUPE — 40s, Mexican, a housekeeper for too long, smart, wry, used to Liberals.

SAM — 50s, Arab-American, teaches history. Peaceful, reasonable, good sense of humor, and sitting on a fury.

## TIME AND PLACE

The play takes place in the present, in Los Angeles. The first scene takes place about a half-hour before the rest of the play, which takes place in “real time.”

## THOUGHTS ON PRODUCTION

Most of the scenes take place around the dinner table (where people change seats often). And there might be some arm chairs for escape. In other scenes, the locale can be more suggested than literal, so that transitions are seamless. There’s a patio, a bathroom with a toilet and a big claw foot tub, a bedroom, and a (mostly suggested) kitchen ... in Myriam and Jack’s warm and colorful, remodeled and now Spanish-style house, filled with Jewish artifacts.

Music should not be what would actually played at a seder. Something with a “world beat” would be best to begin the play and for transitions. The music of Brooklyn’s Matisyahu, which often has a reggae feel, works well ... as do contemporary Arabic grooves or Israeli or Arabic rap. This music is the voice of the place we hear so much about in the play.

# TWO THINGS YOU DON'T TALK ABOUT AT DINNER

## ACT ONE

### Scene 1

*As lights come up, Myriam is setting a table for twelve and singing Edith Piaf's "Je Ne Regrette Rien."*

MYRIAM. *(Singing.)*

*Non, rien de rien, non, je ne regrette rien,*

*Ni le bien qu'on m'a fait —*

*(Jack enters from the patio.)*

JACK. I thought you were boycotting the French.

MYRIAM. Well, Piaf worked for the Resistance. *(Beat; worries.)* I think she worked for the Resistance ...

JACK. So what's the song say, baby?

MYRIAM. *(Sings with a French accent.)* No, I regret nothing ... No, I don't regret a thing — *(Stops singing.)* Shit, I hope she worked for the Resistance. *(Jack comes and puts his arms around her.)*

JACK. Well, I regret everything up until the year two thousand.

MYRIAM. *(Coy.)* And why is that, darling?

JACK. Because I wasn't married to you. *(He kisses her.)*

MYRIAM. *(Flirtatious.)* Jack. People are coming in an hour ...

JACK. *(Checks watch.)* I'll pop a Viagra, we'll have twenty minutes. *(She catches herself in a mirror as he kisses her.)*

MYRIAM. I look terrible — ! *(She lifts the folds in her face in the*

*mirror.*) Look at this, I could make drapes!

JACK. Lie down, take advantage of gravity.

MYRIAM. I don't know what you see in me —

JACK. It's just about sex. (*Checks watch.*) We're down to nineteen minutes, Miri ... (*They start to kiss — as the door opens and Nikki, late 30s African-American, enters with a suitcase and a paper bag.*)

NIKKI. Oh God — I thought you said come early! (*Myriam hurries to embrace Nikki, kissing her five times.*)

MYRIAM. Darling! (*Yiddish for "Look at that face."*) *Voos far a shayn punim.*

NIKKI. Good to see you too! (*Jack and Nikki embrace.*)

JACK. How are you, sweetheart?

NIKKI. Excellent, Jack, you?

JACK. Couldn't be better. You working?

NIKKI. Just — starting a new project ...

JACK. Terrific! I'll put your bag in the guest room. (*He starts to leave.*)

NIKKI. Thanks!

MYRIAM. (*Admiring.*) Nikki, you lost weight.

NIKKI. I did the Master Cleanse. You lost weight too!

MYRIAM. Welbutrin.

NIKKI. Well, you look beautiful.

MYRIAM. Please. I look fifty.

NIKKI. (*Laughs.*) And you're fifty-fi — !

MYRIAM. (*Cuts her off.*) No math, daring. So what's the new job?

NIKKI. Oh, just a play I'm going to be directing. I'm just researching right now ...

MYRIAM. It's a period piece?

NIKKI. You know, I haven't actually signed the contract so I'm a bit superstitious about talking about it —

MYRIAM. (*Hurt; smiles.*) No worries! Let me know when, I'll take you to dinner! Hey, do you know if Piaf worked for the Resistance?

NIKKI. She said she did. After the war. But she also sang for the Germans.

MYRIAM. Shit. Never trust the French, Nikki. Want my albums?

NIKKI. Please. If I feel like drinking myself into a stupor, I'll go for Billie Holiday. (*Myriam opens the bag Nikki's brought.*)

MYRIAM. Ooooh — jelly roll cake! (*Myriam examines cake, bag, and receipt.*) Pesadicke ... Good. But didn't you get my email about supporting Trader Joe's? All you have to do is tell the store

manager you're shopping at Trader Joe's *because* they're selling Israeli products —

NIKKI. I was nowhere near Trader Joe's! Can I help with anything?

MYRIAM. No, no, Lupe's here.

NIKKI. She is? (*She goes to the kitchen door and calls —*) *Hola, Lupe! Que tal?*

LUPE. (*Offstage.*) I'm fine, Miss Nikki! You?

NIKKI. *Bien, bien! Ahorita vengo a saludarte, mija.*

LUPE. (*Offstage.*) Okay.

NIKKI. (*To Myriam.*) I wish she wouldn't call me Miss Nikki.

MYRIAM. Oh, let her do what's comfortable. (*Sam enters.*)

SAM. Hello — ? (*Surprised.*) Nikki!

NIKKI. Sam! I didn't think you'd be here! (*They hug, warmly.*)

MYRIAM. So what am I, chopped liver?

SAM. Hello, you! (*Sam and Myriam hug, and Myriam kisses him five times too.*)

MYRIAM. (*"How are you?"*) *Vus macht du?*

SAM. Uh ... You bet! (*Answering Nikki.*) I just got back to L.A.!

MYRIAM. And you didn't call?

SAM. Well, I knew I'd see you!

MYRIAM. (*To Nikki; proud of him.*) He was on sabbatical in Europe! And he went to the Middle East, Israel ... (*To Sam.*) I hope you brought pictures?

SAM. Damn — I forgot!

NIKKI. (*To Myriam.*) You know, maybe I'll just take a quick shower. (*To Sam.*) We'll catch up later?

SAM. Sure! (*Nikki leaves.*) She looks good, is she good?

MYRIAM. (*Lightly.*) How should I know? No one tells me anything. I think she broke up with that "musician" again. (*She goes back to setting the table. He helps. Knows where everything is.*)

SAM. The guy she brought last year? Thank God.

MYRIAM. Why?

SAM. He wasn't going to commit.

MYRIAM. (*Laughs.*) What do you know about commitment?

SAM. Nothing! That's how I know.

MYRIAM. Oh, I missed you! So how's the job search, darling?

SAM. You're not gonna believe this, but I think we just might be in a recession?

MYRIAM. Oh, you'll get another job, Sami, you always do.

SAM. I'll put that on a sticky note on my mirror. (*They continue*



*setting the table.)*

MYRIAM. Well, if you hadn't extended that sabbatical ...

SAM. Which glasses?

MYRIAM. My mother's. You know, I don't want to say, "I told you so" — *(Sam sets out wine glasses.)*

SAM. Oh, go for it.

MYRIAM. Okay. You broke the rules of your sabbatical and took an extra two months in a totally fucked economy! Can you make your house payments? Do you need a loan?

SAM. No.

MYRIAM. No which?

SAM. No thanks.

MYRIAM. Sami —

SAM. You loaned me the down payment.

MYRIAM. You paid me back! You can't lose your first house! And if you do lose it, you can thank your good friend George Bush. *(Sam keeps it all light. This is just how they talk.)*

SAM. My friend — ?

MYRIAM. You elected him.

SAM. I elected Bush.

MYRIAM. If people like you hadn't voted for Nader, Gore would've won, I'd still have a 401(k) ...

SAM. *(Laughs.)* So the economy is my fault. Tell Obama, he'll be relieved. Candles?

MYRIAM. Of course! *(He gets candles.)*

SAM. *(Smiles.)* You know what? Out of respect for the fact that this is a holiday, I think we should avoid politics entirely.

MYRIAM. *(Smiles.)* You're right, darling. I think so too. So how'd you like Israel? *(The doorbell rings.)*

SAM. Want me to get it?

MYRIAM. Sure. *(He starts to go to the door.)*

SAM. By the way, I should fix that front gate again, the hinge is loose, a stranger could just walk right in.

MYRIAM. Oh darling, what would I do without you? *(She puts the candle sticks on the table and looks after him as he goes to the door. Upbeat world music, something like Matisyahu's reggae "Jerusalem" takes us to the next scene, as guests enter, greet each other, and gather round the table.)\**

\* See Special Note on Songs and Recordings on copyright page.

# TWO THINGS YOU DON'T TALK ABOUT AT DINNER

by Lisa Loomer

5M, 8W

Myriam's annual Passover Seder, a multicultural mix of family and friends, threatens to explode as politics and religion hijack the dinner conversation. Myriam's bond with her liberal daughter is tested, as is her lifelong friendship with Sam, a Palestinian American who's just returned from the Middle East. A Buddhist, a Christian, an Atheist — all have their say. Her husband, Jack, tries hard to keep the sanctity of tradition ... But in this celebration of "freedom from bondage," hilarious and poignant, none of the guests escape unscathed. Is peace possible ... even at the dinner table? The play explores the question with unsparing humor and with compassion for all who dare to voice answers.

*"Underscore[s] the most basic assumptions that divide us and the inability of hard-liners on both sides to hear the opposing view."* —**The Denver Post**

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—**Variety**

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