

## **The Rabbi and the Shiksa - more than humor**

**Corina Roberts**

“It’s a comedy.” Playwright Art Shulman’s simplistic description of *The Rabbi And The Shiksa* is only partly truth. It is funny, yes. It is not purely comedic.

With convincing confidence Theresa Genovese (Rebecca Westberg) brings her definitely unorthodox presence and new-age spiritual views into the office, heart and groin of Rabbi Jacob Persky. Comfortable in his long-held position, confident in the devotion of his staff and congregation, Persky lacks only one thing in his life - love. The death of his wife eight years earlier creates the only void; a void he has accepted.

Genovese - bold, outspoken, flirtatious - has also lost her spouse, and has taken over the management of their family business as well as the manual labor it involves. She is the embodiment of everything the Rabbi Jacob Persky should not keep in close company.

The passion that blooms between Jacob and Theresa is easy to believe, but not easy for his peers and staff to accept. Immediately the Rabbi’s relationship is seen as a scandal and a threat, and Persky is faced with an escalating onslaught of challenges and betrayals from the people most capable of ending his Rabbinical career in disgrace.

Maury Plotkin (Henry Holden) delivers a particularly venomous performance, working tirelessly to find a way to eliminate Persky. His determination is not born of purely mean spirit, however, and in the end we realize he is valiantly defending the traditions and beliefs that he fears are being abandoned and in fact threatened by the liberal Rabbi Persky.

*The Rabbi and the Shiksa* is surprisingly compassionate to a myriad of ideologies as it dances through the stages of a relationship fraught with challenges from the onset, and leaves us examining the most fundamental issues that face religions and cultures today - how to survive as humans and as culture bearers in a world that constantly compromises those identities.

In the final act, *The Rabbi And The Shiksa* transcends comedy; in classic Shulman fashion, it asks the quintessential question; “At what price love?”

No religious or cultural affiliation or expertise is necessary to understand the humor, or the real human issues, enveloped and exposed in this play.

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(Art - I met some people at the play, I want to talk to them and share this with them and see if they could provide additional feedback. I feel like less is more this time because we aren’t talking about a complicated plot and it’s hard not to give too much of it away. I have not sent it anywhere yet. We can release as is or wait maybe a day for feedback?)