

GO SMUDGE The birth of a child usually is seen as a joyful event — but what if it isn't? In [Rachel Axler's](#) disturbing play, the lives of an expectant couple — Colby (Heather Fox) and Nicholas ([Mark Thomsen](#)) — are upended when Colby gives birth to a limbless being with a single eye. The infant is not only strange to look at; it also responds weirdly — or, more commonly, not at all — to attempts to communicate. At home all day, Colby reacts to it with despair and rage, but the ingenuous Nick, a census official, falls head over heels for his new baby girl, although that doesn't keep him from concealing her oddity from his family, or forestall his mailing to the public a dissentious questionnaire, titled "What Could You Kill?" (Sample question: Could you kill a pig?) Nick's peculiar behavior corners the concern of his brother Peter ([Bart Tangredi](#)), a snide guy whose cynicism, within this piece, stands in for the world at large. Axler strews her unsettling story with harsh humor that might have offended but doesn't. Instead, higher motifs — the definition of life, the limitations of love and the human struggle to adjust one's expectations to painful realities — remain the production's paramount focus, under [Darin Anthony's](#) discerning direction. Tangredi's smarmy dude adds an edgy dynamic, while Thomsen is especially affecting as a man struggling for his illusions — and his sanity. [Joe Slawinski's](#) sound design elaborates nicely on the couple's nightmare. GTC Burbank, 1111-B W. Olive Ave., Burbank; Fri.-Sat., 8 p.m., Sun., 2 p.m. (added perf Thurs., Feb. 3, 8 p.m.); through Feb. 19. (800) 838-3006. Presented by Syzygy Theatre (Deborah Klugman)