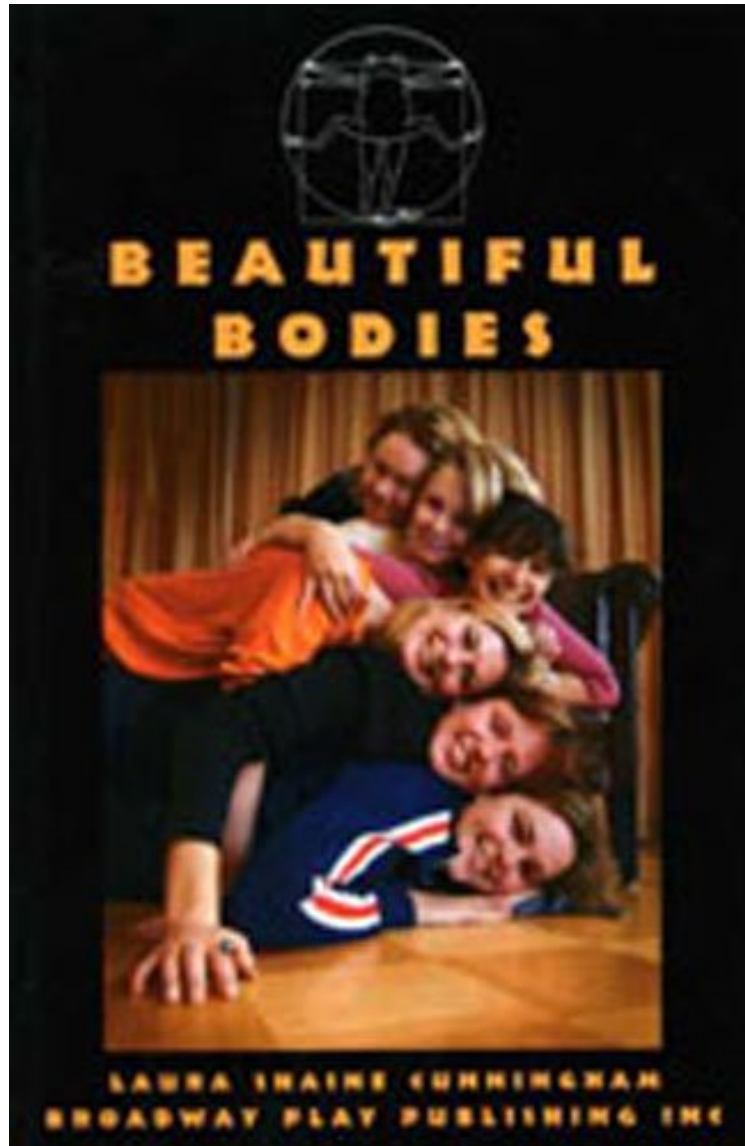


[Mobile pdf] Beautiful Bodies (Play)

## Beautiful Bodies (Play)

*Laura Shaine Cunningham*

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**Laura Shaine Cunningham : Beautiful Bodies (Play)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Beautiful Bodies (Play):

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Maybe I need testosterone shotsBy Mr. JoeBEAUTIFUL BODIES by Laura Shaine Cunningham is a "chick book" that I normally wouldn't pick up on a bet. However, I thoroughly enjoyed the author's two previous volumes of memoirs, SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS and A PLACE IN THE COUNTRY, and we've exchanged emails of mutual admiration, so I bit down on my emery board and got on with it.

Just between you and me, I'm glad I did. But I'm left wondering if I need testosterone replacement therapy. The plot tells you right off that it's not a book for Real Men. Six female pals in their mid-30s living in New York gather at a private dinner party at the apartment of one to have a baby shower for another. Baby shower? Yikes! Jessie, the hostess, is a successful journalist still in the post-coital afterglow of an affair out in Colorado with one of her subjects. Nina, a chronic dieter and the primary caregiver for her dying mother, owns a nail salon. Nina is also fresh off an afternoon tryst with someone she met in her apartment building's laundry room, a New Age Sensitive Fella who invited her up for herbal tea ("Celestial Seasonings"). Sue Carol, a waitress and struggling thespian with a substance abuse problem, has just left her adulterous husband. Sue Carol savors all the little dramas in her life - they'll make her a better actress. Lisbeth, an ethereal, anorexic artist/model pining after a lost (and married) lover, spends a significant portion of her energy staving off her landlord's efforts to evict her from her rent-controlled apartment. Martha, a real estate agent obsessed with her exorbitant earnings and the material goodies they buy, has meticulously planned to have a child with her fiance, but has just learned that she's sterile. And lastly, Claire, the mother-to-be. Claire is an independent, free-spirited musician - she plays the krummhorn - who's happily made a world for herself in an 18 by 20 foot room in a local residence for women. She's blissfully happy with her pregnancy and the prospect of being a single mother. The baby's father, a global wanderer, may never be seen again. For me, the chief fascination of BEAUTIFUL BODIES was in watching the nuances and shifting dynamics of the relationships between the six women as they come together on a winter night to celebrate Claire's impending motherhood and share secrets. For example, Nina is the first to show up at Jessie's apartment. Later, Lisbeth is the second guest to arrive, and: "When a third woman enters the room, it is clear which two women are the closer friends. Triangles always come to a point." And still later, as the assembled group sits for dinner: "The others had taken their places, as the (place) cards indicated .... The lines were drawn. The dull knives waited." For me, a simple guy, this is potentially scary stuff. My two favorite players are Jessie and Martha. Jessie, who desperately tries to keep her party on track in the face of spoken anxieties and revealed confidences. Jessie, whose own angst is growing. (Her new lover did promise to call at 8:00 PM, didn't he? Was he turned off by her mastectomy scar?) And Martha, whose catty criticisms comprise a potential flamethrower in an atmosphere of volatile emotions. BEAUTIFUL BODIES is a wonderful, poignant, funny, touchy-feely book totally unsuitable for a troglodytic male unless he wants a brief glimpse into the female psyche. Having just been there, I think I'll regain a masculine perspective by having a beer with the Boys. If they'll still admit me to the Clubhouse, that is. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. good book By Bobbe Ragouzeos love her writing 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great diversity in characters By Cheryl Ann Marshall A Book for women, over 30 yrs old would appreciate and understand it best. This is not my usual type of book, but I saw the reviews and took a chance. So glad I did. I am not usually a driven reader, but the story drew me in quickly and kept me coming back often. Women will be able to relate to this book on several different levels as it has so much diversity in the characters. One reviewer complained that there was little resolved by the end of the story. I feel that the end was brilliant in that you are not told how each women's situation was resolved. You are left to draw your own conclusions, from the facts in the story and what you have learned of the personalities of these 6 women. I found this to be satisfying. Where a mystery book needs a tidy ending this was unnecessary.

Beautiful Bodies Acclaimed for her memoirs "(Sleeping Arrangements" and "A Place in the Country)," which read like fiction, Laura Shaine Cunningham has now written a novel that rings with truth. "You're invited to a party..." Six "best friends" gather in a downtown loft on the coldest night of the year, as the "storm of the century" is about to descend on Manhattan. The women are celebrating the decision of the mysterious Claire to have a baby, on her own, at thirty-six. The delight is in the details: the hostess too distracted by her new love affair "(How could she have forgotten sex? It had been three years, her longest intermission, but still...)" to focus on the food, the guests who arrive "in crisis." From the moment Jessie's cell phone chimes in her purse "(the voice of materialism, speaking up for itself?)," she suffers "hostess regret": "Oh, why did she plan a dinner in her apartment?" As the Aussie red wine flows, a delirious debate wages over Claire's choice. Will Martha, the Realtor of the Year flying blind on automatic PalmPilot, ruin the evening by declaring, "A celebration? This should be an intervention. Her phone bill is more than her income!" Who will win, the pragmatists or the romantics? Will Sue Carol, the wacktress (hybrid of waitress and actress), return to her husband or "rebuild" her career? Did Lisbeth, the delicate Zoloft model, truly see her lost lover in the subway? Will Nina spill the secret of her sexual tangent? Can this six-way friendship survive the zingers and soul-baring truths that spark and bolt across the table? Proving that a novel can be effervescent yet deeply serious, Cunningham's circle of female friendship radiates the warmth and intimacy her endearing heroines wish to rekindle. "Beautiful Bodies" is a deftly composed take on the "first generation that refused to give up sneakers."

From Publishers Weekly In Cunningham's lively and amusing first novel, six women who have been friends for two decades gather together on the snowiest night of the year. All are on the cusp of 40; none has quite attained the aspirations she shared with her friends at 20. The party takes place at the downtown loft of journalist Jessie Girard, who may or may not have just met her soul mate, Native American lawyer Jesse Dark, and the occasion is a baby

shower for unwed bohemian musician Claire Molinaro. The irony clear to all the women (who include Sue Carol, a still-aspiring actress, Lisbeth, a spaced-out painter and Nina, an overweight spa owner) is that Claire may be the only one who will fulfill their dreams of motherhood. Suspense gets built around three small but effective questions: will Jesse call Jessie tonight, as he promised? Will manipulative, materialistic Martha leave early to meet her lover at an expensive restaurant? Will the storm of the century destroy everybody's plans? Though the novel lacks the verve and surprising pathos of Cunningham's fine memoirs, *Sleeping Arrangements* and *A Place in the Country*, the plot hums along spiritedly. Cunningham is overzealous, however, in detailing the possessions and tastes that indicate her protagonists' status, and her focus on describing numerous Manhattan neighborhoods contributes to the feeling of a book done by the numbers. On the plus side, the dialogue is witty and quintessentially feminine, the atmosphere changes as each character alters the group dynamics, and Cunningham's observant and funny social comedy carries the ring of truth. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal

Jessie, Sue Carol, Nina, Lisbeth, and Martha have come together to celebrate Claire's pregnancy. Some 20 years earlier, the women befriended one another at a boarding house in New York City, where they still live. Now in their mid-thirties to early forties, they have little in common beyond the bond their living arrangements created so many years ago. Much of Cunningham's novel, which was originally written as a play, takes place one evening in Jessie's loft while a blizzard descends on Manhattan. The interaction is strained because of Martha's penchant for criticism. Eventually, however, Martha reveals that all is not so perfect in her life either, allowing the women to comfort and be open with one another despite their differences. An appealing account of the enduring nature of friendship, this is recommended for large public libraries and wherever the author's memoirs (*Sleeping Arrangements*, *A Place in the Country*) are popular. Karen Core, Enoch Pratt Free Lib., Baltimore Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Booklist

Serious journalist Jessie invites her five best friends for dinner and a celebration. The thirtysomething friends met when they first moved to New York and lived in the coop Theresa House. They become snowbound at Jessie's downtown loft during what is being touted as the storm of the century, pull an all-nighter, drink all the wine in the house, and bare their collective souls. Sue-Ellen, now working more as a waitress than an actress, has decided to leave her philandering husband; sensuous Nina is nursing her dying mother and depressed about her romantic relationships; frail Lisbeth thinks that she still has a psychic bond with her married boyfriend, whom she hasn't seen for a year; free-spirited Claire is single and pregnant; and successful real-estate agent Martha has more money than she knows what to do with but is unbelievably miserable. Cunningham excels at characterizations, drawing deft portraits of six women whom you will feel like you already know. This is a guilty pleasure of the first rank--impossible to put down and enormously entertaining. Joanne Wilkinson Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved