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Anything but typical

Nora Raleigh Baskin is the ALA Schneider Family Book Award-winning author of anything but typical. She was chosen as a weekly flying start for publishers for her novel *What Every Girl (Except Me Knows)*, and has since written several novels for 12th graders and teenagers, including *The Truth About My Bat Mitzvah*, *The Summer Before The Boys* and *Ruby on the Outside*. Nora lives with her family in Connecticut. Visit her NoraBaskin.com. 4th-7th grade – As if adolescence isn't hard enough by itself, 12-year-old Jason Blake isn't neuro-typical (NT), he's autistic and interprets the world differently than other children. As a result, children at school laugh at him and no one seems to understand him, including his family. Storytelling is one of Jason's few escapes, the only place he can really be himself. After Jason begins a temporary relationship with Rebecca (PhoenixBird) on Storyboard, an online writing forum, he struggles with the fear of meeting her in person. At the same time, he talks about his past, giving listeners a glimpse into what life is like growing up as an autistic child. Tom Parks gives a near-perfect performance of this enlightening novel (S&S, 2009) by Nora Raleigh Baskin narrated from Jason's perspective. Always using the right tone, it releases the apprehension and wit of the story. Poignant and true, the sincerity of the novel will bring tears to the eyes of listeners. Recommended for fans of the Joey Pigza series.- Terry Ann Lawler, Phoenix Public Library, AZ END --This text refers to an out-of-print or unavailable edition of this title. Jason Blake is a 12-year-old autistic boy trying to be understood in a neuro-typical world. He tries to speak the NT language, but finds out they're not good listeners. Nora Raleigh Baskin allows us to see inside the mind of a bright young man struggling to be accepted for what he is. Tom Parks is the voice of this extraordinary pre-teen determined to tell his own voice, but in a language that neuro-types speak and understand. Parks' delivery is concise, even as he exudes the smothering confusion the language presents to children on the autism spectrum. He brings to life an inspiring new hero in a story greatly enhanced by his transition to audio. N.E.M. Winner of the AudioFile Headset Award © AudioFile 2009, Portland, Maine - This text refers to kindle_edition image. Baskin tells this entirely glamorous story from the point of view of Jason, an autistic boy who is a creative and explaining writing genius of literary instruments, but considerably a loss of social interactions with neurotics both at school and at home. He feels most comfortable in an online writing forum called Storyboard, where his stories pair an e-mail-based friendship with a girl. His excitement about having a real friend (and maybe even a girlfriend) turns to terror when he learns it Parents want to take him on a trip to the Storyboard conference, where he will no doubt have to meet her in person. With astonishing economics, Baskin describes Jason's attempts to interpret body language and social expectations, revealing the extreme disconnect created out of his reference in the world around him. Despite his disability, Jason goes through his failures and beats him with a depth of courage and confusion of every child his age. His story, while not particularly heartbreaking or heartwarming, shows that the distinction between normal and non-normal is thin but intensifies easily to create the chasm between different and flawed. It's a very difficult subject, but Baskin, without dramatic or sentimentality, makes it universal. As Jason explains, there's only one kind of plot: things happen. That's it, that's it. 7th and 7th grades. Ian Chipman - This text refers to a new kindle_edition version. Baskin's formation of an autistic child's world is brilliant. Kirkus, starred in a review of *Glamour*... It's a very difficult subject, but Baskin, without dramatic or sentimentality, makes it universal. – List of books, starring review should capture readers willingly and open your eyes. – Mulin Weeklyevskin reveals not only the obstacles Jason faces, but also his strong determination to be himself at all costs. Jason is a reliable and empathetic figure despite his uniqueness. Baskin also does a great job developing his parents and younger brother as real people with real problems, bravely crossing their lives with a child with a different ability without a road map, but with a lot of love. A delicate and smart children's book just like the best adult novel. — nytimes.com – This text refers to an alternate kindle_edition edition. Anything but typical most people like to speak their own language. They'd really prefer that. They so prefer that when they go to a foreign country they just talk louder, maybe slower, because they think they'll be better understood. But more than speaking their own language, people like to hear things in a way that are most convenient for them. Like they used to. The way they can treat it very easily, like it makes it more real. So I'm going to try to tell this story this way. And I'm going to tell that story in the first person. I'm not him. I'm not him. Mine's not his. Neuro-typically. I'll try to tell my story in their language, in your language. I'm Jason Blake. And that's what someone would say, if they looked at me but could only see and know only in their own language: this kid is weird (he's in SPED, you know). He blinks his eyes, sometimes one at a time. Sometimes the two of them are together. They open and close, open and approach, let the light in, it's out. The world blinks and turns off. And he waves his hands, like when he gets excited or right before he goes to say something, or when he thinks. He does it the most when he's on a computer or reading a book. When his mind focuses on words, he separates from his body, his body that almost becomes a burden, weight. Weight. Wait. Only his fingers aren't standing still while they wait. They're waving at the ends of his hands, at the ends of his wrists. Like bugs stuck on a wire, stuck in a net. Like maybe they want to fly. Maybe he is, too. In first grade they put a thick purple rubber band on the bottom well of his desk chair, so Jason would have something to wiggle with his feet when he was supposed to be sitting still. Second grader Matthew Iverson sent a note saying, if you think Jason Blake is retarded, sign it, and Matthew is sent to the principal's office, which only made things worse for Jason. In third grade, Jason Blake was diagnosed with SD-4 disorder, the autistic spectrum disorder. But his mother would never use that term. She prefers three different letters. Or these letters: PDD-NOS, pervasive developmental disorder – not specific. When letters are put together, they can be so much, and they can't be ie at all. From third grade to year, sixth grade, Jason had a one-on-one assistant, who followed him through school all day. She weighed 100kg. (Jason asked her once, and she told him.) You couldn't miss seeing her. But the thing people see most is his silence, because certain kinds of silence actually seem visible. When I write, I can be heard. Acknowledge. But no one has to look at me. No one needs to see me at all. School doesn't always go so well. It's pretty much a matter of time before the first thing of the day goes wrong. But today I've come a long way. It's already the third period. Mrs. Hawthorne is

missing, so we're going to the library instead of art classes. That's a good sign. You'd think an art class would be one of the easiest lessons, but it's not. I mean, it's not like it's as hard as math, but it's as hard as PE. Lots of unorganized space and time. Anything can go wrong in a place like this. But not in the library. There are computers in the library. And books. Computers. Keyboards, screens, and desktops built into small cells so you don't have to look at the person sitting next to you. And they can't look at me. When we get to the library, someone's already in my seat, at my computer. Where I want to go. Now I can't breathe. I want to go to my storyboard website. I've been thinking about it all the way here. I've had to wait so long. I don't know. Jason, it's free, says the lady. She put her hands on my shoulders. This lady is a lady I need But her face looks like a lot of other faces I don't know very well, and I group them all together. Her face pinched, but her eyes are big, round like circles. Her hair doesn't move, like it's stuck in a ball. She belongs in my library or head office or dentist's office. But she's here now, so I guess she's the librarian. I know from experience she's been trying to help me, but it's not. I can feel her weight on my shoulders like metal cutting my body out of my head. That's not a good thing. I also know she wants me to look at her. Neuro-typicals like it when you look them in the eye. It's supposed to mean you're listening, like the opposite was true, and it's not: just because you don't look at someone doesn't mean you're not listening. I can listen better when I'm not distracted by a person's face: what do their eyes say? Is that a frown or a smile? Why do they wrinkle their foreheads or lift their cheeks like that? What does that mean? How can you listen to all those words when you have to think about all this stuff? But I know I'll get in trouble if I don't look at the lady's eyes. I can force myself. I'm turning my head, but I'm going to look at her sideways. I know the right words to use. Last year Jane, my one-on-one, taught me to say, I'm fine just the way I am. I'm fine just the way I am. She told me I had to say something like that. She said people expect certain things. She said people wouldn't understand me if I didn't say something. It's one of the many, many things I have to go through my head, every time. My OT stuff, my occupational therapist, also taught me: look people in the eye when you talk (even if it makes it harder for you to listen). Speak, even when you have nothing to say (that's what NTs do all the time). Try to ignore everything else around you (even when these things may be very important). If it is possible to put your head and body back together and try very hard not to shake or wave or twist or twirl (even if it makes you feel worse do it). Don't blink. Don't squeeze your teeth. (These are the things people don't like. I'm fine just the way I am, I say, and I'm taking a step forward. I want the librarian to take her hands off my shoulders. The weight of her hands is almost unbearable, like lead. Like the main apron the dentist puts on you when you take an X-ray, a crushing stone while the technician counts to 10. And you can't move. Or they'll have to do it again. Also, I want to stand close, so there won't be any confusion that I'm next. The man on the computer turns to my voice. It's a girl. Most girls look the same, and I can't tell each other apart. Long hair. Earrings. Different tone of voice. Girl. I You know who this girl is, or if she already hates me, but chances are she does. The girl doesn't say anything, so I have to look at her face and figure it out. Her eyes blink, and her lips are so tightly pressed together that they almost disappear. I understand she's not happy or even angry, but I don't know why. You're breathing on me, she says. You're so disgusting. Gross can be large or relate to measuring or weight, but in this case it's not. It means she doesn't like me. She is, in fact, disgusted with me, and that's how most girls react. My mom tells me not to worry. My mom told me I'd find a girlfriend one day, just like everybody else. I'll find someone who sees how special I am. I know no girl will ever get me up. No matter what I do, no matter how hard I try. But maybe I'm wrong. I hope. I hope I'm wrong and my mom's right. But I'm usually right about these things. I've been here before, Miss Lenno, says the girl. Miss Lenno is the librarian's name. Jason, here, Miss Lenno says. Sit here. You can use this computer. But I can't use that computer. I don't want to be a good man. I can't. My breathing is too noisy inside my ears. I harden my body, strengthen my weight, so she can't move me with her hands. You'd be surprised how quickly people try to move you with their hands when they don't get what they want with their words. I wish Jane was here with me right now and then it wouldn't have happened. Words don't always work. Jason, don't move. There's no need to get so mad. There's a lot of other computers. Miss Lenn us is trying to move my weight off my feet, and she's trying to pretend she's not, like she's just walking with me, instead of pushing me, and that's what she's doing. Jason, please. But she doesn't mean to please. There's nothing in the request that Miss Lenn us asks for. She's pulling me. I feel unbalanced, like I'm going to fall. I need to move my weight back and forth, back and forth, rock to steady myself. I can feel my chance to use my computer getting further and further away from me. There's not even enough time left in the period. I might not even know how to hook up, even if this girl gets up. 100 little pieces threaten to fall apart. Jason, please, calm down. Relax. Miss Lennau's voice sounds like a copier. Sometimes there's nothing to hold me together. This text refers to an alternate [kindle_edition](#) version. Edition.

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