



JUDY

BY MAX POSNER



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
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*For my sisters,
Raphaela and Jessica*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My heartfelt thanks to the following:

Michael Walkup, Asher Richelli, Liz Jones, and their heroic Page 73; Rachel Viola; to my teachers and mentors: Moss Kaplan, Dee Covington, Gregory S. Moss, Bonnie Metzgar, Paula Vogel, Lisa D'Amour, Erik Ehn, Christopher Durang, and Marsha Norman; Jenny Schwartz and my labmates; Maria Striar and Clubbed Thumb; Adam Greenfield; Emily Shooltz and Ars Nova; Emily Simoness and SPACE; Michael Chernus and the many gifted actors who developed this play across readings and workshops; Jody Falco and Jeffrey Steinman; Lila Neugebauer; Sarah DeLapppe; Richard Feldman, Group 44, and the Juilliard School; Sam Alper; Lily Spottiswoode; Justin O'Neill; John Early; my family; and to Ken Rus Schmoll for reliable wisdom, precision, and giggles.

—MP

The world premiere of JUDY was produced by Page 73 Productions (Liz Jones and Asher Richelli, Executive Directors; Michael Walkup, Producing Director) at the New Ohio Theatre in New York City on September 1, 2015. It was directed by Ken Rus Schmoll, the set designer was Arnulfo Maldonado, the costume designer was Jessica Pabst, the lighting designer was Eric Southern, the sound designer was Leah Gelpe, the props designer was Ashley Flowers, and the production stage manager was Megan Schwarz Dickert. The cast was as follows:

KRIS Deirdre O’Connell
TARA Birgit Huppuch
TIMOTHY Danny Wolohan
ELOISE Frenie Acoba
KALVIN Luka Kain
MARKUS Marcel Spears

JUDY was originally developed in the Soho Rep. Writer/Director Lab (Sarah Benson, Artistic Director; Cynthia Flowers, Executive Director).

JUDY was developed, in part, at SPACE on Ryder Farm.

Additional development was supported by the MacDowell Colony, Clubbed Thumb, and the Juilliard School.

Who.

Three Siblings:

KRIS — The big sister. In her late fifties or early sixties.

TARA — The middle sister. In her late forties or early fifties.
Mother of Calvin.

TIMOTHY — The little brother. In his forties. Father of Eloise.

The Kids:

ELOISE — Eleven. Timothy's adopted daughter. Looks nothing like Timothy.

KALVIN — Fourteen. Tara's adopted son. Looks nothing like Tara.

The Man Who Repairs the System:

MARKUS — Twenty. Repairs systems in the zipcode. Black.

When.

The winter of 2040.

Where.

The play unfolds in three basements:

Tara's basement.

Timothy's basement.

Kris' basement.

We are on the outskirts of an American City. Nothing coastal. A cold, unremarkable mid-sized city.

In each basement, there is a staircase leading up to the main floor of their home, a door to a bathroom, and a large sofa. In Tara's basement, there is a door to an exercise room.

While the characters live in three *separate* basements, the play may

happen in *one* space, with the characters occupying the same basement despite physical separations. Timothy, Tara, and Kris should each have a separate desk, chair, and screen, but the set might only feature one staircase, one sofa, one bathroom door, etc.

Life should be happening in all three spaces at once.

In addition to other things, a basement is where the innards of one's technological System live.

Notes.

On Punctuation

// in the middle of a line indicates where the next line of dialogue should begin.

A “...” describes a moment that is charged with potential. Not a rest. Mental congestion. Perhaps they are pauses to assess the risk of what one is about to say, or the damage of what one has just said. Or the trickiness of how to proceed. Either way, the speaker's brain should be whirring. Lean into them.

A line in parenthesis is a tangent, a thought the character didn't intend to spend time on.

On People

These characters say way too much, or way too little. They are often hiding something, or making something up. They are inventors. Their lies, stories, and séances are desperate efforts to escape the dullness of the moment they're in, or the sharpness of their pain. These “performances” can be amazing tools for communication, more reliable than any technology.

No one here knows what's about to come out of their mouth. They try to gain control through words, but their own sentences tend to slide in wild directions, forcing them into tricky corner after tricky corner. In their fumbled attempts to mask how they feel, we come to know how they feel.

On Performing

Let the scenes move quickly so that the characters are always behind. Verbal velocity, combined with the physical stillness of their System-centric days will highlight their warped predicament, that their world is rapid and ceaseless, and also prone to stagnation. One layer of the play is focused on language, but it's also a bit of a door-farce. The more we see them accelerate, flop, stumble, flop, get stuck, get unstuck, and flop again, the more we see the larger pattern. Let them be perpetually off-balance, verbally and physically.

While we don't know much about their biological parents, it is my strong preference that Eloise and Calvin are not played by caucasian actors. Nor should they be played by much-older adults. This is a play about age, what it means to be very middle-aged, just middle-aged, almost middle-aged, twenty. If the kids seem to be the same age as Markus, the spell is broken.

People will travel around in flying machines, they'll wear different-style jackets, maybe they'll discover a sixth sense and expand our perceptions, but life won't change. It will still be hard.

—Anton Chekhov, *Three Sisters*

JUDY

ONE

Monday, January 16, 2040. Almost Midnight.

In Kris' basement:

Kris sits, staring at her screen.

In Tara's basement:

Tara is leaning on/against something, practicing a routine in her head.

In Timothy's basement:

Timothy is lying on the floor, alone.

He is distraught.

He might weep.

He wouldn't like anyone to see him like this, in these clothes, in this state.

He's been here for hours.

It looks like the kind of place that was once a blast, full of late-night family games, fun. Recently, it's been more of a bunker, no longer organized or clean.

TIMOTHY. I have decided that

Sisters.

I have decided that

My sisters

We must trade lives for one year.

For one year I want you to know what it's like to ...

Timothy stands up, goes to his System, presses some buttons.

In Kris' basement: a beeping or ringing.

Timothy waits.
Clears his throat three times.
Kris presses a button to answer.

KRIS. Hello?

TIMOTHY. Hi Kris.

KRIS. Timothy I can't talk I'm volunteering.

TIMOTHY. Where?

KRIS. Iran.

TIMOTHY. I have decided that we must. Trade lives for one year. For one year I want you to know what it's like to be married to my wife (to be married *at all*, in your case)

KRIS. Timothy.

TIMOTHY. For one year I want you to

Feed my daughter.

Pet our cat.

It's just a year!

Think of one year in your past!

Exactly. You can't!

2014, 2020, 2032, they mean very little individually, I think.

And I'll do the same, I will memorize your passwords

Watch your FlatScreen on your mattress with your boyfriend.

(Do you have a boyfriend these days?)

(Have you *ever* had a boyfriend

KRIS. I don't have one.

recently?) I will deal with him!

I'm not seeing anyone.

And pay your mortgage if you pay mine.

I will login for you, volunteer all over creation.

I will sing in your choir I will be uh

an

Alto

If you are an alto?

KRIS. Well I'm not an alto.

We can't understand each other without

Really

Just

Like

Sleeping in each other's beds, I mean what's that even like?

I mean none of us have Bad lives they're just very

Separate

So if you think it's a good idea I think it's a great idea to

Switch things up.

...

KRIS. I'm so *sorry*, Timothy.

I think you will find Judy to be
easy to live with.

...

I think you will notice that for two days every week she is Very Silent.
And for two days every week she is Never Silent.
And the other days, it really depends.
And it's not the same days each week, just FYI.

...

I think you will lose your temper with her sometimes and your
mind sometimes and I think you will lose your wallet most days
and I think you will wonder what you did some months.

KRIS. Timothy I'm —

TIMOTHY. The mattress is firm, I know, but you get used to it.
The car is "ancient" but it keeps you alert. There's no CallerID, which
keeps things surprising. But our System is strong, I promise.

KRIS. Well maybe it's time for you to —

TIMOTHY. And Eloise, she's a good kid. You can't help but love her.
So yeah that's kinda the lay of the land.

KRIS. Timothy.

TIMOTHY. (*A burst.*) Judy Left Me.

Mini-beat.

KRIS. Timothy I'm sorry

TIMOTHY. I want to die.

KRIS. Don't.

TIMOTHY. I want to Trade Lives.

KRIS. We can't.

I'm sorry.

TIMOTHY. You don't sound surprised.

KRIS. Well Judy Sent Me An Email.

TIMOTHY.

And don't tell Tara.

...
Oh I just forwarded it
to Tara I wanted her
take on —

She did? Why? When?

WHAT?

Has Tara read it yet?

...

Yeah

Tara and I have little conferences about You and Judy
Your Relationship, The Things She Posts.

TIMOTHY. Why would Judy email you??

Unforward it. *NOW.*

You can't just forward my life around!

...

Forward it to me?

KRIS. Unplug everything. Delete everything.

TIMOTHY. *No.*

KRIS. Fine. Get obsessed. Spend the next decade clicking on her face before you met her, on your faces together twenty years ago, thirteen years ago, last month, on pictures of her playing that that that —

TIMOTHY. *Viola.*

KRIS. *Viola*, I mean what century is she living in?

TIMOTHY. I liked that sound.

KRIS. No.

TIMOTHY. Don't tell me what sounds I like, that makes me feel lousy.

KRIS. What century are *you* living in?

TIMOTHY. I like Lousy. Mom and Dad would say Lousy —

KRIS. Mom and Dad are Dead.

TIMOTHY. She needs me. She'll wake up thirsty at 3 A.M. crying for Electrojuice. You know how many bottles of that stuff I opened for her *per night*? She could never twist the cap off. Needed my hands. Needed my wrists. Needed My Grip. Girl Can't Grip.

KRIS. Timothy have you looked at the date today?

TIMOTHY. (*Checking the date.*) Why? What? It's January Sixt —

He has made a grave error.

Oh my God, Kris Oh My God.

...

It's. One-Sixteen.

...

...

I'm so sorry.

KRIS. People have been calling all day. I am "in their thoughts," they are so "sorry," they are "thinking of me." Funny to have one day per year where the entire world is so sad for you.

TIMOTHY. I'm sad for you every day Kris.

KRIS. You called about Yourself.

TIMOTHY. I am so glad you slipped outta yoga that day. So grateful you had to use the toilet while the resta them were in. The pose they were in. I thank God you didn't wait 'til the class was over. And I don't believe in him.

...

Fourteen years, huh?

KRIS. Next year's fifteen. Then sixteen. Then seventeen.

In Timothy's basement:

Zap.

The System goes out.

TIMOTHY. Oh No. What?

System Went Out.

Can you hear me?

Did your System go out?

...

Kris?

KRIS. Hello?

...

...

Timothy?

Timothy?

Timothy holds a red button down.

Hi there. Timothy here. 458 Glendale. Very Concerned. System went out.

Timothy waits.

In Tara's basement:

Tara is outlining some kind of routine, like a dancer marking a dance in preparation for a performance. It's microscopic. She barely moves.

TARA. Everyone walking in from parking lot, "Welcome welcome" "How's your wife?" "How's your tpepson?" "How's your weekend?" Hanging up coats. Waving at me, saying, *Good Morning* — No — *Evening*, Tara. (I want them to call me Tara, nothing too *formal*, nothing too *Churchy*) I know everyone's name, I know the micro details of each marriage, I give them The-Eye-Smile, The-Nod, The-Knowing-Hand-Clasp, My-Wise-Shoulder-Squeeze "My god you've lost weight!" "My God your yard looks fantastic this season!" "My Word the homework they're downloading." THEN: a massive HUSH, a collective FOCUS

The sound of a toilet flushing from the bathroom in Tara's basement.

and it's THURSDAY because, you know, we all grew up worshipping Higher Powers on SUNDAYS, or not-at-all, and if we're really to begin again, then it seems a new day is the best way.

The sound of water running from her bathroom.

Thursdays. *Thursdays* have no religious connotations and the goal is to be PART of the week, not the END of the week, not the verdict but the TRIAL —

JUDY

by Max Posner

3M, 3W

It's the winter of 2040, and the world has changed — but maybe not by much. Timothy's wife has just left him, and he isn't taking it well. His sisters, Tara and Kris, are trying to help him cope while wrestling with their own lives and loves. The three of them seem to spend a lot of time in their basements, and the kids are starting to ask questions. This subterranean comedy explores how one family hangs on when technology fails and communication breaks down.

"This smart, disturbing comedy is set in 2040, just far enough in the future to be intriguingly weird but close enough to the present to be distressingly familiar. ... Posner's revelations about this brave new world, touching on the linguistic, the sociological, and the theological, waver between the explicit and the mysterious, and each scene ... gives us something funny and scary to ponder." —**The New Yorker**

"Despite [his] technological prophecies, Posner wants his play to demonstrate that some all-too-human impulses will never be stamped out ... The mores and means of human ties may change, JUDY seems to say, but the need for love and understanding never will." —**The Village Voice**

"JUDY ... unfolds within the finished basements of three adult siblings. They mostly communicate through a tablet/computer ... called the System, which, ominously, fails often. [JUDY gets] the kind of playing that happens in finished basements: dress-up, kissing practice, channeling the dead ... Under the aegis of harmless make-believe ('just pretending'), something heavy can emerge. ... [Max Posner shows that] performance remains a better communication technology than anything else ... " —**N+1**

ISBN 978-0-8222-3462-3



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