



JUMP

BY CHARLY EVON
SIMPSON



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JUMP was developed, in part, at SPACE on Ryder Farm, the Kennedy Center in association with NNPN, and as part of Chautauqua Theater Company's New Play Workshop series, 2018, underwritten by the Roe Green Foundation.

author's note.

The first draft of *Jump* was mostly written in the fall of 2016 during a five-day-long writer's retreat that I went on just weeks after my dad's father passed away. By the time I was working on the second draft of the play, in the winter of 2017, my mom's father had passed away. A few days after the first public reading of this play, another family member passed away. I moved through that year thinking about death and acknowledging the deaths around me, but I wasn't sure if I ever felt grief. I didn't really dwell on the losses. And I never really connected the dots that *Jump* probably deals with family and grief because my family and I were dealing with grief ourselves.

While writing the play, my focus was on memory and connection. My plays are often haunted, necessarily, by memory. The memory of what was, the memory of what wasn't, and the pain and pleasure associated with both seem to be at the heart of so many of the plays I write. I was curious about how we remember, what we remember, and how what we remember shapes us. Memory provides us with a map, a way of understanding, a way of uncovering. But memory is also faulty, imprecise, and influenced by emotion and hindsight. As a human being in the world with a memory and memories, I have been struck by the times memories have stayed clear and the times memories have escaped me. I have also been struck by how sharing something I remember can connect me to a stranger while pushing me further away from a loved one.

My instinct is to say that for *Jump*, I dug through the character Fay's memory and found this story and a number of other memories sitting there, like it was in a diary sitting on her desk. That feels as much the truth as the real truth sounds—which is I saw a flash of Fay on a bridge and asked myself how she got there. I was living in and creating the world of her memory, digging my way through layers of grief and mental health and connection. And where I ended up is here...in a funny, sad, hopefully somewhat-magical play that asks us to think about who we connect to and why, where connection can be found and why, and how do we ultimately care for each other.

characters.

FAY, black woman, younger sister, 28, hooked on her vape now that she doesn't smoke cigarettes

JUDY, black woman, older sister, 31, still smells the lingering cigarette smoke

HOPKINS, any race, a fellow bridge walker, late 20s, a bit of a smart-ass

DAD, black man, Fay and Judy's dad, 58, not doing well

place.

a city with a bridge that goes over a gorge

a bridge that people like to linger on

a bridge that makes people nervous

but also

a house near the bridge

with at least a living room

and a bedroom where one can see the bridge out of the window

we go between these spaces easily

things roll on and off

or maybe they are just created on top of each other

it is a melding of space

but we do know when we are in one space versus another

until we just don't

time.

this is a world of past, present, and some fantasy mixed in.

it is late summer to early fall.

note.

the flickers are like a dimming before the lights go out during a storm. there may need to be some sound with it, a distorted splash, a slight buzz, something that makes us feel Fay's confuddlement for a moment.

there's no need to tell the audience the timeline. they'll be fine.

slashes indicate when the next person should start speaking.

there is no intermission for a reason.

JUMP

1.

Six weeks ago.

The bridge.

The lights on the bridge are the only lights on.

That and the lights from cars passing by.

Fay enters.

On the bridge.

She stands and looks out on the water.

A runner runs across, behind her, doesn't take her in.

Then a cyclist.

Fay pulls something out of her pocket.

She wishes it were a pack of cigarettes, but instead

Fay vapes.

She wants to toss the ash, the butt, into the water,

flick it off her fingers.

She vapes.

She vapes.

She decides to throw it anyway, the vaporizer.

She throws it off.

She watches it fall.

From above, another one falls.

Fay catches it without looking.

She vapes.

She vapes.

She wishes she had a cigarette.

*Because she wants to flick the cigarette off her fingers and
into the water.*

*She decides to throw the vape anyway.
She throws. She watches it fall.
From above, another vape falls.
Again and again.
It happens several times.
On loop.
Until the lights bump off.
The sound of traffic horns takes us into the next scene.*

2.

*Present day. Around 1 P.M.
Fay. Vapeless.
She is in front of a house.
It is daytime.
There are birds chirping but Fay is not the type of person
who cares to listen to some birds chirping.
She is waiting, but she doesn't really look like she is waiting.
She doesn't pace or look at her watch.
She stands in place.
She looks forward or to the side.
She chooses a direction.
She focuses on it.
We imagine she is watching someone walk across the street.
Maybe she is doing a math problem in her head.
It is that kind of concentration.
She brings her hand to the back of her head, as if she has a
headache, and closes her eyes.
Judy walks up in the opposite direction.
We hear her footsteps before we see her.
She wears blue heels.
Kitten heels. Cute but practical.
Fay is in Converse.*

*Fay doesn't have to open her eyes to see Judy.
She knows she's there.*

JUDY. Sorry I'm—

FAY. It's okay.

JUDY. Traffic. The bridge.

FAY. Yeah.

JUDY. What's wrong with your head?

FAY. Headache.

JUDY. Want some Tylenol?

FAY. Took some. Didn't work.

They stare at each other.

Fay looks Judy up and down.

JUDY. I hate it when you do that. / It's creepy.

FAY. What's on your nails?

JUDY. What?

FAY. Your nails...?

JUDY. ...polish...

FAY. They look like Fabergé eggs.

JUDY. How do you know what a Fabergé egg looks like?

FAY. Why wouldn't I?

Brief moment.

He likes that? On you?

JUDY. Who?

FAY. Your husband.

JUDY. He's not my—

FAY. Common law at this point.

Does he like it?

JUDY. What?

FAY. The polish.

JUDY. I never asked.

FAY. Why not?

JUDY. It's not for him.

FAY. Don't say it is for you.

It is a lie when we say it is for ourselves.

JUDY. Who are you right now?

FAY. I just think we should be / honest.

JUDY. I thought you were a fem/inist...

FAY. It has nothing to do with / my feminism.

JUDY. So you don't like any kind of makeup?

FAY. I didn't / say that.

JUDY. Now my eyeshadow is some sign of patriarchal / hullabaloo.

FAY. I mean at its core...

JUDY. For you maybe it's about someone else.

Maybe that is what it is for you.

FAY. It's not.

JUDY. But you just said—

FAY. I say a lot of things.

JUDY. You say a lot of things to piss me off.

The lights flicker.

Judy doesn't notice.

Fay does.

FAY. Did you see—

JUDY. You smell like cigarettes.

FAY. No I don't.

I vape now.

JUDY. Still around smokers.

Still gross.

FAY. You're gross.

A small moment.

JUDY. When is he supposed to get here?

FAY. 1.

JUDY. It's almost 1:30.

FAY. I'm aware.

JUDY. He's late.

FAY. You were late.

JUDY. I—

FAY. He's always late.

You're always late.

It's a family trait.

People always expect me to be late.

But I'm not.

I'm early.

JUDY. Do you want a prize?

FAY. No.

No.

I'd just like some recognition, you know?

I'd like for us to acknowledge my contribution to timeliness.

The lights flicker.

Hey do you see how the light is...

She looks up at Judy.

Judy looks off into the distance.

Are you listening to me?

JUDY. I just have things to do.

FAY. So do I.

JUDY. Okay.

FAY. I do.

JUDY. Okay.

FAY. You always think I don't, but I do.

JUDY. I didn't say anything Fay.

FAY. Fine.

JUDY. Fine.

FAY. Fine.

The lights flicker.

They keep flickering.

It is weird that the sun flickers like a lamp would.

It is weird that Judy doesn't notice.

JUMP

by Charly Evon Simpson

2 men, 2 women

As Fay copes with the death of her mother and loss of her childhood home, she seeks solace by visiting the bridge her mother took her to as a child. There she meets Hopkins, who walks the bridge as a balm for his own grieving. JUMP is a play full of flickering lights, vapes that fall from the sky, and the magic of hope in the midst of loss.

"[In JUMP]...heartstrings are not just plucked but shifted, and the reverberations are felt far longer than the final bows. ...what is most profound about this play [is] the juxtaposition between the difficulty of connecting when you are drowning in loneliness and the hope of finding a place where connection, truth, and healing prevail."
—**RDUOnStage.com**

"Depression, grief, suicide, and mental illness are just some of the themes Charly Simpson explores in her play JUMP... While not offering any definitive answers, Simpson's richly layered script does offer a ray of hope that connection is possible IF we pull together the courage to reach out, listen, and trust one another. It's thought-provoking, cautionary storytelling that does what theater does best: informs, enlightens, entertains, and (hopefully) brings us closer together."
—**BroadwayWorld.com**

"[The playwright] makes clear...that [mental health] issues are complex and take time and effort to work through. It's vital, though, to have help in dealing with them, to be connected with other people. And in JUMP, we're reminded that the way to connect two points over dark waters is with a bridge."
—**The Austin Chronicle**

Also by Charly Evon Simpson
BEHIND THE SHEET

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