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CONCORD
THEATRICALS

REASONS YOU SHOULD(N'T) LOVE ME

by Amy Trigg

SAMUEL FRENCH

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CHARACTERS

JUNO
PHYSIO
CONSULTANT
SIMON
MEL
DAN
FLAT MATE
FLAT MATE'S MUM
MR. BAXTER
KEV
ELE
COUPLE
TOBY
JUSTIN

NOTES ON STAGING

JUNO, a wheelchair user, is the sole person on stage for the duration of the play.

The actress playing **JUNO** also plays all other characters and shouldn't use any props or costume to do this.

JUNO should be played by a disabled actress. If you can't find a disabled actress, then look a bit harder.

This text is part stand up, part therapy session. Hopefully the audience will leave feeling like **JUNO** is one of their best friends.

Text in italics is dialogue between characters. All other text is spoken directly to the audience. Any ellipsis indicates a beat, and should be honoured.

The majority of the play takes place in Essex.

I wouldn't worry too much about props and set – save the money for cake.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

In 2019, I sat down to write a play that explored life as a disabled woman in a way I'd never seen before. I wanted to write a character who was funny and honest and lovable and cringeworthy. A character whose disability is intrinsic to her personality, but who doesn't fall into the stereotypes we often see. A character whose experience is both unique and universal. I wanted to write about a woman like Juno. So, I set out to write a brutally honest, but (hopefully!) beautifully playful play.

When I finished that first draft, I wanted to run away and pretend it didn't exist. But then I shared a twenty-minute extract with some mates, and they encouraged me to send it off into the big wide world (thanks pals). So, off it went to The Women's Prize for Playwriting. I never thought it'd get anywhere. I just thought it'd be a good thing to say I'd done. And then it was the joint winner. Whaaaaat. It was very unexpected and a total thrill, but the main thing I kept thinking was "oh no, strangers have read my play" – it felt too personal for others to read. Too honest. I considered leaving the country, changing my name and working on a remote farm. But then I remembered that I'm allergic to most animals and I quite like my friends and family. So here I am.

This play is about love in all its forms. It is a love letter to my younger self and to all my friends and family along the way. Most of all, I hope that it's a reminder to be a little more Juno: messy, honest and joyful. I hope you like it.

And before I go… Thank you to Leigh, Hannah, Cooney, Mick, Lucy, Mel, Leo, Alexander, Alim and Stacey for all their support in the early days of this play. And thank you to everyone at The Women's Prize for Playwriting, Paines Plough, Kiln Theatre, 45North, Ellie Keel Productions, Concord and all the 'Reasons' creative team – you rock. Big thanks to my wonderful agents Lee (and everyone at Lee Morgan Management) and Mel (and everyone at Casarotto Ramsay & Associates – especially Laura).

Amy Trigg, 2021

For Mum and Dad
Thank you for everything.
Sorry about the swear words xx

Waiting Room A

JUNO. Waiting Room A.

"Elderly Medicine" looms overhead.

Around me are a dozen humans at least twenty years older than myself.

Half of us are in wheelchairs.

Everyone else is with a friend, partner or neighbour, but I am alone.

...

Welcome, my friends, to "the spina bifida day clinic".

I'm in a different room now; laying on a plastic bed.

The physio stretches my right leg.

PHYSIO. *You're very supple.*

JUNO. *Thanks, I warmed up.*

PHYSIO. *Can you move your foot towards me?*

JUNO. *Erm, no.*

PHYSIO. *Can you try?*

...

JUNO. I look at my right foot.

...

This is the moment we've all been waiting for.

I picture myself sat on the sofa with Lorraine Kelly, telling her about my medical miracle, before flying out to meet Oprah.

But nothing happens.

Next up, I head to the consultant's office.

I had a tendon transfer on it when I was younger, but it didn't work so they did a triple artho-

CONSULTANT. *Arthrodesis?*

JUNO. *Right. Bone fusion. And that worked at the time, but now it's not so "fused". It's swollen, floppy and blue. Three symptoms I recommend not googling.*

He doesn't laugh.

CONSULTANT. *The X-ray shows that it's not broken, but the tendons have weakened because of the surgery. As we get older this happens.*

JUNO. *Right, but I'm twenty three.*

CONSULTANT. *Well, it's more accelerated because of the surgery.*

...

It could well be nerve related and coming from your back. As you know we don't want to operate on that area again. We can refer you to the pain management clinic.

JUNO. *More drugs.*

CONSULTANT. *I know this isn't the answer you were hoping for.*

JUNO. *No. I'm thrilled that I spent my entire childhood having operations only for them to mean nothing now that I'm the ripe old age of twenty three.*

...

They never tell you that do they?

"Cutting your tendons and fusing your bones together is a temporary measure. We have no idea what to do

after that. Let's just hope you die before your tendons weaken too much, eh?"

Sorry, I know it's just an ankle... but for once I would like one body alteration to be worth it.

I start putting my converse on, but the pain in my ankle makes my nose go cold.

The salt water spills from my eyes, as my heart beats so fast and so loud, it might as well be in my head.

Everything is fine.

Everything's fine.

I smile at the consultant like a clown who has just been fired from the circus.

CONSULTANT. *Are you okay, Juno? Do you want a tissue?*

JUNO. *No, I'm fine.*

I race to the nearest accessible toilet and test my teleportation skills.

...

Still nothing.

I stare at myself in the mirror.

I hear the list in my head.

The list I made when I was a child.

The list that finds a way of time travelling to my present.

Everything is fine.

I return to Waiting Room A, Elderly Medicine.

The air feels dull, and the sounds seem muted.

My face is wet, but no one looks at me.

This must be what Patrick Swayze felt like before he found Whoopi Goldberg.

I consider leaving and crying into an overpriced bowl of pasta over the road at Carluccio's.

But I've still got to see the urologist and occupational therapist and…

…

…

My phone starts ringing.

It's Simon.

Simon's office is around the corner. He works at some fancy media company.

They have a free pick 'n' mix stand in the lobby. It's wild.

I answer the phone and try to sound like I haven't been crying.

Hello.

Half an hour later, Simon arrives with free pick 'n' mix.

He sits opposite me, replying to work emails on his phone.

SIMON. *Mel wants to know what time we're getting there tonight.*

JUNO. I stare intently at my jelly beans and pretend I haven't heard him.

SIMON. *Please don't make me go on my own again.*

JUNO. *You'll be fine. It's Mel and Kev.*

SIMON. *And all of Mel's work friends.*

JUNO. *I'm just not in the mood, Simon.*

…

SIMON. *Rock, paper, scissors?*

JUNO. Things just got serious.

Simon and I once ended up at Legoland on Christmas Eve because of rock, paper, scissors.

We've only known each other for a couple of years, but in that time Simon has managed to make himself irreplaceable.

He's the man who brings me sweets when I'm sad.

And forces me to drive to rainy Windsor in the middle of winter.

I know he's not really worried about going to the party on his own.

He'd be fine.

He's worried about leaving me.

Anyway, it's no longer our decision to make.

It's with the gods of fate.

We hold our hands out in fists and make solid eye contact.

JUNO/SIMON. *Three, two, one...*

Pumpkin Party

The party is at Mel and Kev's.

Recently engaged.

More recently on the rocks.

Mel greets us at the door.

MEL. *I need you two to carve the pumpkins.*

JUNO. Just to clarify… it's not a Halloween party. It's just a party with pumpkins. A pumpkin party.

Simon is given a knife because he is the responsible one.

I'm given a spoon.

I do however get entrusted with the recycling bag.

And the future of the earth is a pretty big responsibility, thank you very much.

Mel, Kev and I all went to school together.

Mel works in a posh bank, and once got sent freebies from a jewellery company to post about on Instagram.

Meanwhile, Kev once got arrested at Glastonbury whilst dressed as a cabbage.

He's a teacher.

My friends are all very grown up.

Anyway, back to me and my spoon.

JUNO. *Simon, I love you, but I just think you're an idiot.*

Simon recently broke up with Becky, and I'm one hundred percent more upset about it than he is. She was our dungeon master, and we haven't even finished our quest.

Mel storms into the room.

MEL. *Guys, disaster. I can't find the tea lights.*

SIMON. *Oh God, should we cancel the party?*

MEL. *No, Simon. Obviously not. I need you to go out and get some.*

JUNO. Mel lost her sense of humour somewhere between her move from Braintree to Brentwood. Around this time, she also lost her accent and started shopping at Waitrose.

I can ask Dan to get some on his way.

MEL. *Are you two talking again?*

JUNO. Dan and I have been on off flirting – and fornicating – since sixth form. It's all very exciting, and very dull.

Mel leaves the room with a nod and a stressed attempt at a smile.

Forty five minutes later...

DAN. *Did somebody order tea lights?*

JUNO. Dan is a bit of a douche.

But in a really attractive way.

Confidence. Arrogance. It's a fine line. And Dan straddles it like he's at a rodeo.

The party is uneventful.

Mel and Kev have muted arguments in the kitchen.

Simon cuts crudités, whilst I spoon hummus into a mosaic bowl.

I tried putting it out in the plastic tub that it comes in, but apparently we're pretending to be posh tonight.

I see Dan occasionally.

He smiles at me and I wonder if he had braces as a child or if his teeth just grew that way.

At the end of the night, we offer to help tidy up.

MEL. *No, honestly. We'll do it in the morning. Text me when you get home.*

JUNO. Mel slams the door as Kev waves at us from the kitchen.

I don't know if they're about to have sex or break up.

Maybe both.

Simon carries my wheelchair down the front steps, as I shuffle down on my bum.

I see Dan talking to a couple of Mel's work friends.

DAN. *Yeah, here, take my card.*

JUNO. He kisses me goodbye.

On the cheek.

Bit disappointing.

Simon puts my wheelchair in the boot before jumping in the passenger seat.

...

When Simon and I first met, he thought I was anti social and a "bit odd".

I thought he was an arrogant man with good bone structure who wouldn't give me the time of day.

We met at an improv class and finally got talking during our second session, when we bonded over our mutual love of Billy Joel.

...

At school I didn't really have a friend until I was fourteen.

I spent half my time at the hospital, so I couldn't offer consistency.

Or a cool reputation.

I once laughed so hard whilst drinking a Capri Sun that I got projectile snot.

My best friends were my counsellors.

I don't like to brag but… I had two.

I guess that's what happens when you try and throw yourself out of a window aged eight.

…

I pull into Simon's driveway but instead of getting out, he stays put…

SIMON. *You gonna go straight home?*

JUNO. *Yep.*

SIMON. *No detours?*

JUNO. *Nope.*

SIMON. *You're wearing matching underwear, aren't you?*

JUNO. *Okay, firstly that's a really weird thing to ask and secondly, it doesn't mean anything.*

SIMON. *It means everything.*

JUNO. *Oh my God, Simon!*

Once he disappears into the darkness of his much-nicer-than-my-flat-flat, I pull out my mobile…

JUNO TEXT. *Hey, didn't get to talk to you much tonight. Want to grab a drink… question mark, send.*

DAN TEXT. *Sure, where?*

…

JUNO TEXT. *McDonalds… question mark, send.*

…

It's twenty four hour.

…

DAN TEXT. *Want to come back to mine?*

JUNO. Yes, please, god. Absolutely.

Dan and his Seahorse

JUNO. Half an hour later, I'm sat in his bedroom.

Dan's flatmate is next door.

The walls are thin and he's FaceTiming his mum.

FLATMATE. *Do you have a rough time?*

FLATEMATE'S MUM. *Oh, I don't know dear. You know what traffic can be like on a Sunday.*

FLATMATE. *You'll need to park in Clarence Street.*

FLATEMATE'S MUM. *Ooh, have you moved?*

FLATMATE. *No. It's the road behind ours –*

FLATEMATE'S MUM. *Well, we'll just park on your driveway.*

FLATEMATE. *I told you. There are road closures so –*

FLATEMATE'S MUM. *There are what?*

FLATEMATE. *There are road closures.*

FLATEMATE'S MUM. *Say it again.*

FLATEMATE. *Road. Closures.*

FLATEMATE'S MUM. *Oh, hang on, you've frozen.*

(Calling into another room.)

Charlie?

JUNO. ...

We've not kissed yet.

We're watching Futurama.

Is that a new lamp?

DAN. Yeah.

JUNO. *Is it a... seahorse?*

DAN. *Yeah, I just like seahorses. I prefer them over starfish.*

JUNO. …

DAN. *Do you want some brioche?*

JUNO. …

Yeah, okay then.

…

He's different in private.

Less of a douche.

He never holds my hand.

Which is okay.

I don't like my hands.

They're rough because of my eczema.

And the wheeling.

We talk for what feels like two weeks.

Or rather he talks, and I impatiently nod and smile.

And then… we begin.

The first time I took my clothes off in front of Dan, I warned him about my scars.

He told me that he didn't care.

Which was nice of him.

I turn off the seahorse as he reaches for a condom.

I ask if it's latex free.

It isn't.

Which is a bit frustrating because we've been through this.

I reach for my own.

…

People with spina bifida are more likely to have latex allergies.

Which is really something we should learn about in sex ed.

MR. BAXTER. *Yes, well we don't have any disabled students.*

JUNO. *Well, Mr. Baxter what about when one of your students has a disabled sexual partner?*

MR. BAXTER. *Don't be ridiculous!*

JUNO. Long story short: I was not part of the sex ed story.

For a long time, I didn't know how it'd work.

Or what I'd be able to feel.

People would ask me if I could have sex and I'd feign shock and act wildly offended, whilst secretly wanting to grab them by the shoulders and be like: "I don't know, Janet!"

Every time the opportunity arose.

I'd make an excuse.

I told my first – and only – boyfriend that I was Catholic and saving myself.

He got me a promise ring and told me he'd wait, and I immediately broke up with him.

So, I guess I'll be going to hell.

Eventually, I discovered google.

It was a bit like reading the iMDB parental guide before watching a horror film.

But instead of reading about violence, profanity and frightening scenes, I'd read about sensation, positions and lube.

With this newfound knowledge, I decided that I wanted to get it over and done with.

And done, I did get.

It was with this guy, let's call him Dan, because shock horror, it was in fact seahorse Dan.

And now here we are.

Four years down the line.

With a guy who would be happy for me to have an allergic reaction in my vagina.

Call me crazy, friends, but I don't think I'm going to marry Dan.

He's made little attempt to understand my body.

He still tries positions that are very ambitious for your average Joanne, let alone a Joanne who has next to no control over her lower limbs.

I try to tell him when something won't work, but he sees it as a challenge, rather than an uncomfortable impossibility.

I can't feel everything, which would probably be fine if I was being stimulated in other ways, but I'm currently tuning back into the conversation next door and hearing about Dan's flatmate's issues with his mum's new boyfriend, Charlie, so I would say that I'm not quite as excited as I should be.

Dan seems happy.

So, that's good, eh?

Afterwards – yeah, it's over – Dan puts his arms around me and begins to snore.

He looks softer when he's asleep.

I look at my phone.

Four forty seven.

I google what time McDonalds starts serving breakfast.

...

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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