

Reason to Jump

A One Act Play

by

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CAST: SUSAN APPLE, 30's, first-time skydiver. Unassuming, low self-esteem, forever being sorry about everything and sick of it.

LITTLE SUSAN, 9, Susan as young girl. Daredevil, loud, undaunted, on the brink of growing up in a hurry.

DAD, 50's, Susan's father. brash, opinionated, straight out of the middle class 1950's. Dead and he has something to say. 50's.

CINDY, 20's, skydiver. Way into extreme sports and anything that's like almost dying.

ARMAND, 20's, jumpmaster. French, bothered, annoyed, considers skydiving only for the truly deserving.

LAWYER, a lawyer.

PLACE: Airplane hanger in a California desert town, backyard with a large oak tree in a Midwestern city, an airplane

TIME: Present, New Year's Day in California and an evening in August, 1971.

NOTE: Armand and the Lawyer can be played by the same actor, Or the Lawyer can be a voice over. Airplane and wind noise should be as loud as possible.

At curtain, a small spotlight illuminates center stage. A small, plastic figurine tied to a plastic parachute floats to the ground. LITTLE SUSAN runs in from the back of the theatre, grabs the figurine and addresses the audience.

LITTLE SUSAN

Did you see that! Did you see how high I threw it! I can throw it way up there! Watch! Are you watching?

(throws it up, makes a falling bomb noise)

This is my parachute guy.

(MORE)

LITTLE SUSAN(cont'd)

My brother got it for me yesterday. You gotta fold this up like this.

(she folds it up)

And then you hold it like this. And then you throw it straight up! Watch! Watch how it opens!

(throws, makes falling bomb noise)

See! It opens every time. Nobody breaks their legs or arms or anything. Just like the American army guys on Rat Patrol.

(she folds, prepares to throw it again)

Real parachutes are really, really big. My brother is in the Army and he brought one home last week and he let me put on. I wanted to go and jump off our garage but my dad wouldn't let me. He said: "Girls don't jump out of airplanes." He works for the airlines. He's an air cargo sales manager!

(she throws folds again)

On a real parachute, you gotta pull the ripcord. If you don't, you'll die like the German army guys on Rat Patrol. I'm going to jump out of a plane with a parachute when I'm older. You wanna see what I'm going to do? Watch! Are you watching?

(she stands on a table and simulates the jump)

I'll be in the airplane and the guy will open the door and yell "GO!, GO!" and I'll jump!

(she jumps and screams, ahhh!)

I'll fall real fast.

(ahhh!)

I'll fly around in the air!

(ahhh!)

Then I'll pull the ripcord.

(pop!)

The parachute will open.

(fluff, fluff, fluff)

I'll float in the air.

(shhhhhhhhhh)

Then I'll land. Boom. Just like the American army guys on Rat Patrol.

(answering to someone offstage)

Nothing! I'm not. Alright.

(to audience)

I won't die because I pulled the ripcord.

LITTLE SUSAN gathers the figurine and runs offstage.

Lights up on the airport hanger. Loud music.

Enter CINDY, wearing a tight-fitting jumpsuit, the top half pulled down and wrapped around her waist exposing a t-shirt emblazoned with "Skydive Grrl." She carries two, packed parachute harnesses and two ripcord attachments and plops them on a long counter, attaching the ripcords to the harnesses. She finishes one harness, giving it a tug to ensure a proper attachment.

SUSAN appears, visibly nervous and unsure she's in the right place, unseen by CINDY.

CINDY attaches another ripcord. She gives it a tug and this time, the parachute opens and unravels into huge colorful tufts of nylon like the trick "snake in a can."

CINDY

Armand!! Idiot!

She wrestles with the parachute, cursing.

SUSAN enters slowly, trying to get CINDY's attention with a few words. Unsuccessful, she crosses and taps her on the shoulder.

CINDY

Ahhhh!

SUSAN

I'm sorry!

CINDY tries to catch her breath.

SUSAN

I'm didn't mean....

CINDY

(strangely exhilarated)

Don't touch me!

DAD enters, dressed in an airplane mechanic's coveralls. He sits in a nearby chair, thumbs through a "FLYING" magazine.

CINDY

Wooo! Yes!

SUSAN

I'm sorry, I didn't...

CINDY

Uh, huh. Uh, huh.

SUSAN

I didn't know... I'm sorry. Are you okay?

CINDY

Totally cool. Fear is nature's alarm clock, you know.
(calming down)

Yeah. Woo. Ah, yes. Yes. Yeah. Ah.

SUSAN

I'm sorry, I...

CINDY

(suddenly, explosive)

BOO!

SUSAN

Ahhh!

CINDY

See what I mean? Enjoy the rush.

SUSAN nodding, catching breath.

CINDY

Breathe, breath. You must be Susan. Right?

SUSAN

Yes...I..., I have a reservation? Two o'clock?

CINDY

We've been waiting for you. Our only jump today so things will skate. Not like yesterday. End of the year thing, you know. Crazy. We forgot to give some of 'em parachutes. You can hear the screams all the way down. Aaaahhh!!

SUSAN

Really?

CINDY

Oh yeah. We tried to catch some of them with the net but it's tough to calculate the wind, airspeed, angle of attack, they're so small... Girl! I'm kidding!

SUSAN

Oh, sure, sure. I, I knew you were joking.

CINDY gathers chute.

CINDY

Uh, huh. Okay, lemme get you going on the paperwork. First skydive, right?

SUSAN

Yes.

CINDY

Cool. You're gonna love it.

SUSAN

Well, my first real skydive. I jumped out of a tree in our backyard when I was a kid. Pretty stupid, huh?

CINDY drops the chute.

CINDY

No fucking way.

SUSAN

I was nine.

CINDY

No fucking way!

SUSAN

With a bed sheet.

CINDY

A bed sheet?

SUSAN

It snagged on a branch on the way down.

CINDY

Oh my God! Girlfriend!!

CINDY hugs SUSAN.

CINDY

I was nine! I jumped off my parent's split level! Fucking A, girl! Bed sheet out the tree. What size sheet you use?

SUSAN

I don't know. It was off my bed. A twin?

CINDY

Oooh... Twin. Not a lot of canopy. Extreme.

SUSAN

My dad nearly killed me when he found out.

CINDY

Tell me about it. My parents were all like "Oh my God, oh my god! she's dead." I'm like I want to do it again, but they're like freakin' and "we gotta go to the emergency room." But I didn't die and so they were cool but when we got home, they were raging like "we're locking you in the closet." You know?

SUSAN

They locked you in a closet?

CINDY

Yeah. Six months. Sucked. No cable. Starbucks. Girl! I'm kidding! Loosen up a bit.

SUSAN

Well, I broke my ankle in three places. That's why I have a slight limp.

CINDY

You gotta limp?

SUSAN

It's slight. I was going to tell you because I was wondering if I wouldn't be able to jump because of it.

CINDY

Lemme see.

SUSAN walks. A slight limp.

CINDY

Girl, that's nothing. You're totally cool.

SUSAN

Are you sure?

CINDY

Totally cool. If you liked jumping out of a tree, you're gonna love jumping out of an airplane at 10,000 feet. It's the most awesome mind fuck in the world! Like your brain is swimming in ten thousand ice cubes. You get this tingling sensation like every nerve ending is going "oh my God, oh my fucking God! Red alert! Red alert!" Like you'll never question the existence of synaptic nerve impulses ever again.

SUSAN

It's safe, right?

CINDY

Safe as almost dying can get.

SUSAN

What do you mean by that?

CINDY

Girl! Come on, lighten up. This is supposed to be fun.

SUSAN

Oh, sure. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I guess I'm a little nervous.

CINDY

Well don't be. I mean, we're totally pro. Okay. So hang out, I'll get rid of this and get you going. Be right back, okay?

SUSAN

Okay.

CINDY

Happy New Year.

SUSAN

Happy New Year.

CINDY exits. SUSAN paces the room, avoiding DAD as much as possible.

DAD

Afraid? It's okay. Fear is God's way of making us pay attention. You might want to jot that down. I know what you're thinking. You're thinking, "I'm going to die today. Smashed like a black fly on a windshield on a Florida highway. Flattened like a squirrel underneath the unfortunate treads of an 18-wheeler. Squished like a frog against..."

SUSAN

That's not something I want to hear right now.

DAD

Even if it's true? Here's another one for the books. Truth is the last second before the first second of our death. You know who said that? Me. You should jot that down.

SUSAN

Go away.

DAD

Can't. You and I are intertwined, crossing over each other like shoelaces, twisted and tied together and ending up in a knot.

SUSAN

I don't want you here.

DAD

Yes you do.

SUSAN

No, I don't.

DAD

Yes you do.

SUSAN

No I don't.

DAD

(laughs first, then)

But, yet. Here I am. One time, I saw a bumper sticker that said "skydiving is the reason birds sing."

(whistles like a bird)

Do you think that's true? I've always wondered what it would be like to be a bird. Flying, soaring, not a care in the world...

SUSAN sits on the ground, crosses her legs into the Lotus position, takes a deep breath, then evenly and fast.

SUSAN

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.
(deep breath, then low to high
to low)

Woooooo!

DAD

Did that help?

SUSAN

Leave me alone.

DAD

Ah, ahh. Shoelaces. So I have to ask. Why are you skydiving on New Year's Day? You should be in bed with a hangover.

SUSAN

Just like you, right?

DAD

Ahhh, finally! She's speaks the truth! So you think you're better than me? Huh? Huh, Gimpy?

SUSAN

Don't call me that.

DAD

If the shoe fits, Gimpy.

SUSAN

Don't call me that! I'm skydiving! I said I was going to do this and I'm going to do it and I'm here and I'm going to skydive and I'm not in bed with a hangover, not like you. I'm doing something with my life, so go away.

DAD

Haven't done it yet. Haven't done anything at all. Have you?

SUSAN

I am doing it. That's the difference between you and me.

DAD

We'll see about that. Gimpy.

Lights up on LITTLE SUSAN eating an apple.

LITTLE SUSAN

I know a riddle. You want to hear it? What is something you can't see, touch, taste, smell, hear or anything and it's not air but it's all around all the time. Give up? It's gravity! I'll show you.

(jumps up and down)

See. There it is. There. And there. You can do this at home because gravity is at your house right now.

(stops and bites the apple)

The first time I saw gravity was when my dad was nailing shingles to our roof and he dropped the hammer and started yelling bad words and then he and the ladder fell kind of sideways onto the grass and then he got up and started kicking the ladder and the hammer and yelling bad words at both of them and then my mom came outside and he started yelling bad words at my mom who was kind of laughing because he was yelling at a ladder and a hammer. He was really mad.

LITTLE SUSAN

(imitating)

"Goddamn it. Son of a bitch."

DAD

Goddamn it. Son of a bitch.

LITTLE SUSAN

(takes another bite of the
apple)

I don't know what he was mad about.

LITTLE SUSAN

It was just
gravity.

SUSAN

It was just
gravity.

LITTLE SUSAN exits. CINDY enters.

CINDY

Ok, let's get you started. You know, Apple's a great name
for a skydiver. Like Newton's Apple? The apple going "ahh,
look out" Then there was gravity. Hey.

(like a public service
announcement)

Gravity. Not only is it the law, it's a good idea.

(normal)

You know? Hey, you okay? You're not bailing on me, are you?

SUSAN

No, no. I'm sorry.

CINDY

Cool, because you pulled a twin. That means you gotta jump.
Okay, you're going to watch a video before we start and I
need you to look over this as you watch it.

CINDY hands SUSAN a clipboard

SUSAN

What is it?

CINDY

Our standard release form. No big deal. Everybody gets it.
Have a seat and relax. You're gonna have a kick-ass time.
I'll be back in five.

*CINDY exits SUSAN sits. A TV frame
descends from the ceiling. LAWYER
enters and moves into the frame.*

DAD

Oh, wait 'til you get a load of this. This guy's going to
make your eyes rattle.

LAWYER

(quickly, seriously)

Good afternoon. I'm Jack Baumberg, attorney for Adventure
Skydiving. I'm here to talk with you about the document you
have in front of you. This document is the most important
document of your life.

(MORE)

LAWYER(cont'd)

Because you are a willing participant in a life-threatening sport, you will be required to sign the document before you are allowed to skydive.

DAD

See! They get you coming and going.

SUSAN

Shhhhh.

LAWYER

If you should have concerns with, have questions to, do not agree with, want a second opinion of, desire further clarification of a section, word, phrase or case law cited within, I urge you to get up out of your chair right now and contact an attorney of your choosing so that he, she or they may advise you on the document and the risk you are about to take. Make no mistake. Skydiving carries the risk of death and/or serious physical injury and/or psychological trauma.

DAD

He's got some way with words, don't he?

LAWYER

With that in mind, I will now point out what this document says. This document says, in Section One, that you agree that even under the best weather conditions, the most advanced training, the highest-quality equipment, the most experienced jumpmaster, there is a possibility that your skydive could result in death and/or severe physical injury and/or psychological trauma.

DAD

Uh, oh, here it comes.

LAWYER

In short, Section One says your skydive may, in fact, kill you.

DAD

Black fly on a windshield!

LAWYER

Now let's move on to Section Two through Section Twenty-four.

Lights dim on LAWYER. He mouths words.

DAD

Still want to jump out of an airplane and find yourself?
(singing)

Susan Apple sitting in a tree. J.U.M.P.I.N.G. First comes falling, then comes, screaming, then comes Susan... then comes Susan...

(stopping)

(MORE)

DAD(cont'd)

That's the part we don't know, huh Gimpy? What comes next?
Self-esteem? Courage? Meaning? What is it that comes next?
(sing-songy)

I can't hear you. I can't hear you, Susan Apple.
(stopping)

What comes next?

<u>SUSAN</u>	<u>DAD</u>
So I don't end up like you!	So you don't end up like me!

DAD

A wasted life! Ha! That's a laugh. Don't you get it? We
all end up like black flies.

LAWYER

--complaints filed in Circuit Court were found to be
insubstantial and all plaintiff damages were dropped--

DAD

Your life is pointless and that's my fault?

SUSAN

I'm not listening to you.

DAD

Well, that's your problem right there, Gimpy.

SUSAN

Please stop calling me that.

LAWYER

-- severe spinal, head and neck injuries, back trauma, or
compounded fractures to hips, thighs, knees, shins or ankles--

DAD

Ouch! That's got to hurt.

SUSAN

Please, go away.

DAD

This ain't the tree in the backyard.

LAWYER

-- hydraulic systems malfunction, sudden engine failure,
cabin depressurization, chute entanglement and/or malfunction
--

DAD

Your stunt cost the whole family an arm and a leg!

SUSAN

I said I was sorry.

DAD

All my money! Gone! Money don't grow on trees!

LAWYER

--cause of action subsequent to the party's deposition shall be no less than half of the deceased property value--

DAD

Up shit creek without a paddle.

SUSAN

What do you want me to do? I'm sorry.

LAWYER

--property of the deceased shall be immediately surrendered to the immediate family subsequent the coroner's investigation--

DAD

Sorry doesn't put food on the table.

SUSAN

I didn't mean to.

LAWYER

--bruises to the hands, neck or face--

DAD

Families are shoelaces. Tied together forever!

SUSAN

I'm sorry.

LAWYER

--coroner's inspection of the crash site --

DAD

Break the knot, throw away the shoe!

SUSAN

I'm sorry.

DAD

Stop saying you're sorry! We're all sick of it!

LAWYER

--next of kin will be notified--

DAD

Gimpy!

SUSAN

Please!

DAD
Gimpy!

SUSAN
Please!!

DAD
Sorry ass Gimpy!!

SUSAN
I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'M SORRY!!!!

LAWYER and DAD regard SUSAN. Then...

LAWYER
-- Sections Thirteen through Twenty-four further reiterate and clarify Sections One through Twelve. This concludes the videotape. Have a pleasant jump.

Lighting change. LAWYER exits. CINDY enters with a couple of Red Bulls.

CINDY
Painless, huh Twin? Hey, wanna Red Bull?

SUSAN
I've changed my mind. I don't want to skydive.

CINDY
Ah, don't worry, he's just a lawyer.

SUSAN
No... I don't want... I want to cancel.

CINDY
Look, I keep telling them they got to change that video. I mean, you're right, that lawyer creeps people out.

SUSAN
It isn't the video.

CINDY
Then have a Red Bull, everything's cool.

SUSAN
I don't want a Red Bull. I want to cancel.

CINDY
Okay. Serious. We're professionals. I jump eight, nine times a week. No problems, ever. We have an excellent safety record.

SUSAN

Don't you mean a perfect safety record?

CINDY

Nobody's perfect.

SUSAN

I'm sorry. I want to cancel.

CINDY

What's going on?

SUSAN

Nothing is going on. I've changed my mind. I'm sorry.

CINDY

Come on, Twin....

SUSAN

Stop calling me Twin! God! I don't have to explain myself to you, alright!? I want to cancel. Why can't I just cancel and leave? Is that so hard for you to understand?

Beat.

CINDY

You got your credit card? You only get ten percent back.

SUSAN digs through purse, gets credit card.

SUSAN

I understand.

DAD

(laughing)

Don't matter how old you get, it's still you all over again.

SUSAN

I'm sorry I snapped at you. I didn't mean it. I thought I was ready to do this. I guess, I'm not. I'm sorry. I hope I didn't ruin anything. I really am sorry. It's just... I'll do it another time. Maybe in a few months. I'm sorry.

CINDY

Is that all you ever say?

SUSAN

Excuse me?

CINDY

"I'm sorry." You must have said it six thousand times.

SUSAN

No I haven't.

CINDY

Girlfriend, it's like you own it and you're still making payments on it.

SUSAN

Well, I don't think I do.

CINDY

Yeah, okay. Whatever.

SUSAN

What I mean to say is...

CINDY

Hey, no worries, okay? Whatever you got going on you can deal some other way. Go shopping. Get a facial. Buy a candle.

SUSAN

Excuse me, but what are you saying?

CINDY

Nothing. Just, you know, whatever brought you in here is going home with you. Like second hand smoke. You know?
(handing her receipt)
Sign at the bottom.

SUSAN

What?

CINDY

The line at the bottom.

SUSAN

No, what do you mean second hand smoke?

DAD

She's on drugs and she probably has a tatoo.

CINDY

I'm talking about your reason to jump. Nobody jumps out of an airplane and falls ten thousand feet because they're bored. I've seen tons of newbies like you come in here, all the time, all excited and nervous and freakin' out and all of 'em got a reason to jump. I see it all around 'em like piece of fog. It pushes 'em out the plane then they hit the DZ and after it's all over, the reason they had doesn't seem like much of a reason anymore. Like it's like whatever they had going on, they left up there. You know?

(MORE)

Wonder what happens next?

For a copy of the full script, email me at:

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Thanks!