

JUMPING IN by Seth Freeman

A short play

JUMPING IN

Cast

Junie. *late 20'-50's, a school teacher*

Puma. *about 17-18, a poor student*

JUMPING IN

(A class room in a public high school. There's a blackboard or white board, not in good repair, a standard-issue desk, and -- only if possible, some shelves, posters on the wall, florescent lights, worn blinds.

(JUNIE, the teacher who uses this room, is in a desk chair, at some remove from the desk. A young woman of high school age, PUMA, full of attitude, dressed in baggy everything, is tying Junie to the chair with phone wire.)

JUNIE

Hey, easy.

PUMA

I ain't hurting you.

JUNIE

This chair is kind of fragile.

PUMA

*(removing a spray can
from a scruffy pack)*

I ain't messin' with the chair.

*(She spray paints the words "FUCK
SKOL," on the board, steps back to
review her work.)*

JUNIE

"Fuck Skol"? You're against chewing tobacco?

PUMA

Fuck school. *School.* I hate school, bitch. That's why I didn't want to come here. I don't even like being around a school.

JUNIE

Duh.

PUMA

*(wheeling on Junie
menacingly)*

Hey!

JUNIE

Hey. It's kind of obvious you haven't spent much time in a class room.

PUMA

Are you a teacher or something?

JUNIE

I'm a teacher. This is my room.

PUMA

What the fuck you doin' here this time of night anyway?

JUNIE

Lesson plans.

PUMA

What?

JUNIE

We actually plan what and how we're going to teach.

PUMA

You mean, like, you're working? This late? That's loco, girl.

JUNIE

You're probably right.

PUMA

Nobody was supposed to be here.

JUNIE

Sorry. I didn't get the memo.

PUMA

Fuck.

JUNIE

I could go now.

PUMA

No, Crackmama should be here soon. She'll know what to do. She probably knew you'd be here. There's some teacher Crackmama is always talking about frying her balls.

JUNIE

That's somebody else.

PUMA

I don't know.

JUNIE

Oh, definitely. For sure. I don't have balls. And I don't even know Crackmama.

PUMA

She doesn't come to school much.

JUNIE

Why am I not surprised?

PUMA

You still coulda pissed her off. You're pissing me off. And Crackmama, she gets pissed off easy.

JUNIE

Technically, if she wants to discuss something with me, she's supposed to make an appointment --

(off Puma's glare)

but I'm not a real stickler for the technical details.

PUMA

(of the wall clock)

That the right time?

JUNIE

A couple of minutes slow.

PUMA

She shoulda been here then. Damn. I was supposed do a break in, do a tag, and then Crackmama was going to tell me the last thing. For my jumping in.

JUNIE

Jumping in?

PUMA

Yeah, to be part of the set.

JUNIE

Ah, an initiation ritual.

PUMA

The last one is usually something big.

JUNIE

Big?

PUMA

Yeah, big. Big. Torching a store or killing somebody or something.

JUNIE

I'm starting to like the sound of 'or something.'

PUMA

Damn. Bitch. One thing -- I don't like it that you got a look at my face.

JUNIE

I wouldn't let that worry you. You're not that memorable.

(ignores Puma's scowl)

What's your name?

PUMA

Puma.

*(as soon as the words are
out of his mouth)*

Fuck!

JUNIE

Don't worry. You're probably not listed in the school records under "Puma" since it's not your real name anyway. My name is Junie. I'd shake hands or fist bump, but...

PUMA

So, lady, what do you teach?

JUNIE

I teach Math.

PUMA

Math, oh man. That's like the worst.

JUNIE

Thanks.

PUMA

I mean, it's like the one class I couldn't get at all.

JUNIE

Because you're afraid of the material.

PUMA

Hey! I'm not afraid of nothin'.

JUNIE

You're probably very tough about torching and hair pulling and scratching other girls with your nails, but you are afraid of Mathematics. Don't feel bad about it. Most of the people in this country, adults *and* kids, have Math fear.

PUMA

I'm telling you, bitch, I'm not afraid.

JUNIE

Good. You see that tennis ball on my desk?

PUMA

Yeah.

JUNIE

Pick it up. Bounce it a few times.

PUMA

(cautiously)
What is this?

JUNIE

You're not afraid to bounce a ball?

*(Puma tentatively picks up the ball,
bounces it on the floor, then again.)*

PUMA

Yeah?

JUNIE

Bounce it against the blackboard.

*(Puma tosses the ball at the
blackboard, catches it on the rebound.)*

PUMA

So?

JUNIE

Okay, now here's your problem. Throw the ball away from you so it stops and comes right back to you. But it can't hit a wall or the floor or any object.

PUMA

What?

JUNIE

Throw the ball -- if we were outside I'd say throw it as far and as hard as you can -- make it stop and come straight back to you, without touching a wall, the floor or any object.

PUMA

That's impossible.

JUNIE

You sure? I know you can solve problems, Puma. The building is locked now, but you broke in, right? And you didn't set off the silent alarm.

PUMA

(suddenly panicked)

Silent alarm?

JUNIE

No, I'm messing with you. There's no silent alarm, but there is an alarm and it didn't go off, so you figured out how to get around that.

PUMA

Yeah, well, somebody told me.

JUNIE

Right. Okay. Nevertheless, think about this problem for more than half a second.

PUMA
This is a Math problem?

JUNIE
It's a problem in logical thinking.

(Puma thinks, shrugs.)

JUNIE (CONT'D)
If you untie me, I'll show you.

PUMA
Like I'm going to fall for that.

JUNIE
Ah, signs of logical thinking. Okay, so first,
state the problem.

PUMA
Throw the ball.

JUNIE
Hard.

PUMA
Hard.

JUNIE
But you're indoors, so not too hard. And don't
throw like a girl.

(Puma mimes throwing the ball.)

PUMA
This is crazy.

JUNIE
Not if you *think*. Just imagine you're outside on
the baseball diamond and throw the ball as hard as
you can toward the outfield. What happens?

PUMA
It just goes and goes.

JUNIE
Forever?

PUMA
'Course not. It goes 'til it falls. Unless, like
you could put a string or, hey, some like rubbery
bungee or something on it. You could throw it and
it'd come back. There, problem solved. Big deal.

JUNIE
Nothing can be attached to the ball.

PUMA

You didn't say that.

JUNIE

I should have said that.

PUMA

Then it's fuckin' crazy, lady.

JUNIE

Think.

PUMA

I have.

JUNIE

Not enough. A good thing to do when you're trying to solve a problem is play around with the elements, get familiar with it.

(Puma throws the ball against the blackboard, catches it on the rebound. She bounces it.)

JUNIE (CONT'D)

Yeah, like that.

(Puma drops the ball in the trash.)

JUNIE (CONT'D)

Swish. Nothing but net.

(Puma fishes the ball out, tosses it up and down in her hand. Suddenly a big grin spreads across her face.)

PUMA

Throw the ball? It's gotta stop in the air and come straight back to me, right?

JUNIE

That's right.

(Puma tosses the ball straight up as high as conditions in the venue allow. It drops straight back into her palm.)

PUMA

(a little defensively)

Whatever you say, woman, that did everything you asked.

JUNIE

It did.

PUMA

It did.

JUNIE

It did. I'm agreeing. You solved it. That's the answer.

(Inadvertently, Puma grins broadly, very pleased. Then she catches herself, gets a more stern expression back on.)

JUNIE (CONT'D)

Okay, now look at the blackboard, the part you didn't mess up with your vandalism.

PUMA

What for?

JUNIE

Afraid again?

(scary voice)

O-o-o-h, there might be a math problem.

PUMA

Shut up.

(But Junie waits and eventually Puma sneaks a quick glance at the board.)

PUMA (CONT'D)

There's a bunch of dots.*

JUNIE

It's the warm up for tomorrow's first class. Your problem is to draw four straight lines, parallel to each other and the same distance from each other, so that there are two black dots in each section.

PUMA

It's not my problem.

JUNIE

Humor me.

PUMA

I don't have to.

JUNIE

It's the last request of woman before she dies. It's the least you can do.

(Puma draws some lines dividing the square, but nothing seems to work.)

* See problem and solution tips in the addendum.

JUNIE (CONT'D)

I wasn't sure you'd know what parallel means. You must have been paying attention at some point. That's excellent, Puma.

(Puma draws a couple more lines, then throws the chalk down.)

PUMA

It's impossible.

JUNIE

There's that word again.

PUMA

Well, look at it!

JUNIE

It's impossible with the assumptions you're making. I said the lines have to be parallel to each other but not to the side of the rectangle. And the areas of the sections don't have to be the same.

PUMA

Fuck.

(She goes and sits on a chair to the side. She and Junie both study the board. After a while, Puma gets up and goes back to the problem. She erases her earlier lines, gets a piece of chalk - or marker - and draws the four lines that solve the puzzle. She looks at Junie expectantly.)

JUNIE

(smiling)
That's it.

(Again Puma can't help a big, spontaneous smile.)

JUNIE (CONT'D)

Puma, you've got some stuff. You can do math, and you can do school. And I can give you the statistics on your improved chances of getting a guy, having a family, and making good money, but...I know, quit while I'm ahead. No statistics. So let's stick with the bottom line: do it, girl.

(The funky music of Puma's cell phone SOUNDS. She answers quickly.)

PUMA

Yeah?...Right...Totally...Okay.

(clicks off)

Crackmama is here.

(Junie looks away, genuinely worried. Puma studies her, wrestling with confusing thoughts, then comes to a decision. She produces a switchblade, pops it open. She moves quickly to Junie and slices the phone wire. Junie rubs her hands to get the circulation back.)

PUMA (CONT'D)

Get up, woman. Hurry. Go.

JUNIE

(standing)

If I go, aren't you going to have a problem with Crackmama?

PUMA

Whatever. Get the hell out of here. Now!

JUNIE

What'll you do?

PUMA

Go! I'll figure something out.

JUNIE

Yes.

*(hurries to the door,
stops; then, with real
admiration and respect)*

Yes, I'm sure you will.

*(Puma gives Junie a look, both
appreciative and warning, and Junie
goes.)*

BLACK OUT.

THE END

The Dot Problem

(*Jumping In* - Addendum)

[Unfortunately, the playwriting software in which you are reading this material does not support graphics. The Addendum will be attached in a separate document.

[If there are any problems with this, please contact the author and the image of the array of dots needed for the problem will happily be provided. Thank you, and sorry for the hassle.]

The problem: On the diagram of ten dots in the box above, draw four straight lines, parallel to each other and equal distance from each other cutting the rectangle into five sections, with two dots in each section.

Hint 1: The lines must be parallel to each other. There is no requirement that they be parallel to the top, bottom or sides of the rectangle.

Hint 2: The four lines must be equal distance apart. There is no requirement that they enclose equal areas, i.e. there is no requirement that the five sections each be the same size.