

The Jumper - A Radio Play by Benjamin Brook

ACT 1 - On the train

[FX: sounds of busy railway station, general bustle of commuters]

[FX: doors opening, people getting on a train carriage, fiddling with bags etc. sitting down]

[INTERNAL TANNON]: This is a passenger announcement. Unfortunately the 1832 service to Walton-on-the-Naze is delayed. This is due to a suspected fatality around the Gidea Park area. I would like to apologise for any inconvenience that this might cause.

WOMAN 1: Oh, for goodness sake. Not another one.

WOMAN 2: Second time this year, always on a Monday.

MAN 1: And I thought I was having a bad day.

WOMAN 2: I know I should have more sympathy but really? If you're going to do it, why not choose a quiet place that will cause minimum fuss?

WOMAN 1: Oh, I don't know. I think if I was going to kill myself, I'd want to cause maximum disruption and hassle for as many people as possible.

MAN 1: So, what does this mean for the journey? What sort of delays for a suicide, assuming that's what it is.

WOMAN 1: Who knows? Will probably be a couple of hours. Can't let any trains go through until they've picked up all the pieces.

WOMAN 2: Oh, come on! I just want to get home. It's been a long day already.

[WOMAN 2 gets phone out of her bag]

WOMAN 2 [on phone]: Going to be late tonight, love....Oh, another jumper...think they said Gidea Park...who knows how long it's going to be...have the kids had their tea?

[Indistinct chatting on phone continues]

WOMAN 1: Bloody shame, really. Someone's lost their life and all I can think about is how this will inconvenience me. I wonder what makes people do it?

MAN 1: Must have been in a pretty bad way. I mean, we've all had times when things get a bit too much but don't think I've been close to ending it all.

WOMAN 1: Yeah, coming up to London every day to work can't help. Been commuting for 20 years this year. Believe it or not, the trains are getting better. Used to be those old-fashioned slam door types when I started. Just the one seat going all the way across

from one side of the train to the other. Dreadful at the best of times, unbearable in the summer especially when you got stuck in the middle.

MAN 1: This is only my fourth month. I've had enough of it already. I don't mind the job I'm doing but the thought of the journey home on a packed train at the end of a long day makes me feel sick sometimes.

WOMAN 1: Oh, don't worry too much. After about a year you begin to get numb to it all. Look at the seasoned commuters around us. All tuned out and staring like zombies into their screens. Which reminds me, I should call my hubby.

[WOMAN 1 gets phone out of bag and dials]

WOMAN 1 [on phone]: Oh, bloody hell. It's gone through to answer phone. What's the point in having a mobile if you never use it. He's probably gone down the pub with his mates.

WOMAN 2 [still on phone]: OK, love. Will call again once I know more.

[WOMAN 2 hangs up]

WOMAN 2: Any update on when we might be leaving?

MAN 1: No, they've not made any further announcements. Don't think that communication's best when these sorts of incidents happen.

WOMAN 2: Where you travelling to?

MAN 1: Oh, I'll be getting off at Chelmsford. How about you?

WOMAN 2: Yeah, I'm Chelmsford, too.

WOMAN 1: Lucky you, I'm on here until the end of the line.

MAN 1: Blimey, that must take time. What time do you normally get there?

WOMAN 1: Should get in at about seven forty, usually ends up closer to closer to eight.

MAN 1: That's a long journey. Far to go once you get to Walton?

WOMAN 1: Fortunately not, just a five minute walk from the station.

MAN 1: Small mercy.

[INTERNAL TANNON]: This is a passenger announcement. Sorry for the continued delay to the service tonight. This is due to a suspected fatality around the Gidea Park area and no trains are leaving Liverpool Street presently. Please be advised that severe delays are

expected and you are advised to use alternative routes. Tickets are being accepted on London Underground and other overground train services.

MAN 1: Is there an alternative route?

WOMAN 2: Well, you can get a train out to Basildon and then a bus back to Chelmsford. Takes hours, though. I think we'll be better off staying on this train.

MAN 1: What about going out to Stansted?

WOMAN 2: Same difference. Really long journey and hundreds of others will be doing the same. Stay here while you've got your seat, I'd say.

WOMAN 1: Wish I was in the pub like my husband.

WOMAN 2: Oh, is that where he is then?

WOMAN 1: Got to be. Still not answering but I've sent him a text. Expect he'll 'fess up soon.

WOMAN 2: I could do with a drink now. Nice glass of gin and tonic.

MAN 1: Not really a winter drink.

WOMAN 2: There's always time for gin!

WOMAN 1: Think I'd like a glass of the wine I've got at home.

MAN 1: Red or white?

WOMAN 1: Nice bottle of red. Got it for my birthday, just been waiting for the right occasion to crack it open. A day like today seems the perfect excuse.

ACT 2 - Somewhere in London

[FX: rain falling the background, sound of city traffic]

MAN 2 [talking to himself whilst walking]: Oh, well this is a fine mess you've got yourself into. Did you really think that you were going to be able to get away it? What sort of bloody idiot puts his family's security on the line for the sake of greed? You. You're the sort of bloody idiot who would do exactly that.

ACT 3 - At the office

[FX: city trading office noises, telephones ringing, background conversations]

[FX: sounds of cup being filled with water]

MAN 2: I dunno, mate. All sounds a little bit risky to me, not to say bordering on illegal.

MAN 3: It's a dead cert. Look, I told you, my guy over in the Far East says they've been keeping an eye on this company for some time now. Making lots of waves in the tech world, not to mention with the military who are desperate to get their hands on technology like this.

MAN 2: Yeah, but I've seen it before - up and coming company, bags of potential, will be tripling in size over the next year...only to disappear off the face of the earth never to be heard of again.

MAN 3: But this is different. As I said, the analysts have been watching this one for a while. Best bit is that for many over here, they're off the radar, so interest going to be nowhere near as high as it should be for something so exciting. Means we can buy shares at a much lower starting point than should be the case. But once that buzz gets going...and it will...think of what you could do with the money - weren't you talking about needing to move house?

MAN 2: Surely it can't be right for me to buy a stake in the company just before the initial issue and then drum up excitement to push up share price? Sounds like something the FSA would be very interesting in.

MAN 3: Oh, come on! Don't kid yourself, this sort of thing is happening all the time. Look around you. You don't think that anyone in this place hasn't used what or who they know to give themselves a nice unofficial bonus. This is the business we work in - making money out of old rope but with that rope cunningly disguised as complex financial instruments and whizz-bang IT.

MAN 2: I certainly could do with some extra money. Mel has been getting on at me about how little space we've got in our current gaff and even leaving hints with some none-too-subtly placed flyers about a new development just down the road. Perfect for families it says. Think she wants kids.

MAN 3: There you go! Just imagine her face when you let her know you've done something to make it happen. And just imagine what she's going to do to you on the first night in your new home...making babies, wa-hay!

MAN 2: Alright, mate, enough of that! What are we looking at then? You know, investment wise?

MAN 3: As much as you can get your hands on, of course! One month, tops, and you will have doubled your money. Could you imagine that? What about using this year's bonus?

MAN 2: Gone already. Used it to overpay on the mortgage.

MAN 3: Couldn't you borrow it back? Must be plenty of equity in that place of yours, even if Mel thinks it's getting cramped!

MAN 2: I suppose so. Would take a bit of time to sort out but certainly doable.

MAN 3: How much shall I put you down for? £300k

[FX: MAN 2 spits out drink]

MAN 2: You're kidding aren't you? I can't get anywhere near that amount!

MAN 3: Just a suggestion. Don't forget it's only short term. Double your money. Dead cert.

MAN 2: I could probably get £200k... Sounds like a lot of money when you say it out loud.

MAN 3: Drop in the ocean compared to what we deal with every day.

MAN 2: Yes, but that's not our money. Easy to gamble when it's numbers on a screen and no real personal consequence. Different proposition when it's your own hard-earned cash.

MAN 3: No pressure. Let me know by the end of the week what you want to do.

ACT 4 - Back on the train

MAN 1: Oh, this taking forever.

WOMAN 1: About par for the course. As I said, they need to find all of the bits before the trains starts moving again.

MAN 1: Sounds grim.

WOMAN 1: Not as grim as for the person doing the looking. Could you imagine? Expect they get used to it after a while.

WOMAN 2: Probably develop some sort of twisted sense of humour. Oi, mate, got any limbs over there? I've found the left foot and upper leg. Bugger me if I know where the knee has got to!

MAN 1: You're getting into this a little too much!

WOMAN 2: You've got to laugh. Life's pretty tragic, really. Sometimes it needs a bit of humour to put things in perspective.

WOMAN 1: Doesn't bear thinking about though. How do you get into that sort of thing?

WOMAN 2: I wonder how they position their advertising? Undertaking not exciting enough for you? Opportunity has arisen in a small but effective team of body parts finders, specialising in railway accidents.

MAN 1: There she goes again!

WOMAN 2: Got an active imagination, you see. Job I do is pretty boring and like to exercise another part of my brain when I get the chance.

MAN 1: Certainly imaginative enough!

WOMAN 1: Oh, where the hell is he?

WOMAN 2: Still not answering? Expect he's just at the bar getting his second pint.

WOMAN 1: Wouldn't do any harm to pick up the phone. You'd think he'd wonder where I am.

WOMAN 2: That's blokes for you. Out of sight, out of mind.

MAN 1: Steady on! We're not all the same, you know.

WOMAN 2: Present company excepted of course. You got any kids?

MAN 1: Direct question. Isn't the usual protocol to ask if I am married first?

WOMAN 2: Saw the ring.

MAN 1: Imaginative and observant! Well, I've got two kids; one boy and one girl.

WOMAN 2: Nice. How old are they?

MAN 1: Eleven and eight.

WOMAN 2: Similar age to my two. Both boys. [Turning to WOMAN 1] How about you, enjoying the joys of parenthood yet?

WOMAN 1: No, not yet. We've decided to give our careers a bit of a go before settling down to family life. Besides, the house we're in is too small. Could really do with an upgrade before adding to the numbers.

WOMAN 2: Best thing I ever did.

MAN 1: Yeah, me too although there are plenty of times when it seemed like the worst!

WOMAN 2: And that's what parents tend to talk about. It's like it's a competition. Who has the shittiest life, sometimes quite literally. What you don't hear about is those moments that make it all worthwhile. Nearly burst into tears the other day when I got a letter from my eldest. Simply said "Mum, thanks for everything. I love you".

MAN 1: That's nice.

ACT 5 - Somewhere in London

MAN 2: What the hell am I going to do? No money and now no job [imitating his boss] I'm sorry but this company does not tolerate any form of behaviour that could be construed as illegal insider dealing. He's been wanting to get rid of me for ages. Could see I was moving into his seat. [Shouting] Aaaaaaaagggghhhh!

ACT 6 - Back at the office (by the water fountain)

MAN 3: So, you've managed to get the money?

MAN 2: Two hundred grand sitting there ready and waiting. Still feel nervous about this. Is this really only going to be for a month?

MAN 3: I told you. One month tops. If it all goes according to plan, you'll be sitting pretty in a fortnight. Mel's going to give you the night of your life when she sees what you've done!

MAN 2: OK. What's the next step?

MAN 3: I'm going to send you the details of the bank account we're using to run this through. Simply transfer the money there and I'll do the rest.

MAN 2: Sounds too good to be true. How much are you putting in?

MAN 3: Half a mil.

MAN 2: What?! How did you get your hands on that sort of cash?

MAN 3: Don't you worry about that. Just a little nest egg I've been paying into the last ten years.

MAN 2: Millionaire in two weeks, eh?

MAN 3: Exactly. Then I'm chucking this in and heading off to France. Fancy myself as a bit of a wine connoisseur. Good money in buying and selling rare vintages. Saw something about it on telly. Some German fella's got hundreds of bottles in a secret storage facility in the home counties. Got to speculate to accumulate as they say

MAN 2: Exciting stuff!

MAN 3: Keep an eye on your emails. Something coming across very soon.

MAN 2: Will do. And thanks for this.

MAN 3: No problem, mate.

ACT 6 - Back on the train (again)

[INTERNAL TANNON]: I regret to inform you that this service is now cancelled. As no trains will be leaving Liverpool Street in the foreseeable future, you are strongly advised to seek alternative means of transport. All tickets will be accepted on overground and underground rail services as well as any connecting buses. Shortly, the doors will close and the lights will go off. I repeat, you are strongly advised to seek alternative means of transport.

WOMAN 2: What, so they're going to lock us in here in the dark if we don't get off?

WOMAN 1: I'd like to see them try!

MAN 1: That seems utterly bizarre. Surely the train will be leaving eventually even if it takes hours.

WOMAN 2: Probably just trying to save some cash. All about profits for the shareholders since they privatised this lot.

MAN 1: Can't believe it will save that much money.

[FX: Beep of doors and swoosh as they close]

MAN 1: Little bit exciting isn't it? Don't think I've ever been trapped on a train.

WOMAN 1: At least the lights haven't gone off.

WOMAN 2: Don't speak too soon.

[FX: Ping of fluorescent tubes going out]

WOMAN 1: Whoops, seems I did!

MAN 1: It's a nice glow these emergency lights give off. I was expecting total darkness.

WOMAN 2: Oh, now you're the one tempting fate.

[FX: Beep of doors and swoosh as they open]

[INTERNAL TANNON]: Please be advised that this service is now cancelled. You should disembark from the train and seek alternative transport. Thank you.

WOMAN 1: Is he threatening us?

MAN 1: What do you mean?

WOMAN 1: Well, they let us know they're going to shut the doors and turn out the lights before doing exactly that. Then they open the doors as if to say, "Told you we would, if you want to get off now's your chance."

WOMAN 2: Nobody from this bloody company is threatening me. I'm definitely not getting off now!

MAN 1: Nor am I. Seems almost pointless wandering off into the night looking for a way back home via Basildon or Stansted. I say we should wait it out.

WOMAN 2: Here, here! You heard from your husband yet?

[FX: sound of getting phone out of bag]

WOMAN 1: He still hasn't texted. Not sure if he's even read my message. Is there any way of checking?

WOMAN 2: Not unless you have read receipts turned on.

WOMAN 1: Oh, well. Best try to give him a call.

WOMAN 2: Not going to give your wife and kids a call?

MAN 1: No, I've sent her a message. I feel very self-conscious talking to people when I'm on the train.

WOMAN 2: Unlike some people. The other night I was travelling back a bit later than usual and there was a young woman talking to what must have been her mate about how her date had gone that night. All sounded quite romantic until she moved onto what they had got up to in the toilet. Was like an audiobook of an erotic novel!

MAN 1: I'm not sure I would have known where to look. Did she even realise that other people might be listening?

WOMAN 2: Don't think so. She couldn't have done, it was like she was in her bedroom going on and on.

WOMAN 1: Still nothing. I'll be having words when I get home.

WOMAN 2: Your husband better watch out. Sounds like he's in the dog house.

WOMAN 1: He'll be sleeping on the sofa tonight. Can't believe he's out boozing it with his mates while I'm stuck on here.

MAN 1: At least the doors are open. Bit of fresh air.

[FX: Beep of doors and swoosh as they close]

MAN 1: Sorry.

ACT 8 - Somewhere in London

MAN 2: You useless tosser. No good for Mel anymore. Why don't you do the right thing and take responsibility for what you have done? I know you don't want to leave her but do you really think you still deserve her? Wouldn't be surprised if she just upped and left once you tell her what's happened.

ACT 9 - Cafe

[FX: Clink of spoons and crockery. Hiss of a coffee machine]

MAN 2: So this is it. All ready to go.

MAN 3: What's up, mate. You look unsure about something.

MAN 2: No, it's just. Well, I was talking with Mel last night and she was hinting about it being time for us to think about having a family.

MAN 3: Bloody hell! You ready for all that yet?

MAN 2: Not sure. Took me by surprise to be honest. I mean, we've talked about but was thinking perhaps in another few years.

MAN 3: Well, Mel still looks alright but you, mate, you look knackered!

MAN 2: Thanks. It's this job, nearly killing me.

MAN 3: And this is why we're doing this thing. Time to earn a few quid and then get out. Sure you can only put in 200?

MAN 2: Yep, that's it. Don't keep on saying the amount to me or I really will get cold feet.

MAN 3: OK, no pressure. You ready to transfer it across?

MAN 2: Are you sure this is going to be safe?

MAN 3: Look, would I be putting in my life savings if I had any doubts?

MAN 2: You're right. Fortune favours the brave. Let me get online.

MAN 3: Take your time. Want another drink?

MAN 2: Yeah, go on then. Let's have a tea to celebrate.

ACT 10 - Back on the train (again)

[INTERNAL TANNON]: I regret to inform you that this service is still cancelled. You are strongly advised to seek alternative means of transport. All tickets will be accepted on overground and underground rail services as well as any connecting buses. Shortly, the doors will close and the lights will go off. I repeat, you are strongly advised to seek alternative means of transport.

WOMAN 2: Still cancelled? Threatening us again.

WOMAN 1: Seems like it. Expect to be plunged into total darkness.

[FX: Beep and doors swoosh shut. Ping as lights go out]

MAN 1: On cue.

WOMAN 1: Ah, that's a proper hint.

WOMAN 2: No funny business you!

WOMAN 1: What, I haven't done anything.

ALL: Laughter

WOMAN 2: Strange isn't it?

MAN 1: What is?

WOMAN 2: The only time anyone talks to each other on the train is when something has gone wrong and we're all massively inconvenienced. And when you do take the time to talk, you find out that most people are alright really.

MAN 1: Most kind.

WOMAN 1: Yes, thank you.

WOMAN 2: Think about it. When you have actually talked to someone on the train - the tube for that matter - how often have you thought what the hell am I doing? Usually, they're pretty decent and normal people. Just like us. But as a collective, complete arseholes!

MAN 1: Did you deliberately not mention the bus?

WOMAN 2: Are you serious? You should never talk to anyone on the bus. Made that mistake once.

WOMAN 1: Yeah, what happened?

WOMAN 2: He seemed like a pretty normal bloke. Good looking, truth be told, but I can't even remember what I first said to him. He took it completely the wrong way and started trying to chat me up. And that's when I saw it.

MAN 2: Saw what?

WOMAN 2: His thing. Hanging out of his flies.

MAN 2: Good Lord!

WOMAN 2: And before you ask, this wasn't an accident. He'd pulled it out deliberately.

WOMAN 1: Oh, for goodness sake. What did you do?

WOMAN 2: Got off off at the next stop but he got off as well and started walking after me. That thing flapping around in the wing and all.

MAN 2: Sounds traumatic...Nothing dreadful happened did it?

WOMAN 2: Not for me it didn't. I gave him a sharp kick in the general area that was causing offence. Went down like a bag of spuds and then I ran to get onto the next bus.

WOMAN 1: You must have been so frightened.

WOMAN 2: Too right. Although didn't realise until I got home when I burst into tears.

WOMAN 1: Oh, you poor love.

WOMAN 2: Sorry about that you two. Didn't mean to bring the mood down.

MAN 1: That's OK.

[FX: Beep and doors swoosh open.]

MAN 1: Anyone getting off?

WOMAN 2: Not a chance.

WOMAN 1: Me neither.

ACT 11 - Somewhere in London

MAN 2: Think, think. What am I going to do? [In a whisper] what am I going to do?

ACT 12 - Outside the office (on the street, sound of traffic)

MAN 2: Sorry, I don't think I understand what you mean.

MAN 3: There's no easy way to say it. The stock's crashed.

MAN 2: What do you mean crashed? Surely we can get back the money we put in?

MAN 3: It's crashed big time. Market's been spooked, shares worth 1 pence each.

MAN 2: 1 pence?!?!? We bought them for a tenner each. A dead cert you said.

MAN 3: Calm down man.

MAN 2: Calm down? How can I calm down? I've just lost the best part of 200 grand. Do you realise what this means? My mortgage is pretty much back to what it was when we bought the house. Mel's going to go ape at the very best. At the worst, she'll kill me. You seem to be taking this very well.

MAN 3: In shock. Half a mill gone up in smoke.

MAN 2: Surely we can do something? Perhaps they'll bounce back.

MAN 3: I wish there was chance of that. Seems they were all smoke and mirrors and a reputation built out of nothing. There's no groundbreaking technology there. Nothing. Just an empty warehouse on a hill in Hong Kong.

MAN 2: Shit. What am I going to do?

MAN 3: I think a drink will help. Come on, I'm buying.

MAN 2 [under his breath]: Shit. Shit. Shit.

ACT 13 - Back on the train (again)

[INTERNAL TANNON]: I am pleased to inform you that this service has just been reinstated. There will still be severe delays as the lines out of Liverpool Street are very congested. However, I expect to be moving in about ten minutes. For those of you who stayed on the train, thank you for your patience.

WOMAN 2: Must have found all the bits, then.

WOMAN 1: Hallelujah! Still haven't heard from him, the tosser.

MAN 1: What, nothing at all?

WOMAN 1: Not a peep. He'll be half drunk now. Lucky him.

WOMAN 2: Lucky him indeed! Might keep a bottle of something in my bag in case this happens again.

MAN 1: G&Ts on the train. Very civilised.

WOMAN 2: Must have opened the barriers. Here come the floods of people they've been holding on the concourse.

WOMAN 1: Glad we're sitting pretty!

MAN 1: Too, right. Imagine having to stand all the way home after all this. Excuse me, I'm just going to send a quick text home.

WOMAN 2: Yeah, me too.

ACT 14 - On a platform

MAN 2 [slurring and shouting]: What am I going to do? What the hell am I going to do? Just pick up the bloody phone and talk to her. She'll be wondering where you are. How am I going to tell her I've lost everything? I can't. I can't do it!

MAN 2 [crying]: I'm so sorry, Mel...I've really let you down this time...I'm no good for you...your mother always said that...even said to my face that I'd amount to nothing...turns out she was right.

[FX: Shoes knocking together. Stumble. Scuffle of feet.]

MAN 2: Woooh!

[FX: Sound of train approaching. Thud. Screech of train brakes.]

FINAL ACT

[INTERNAL TANNON]: The next station is Chelmsford. Next station Chelmsford. On behalf of East Anglia Railways I would like to apologise for the disruption to your journey this evening. This was due to an earlier incident at Gidea Park. Safe journey home folks.

MAN 1: Finally!

WOMAN 2: Well, that's me, too.

WOMAN 1: Lovely talking with you both. See you when it happens again.

WOMAN 2: Not too soon, I hope. The suicide I mean. Enjoyed spending the evening with you both. How ridiculous, we don't even know each other's names. I'm Sam.

MAN 1: What are the chances? I'm Sam, too.

WOMAN 2: Shut up! Don't tell me you're Sam as well.

[Laughing]

WOMAN 1: No, I'm Mel.

WOMAN 2: Well, lovely to meet you Mel. Take care.

MAN 1: Yeah, see you around. And tell that husband of yours to answer his phone next time!

[phone rings]

WOMAN 1: Talk of the Devil. This is him now.

MAN 1: See ya.

WOMAN 2: Bye.

[FX: Beeps, doors swoosh shut and train departs]

WOMAN 1: You bloody idiot. Where have you been and why have you been ignoring my calls?

POLICE CONSTABLE: Hello. Am I speaking with Melanie Simms?

WOMAN 1: Yes, who is this please?

POLICE CONSTABLE: This is PC Derry of the British Transport Police. I'm afraid that I've got some bad news... [Music, fade out]