

Taking the Plunge

A short play

By Rich Espey

Characters

TREVOR 1987, 25, a young man living in Brooklyn in 1987
TREVOR 2017, 25, the same young man living in Brooklyn in 2017
DEACONESS, 30, an angel, a sister, a mother, a preacher

Setting

An open area underneath the Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges

Time

An early evening in 1987 and 2017, both at once

Synopsis: TREVOR 2017 and TREVOR 1987 are two incarnations of the same soul at different times. TREVOR 2017 wants to propose to his boyfriend and build a life with him; TREVOR 1987 is at the end of his rope and wants to end his life. TREVOR 2017 needs TREVOR 1987 to get out of his way in order to fulfill his dream. TREVOR 1987 needs to sacrifice himself in order to make TREVOR 2017's dream possible.

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Taking The Plunge

TREVOR 1987, 25, is lying on his back. He's dressed in clothing that suggests it's 1987 – a jacket with the sleeves pushed up, a thin tie. He's a little drunk, maybe more than a little. TREVOR 2017, also 25, is dressed in modern clothes and is writing something very large with a very large piece of sidewalk chalk. Up higher, the DEACONESS, 30, dressed in a church robe, sings.

DEACONESS

Wade in the water
Wade in the water children
Wade in the water
God's gonna trouble the water.

TREVOR 2017's writing path is now being blocked by TREVOR 1987's body.

TREVOR 2017

Dude. Hey, Dude!

TREVOR 1987

Which one's higher?

TREVOR 2017

Any chance I could get you to watch the clouds someplace else?

TREVOR 1987

The pedestrian part, I mean. Where you can get to just by walking. Don't have the energy these days to do much climbing.

DEACONESS

Wade in the water
Wade in the water children

TREVOR 2017

I just need you to move for like two minutes.

TREVOR 1987

Not as much foot traffic on the Manhattan.

TREVOR 2017

Look man, I just need to write something on here in chalk.

TREVOR 1987

The Brooklyn's more romantic, but you have to climb the tower, because if you jump from the pedestrian part you just land in the roadway and get hit by a car, which would still do it, but it would completely screw up somebody else's day. Gotta find a way to hit the water.

DEACONESS

Wade in the water
God's gonna trouble the water

The DEACONESS touches TREVOR 1987. She goes back to the stairs.

TREVOR 2017

Whoa. Are you serious, man? Look, there's lots of people who can help...

TREVOR 1987

You can help me. And I'll help you. You interested? You look like it. Twenty bucks, man, what do you like?

TREVOR 2017

Wait, I thought –

TREVOR 1987

Let me take care of you for twenty bucks, that's all I need. Yeah, I was just being a big old nelly drama queen! Pay no attention to the drama queen, people!! She just needs a twenty to make it through the night. Awww...I got you to feel sorry for me.

TREVOR 2017

Look man, all I want to do is finish my message here.

TREVOR 1987

Twenty bucks, man. OK, fifteen. OK, look, TEN! Come on, anything you want. Anything. I don't care about safe. I mean, you should. You should stay safe, but it doesn't matter anymore what you do to me.

TREVOR 2017

Look, I don't do that, man.

TREVOR 1987

I ain't had nothin' to eat all day. So come on and fill me up.

TREVOR 2017

Read what I wrote, man. Read it!

TREVOR 1987

"Marry me." Aw, ain't that sweet. You come see me when you get tired of her.

TREVOR 2017

It's a him, OK? Now all I gotta do is write his name.

TREVOR 1987

Him. Shit. Does President Reagan know about you two? Or at least Mayor Koch?

TREVOR 2017

What? Look, man, I'm all about peace, love and understanding, know what I'm sayin'? So if you don't mind -

TREVOR 1987

Dude! Elvis Costello rocks! (*singing*) "What's so funny 'bout peace love and understanding..."

TREVOR 2017

Whatever. Look, let me just write what I need to write here and you can lie down over there and sleep it off, OK? Look, here's ten bucks. No, here's twenty.

TREVOR 1987

That's more like it. Tell me what you like.

TREVOR 2017

You get it if you get outta my way.

DEACONESS

Amazing Grace!
How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now I'm found
Was blind but now I see.

TREVOR 1987

What's his name?

TREVOR 2017

Move and I'll write it. Well, sort of.

TREVOR 1987

Tell me his name...and I'll move. No! Tell me all about the two of you. And I'll move. But it better be good! I'll only move if it is the greatest love story since Caesar and Cleopatra! Since Romeo and Juliet! Since Rock Hudson and...the sleazy pool boy who got him sick...

DEACONESS

(continuing to sing over the dialogue)

When we've been here ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun.

We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we've first begun.

TREVOR 2017

It's Robert. And if you don't let me write his name here, you're gonna screw up my plan. My dream, see? In one hour I'm gonna surprise Robert at his office at City Hall. We're gonna take a nice walk over the Brooklyn Bridge. We're gonna have a bottle of wine in the park and then just before sunset we're gonna walk by here, like this. I'm gonna lead him up those steps, just like this. We sit down, look down...and voila.

TREVOR 1987

Is he gonna say yes? Is he? Your silence speaks volumes, Mary.

TREVOR 2017

Look, he's 34. Yeah, way older than me. Everybody says I'm too young. They say, "Why do you want to waste your best years, Trevor?" but, man...Robert...Robert is everything I have ever wanted! He's totally amazing!! And I want to get married right here. Both of us, we walk down those steps.

DEACONESS

Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today in the sight of God and the shadow of these two beautiful bridges in a city that saved us to unite these two fabulous men in holy matrimony. If anyone here can show just cause why these two should not be united let them speak now or forever hold their peace.

TREVOR 2017

That's a silence that speaks volumes.

TREVOR 1987

Wait, your name's Trevor?

TREVOR 2017

Yeah.

TREVOR 1987

Me too. What are the chances, huh? So why this spot? Why in the sight of God and the shadow of these two beautiful bridges?

TREVOR 2017

This was like the first place I went to when I got off the bus from Sulphur Springs, Georgia. I heard it was cheaper to live over here so I decide I'll walk over the bridge to get a good look for myself. And I walk over the bridge and I look at that water, for some reason I start wondering if that water is hot or cold or somewhere in between. And I just have to know. I don't know why. So I come down here. I take off my shoes and I wade in.

TREVOR 1987

How is it?

TREVOR 2017

It's November! Cold and sharp as Daddy's voice when he caught me making out with Tommy Green!

TREVOR 1987

I know that Daddy voice. Razors in your guts.

TREVOR 2017

Yeah, it's so cold it burns, but at the same time...I feel like I've been saved. Like I'm free of the stink of Sulphur Springs.

DEACONESS

For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatever disease he had.

TREVOR 1987

But what does this place have to do with your lover?

TREVOR 2017

My partner? See Robert and me...well, our second date we come over to the park here with a nice bottle of wine and we end up taking a little swim right there under the bridge. This was the next August, so the water felt like Grandma's marmalade. And one thing leads to another...I told myself we shoulda waited till the third date, but...sometimes you just gotta take the plunge.

TREVOR 1987

You ever skinny dip in Sulphur Springs? That creek off of Jackson Ferry?

TREVOR 2017

Whoa.

TREVOR 1987

You smell just like Sulphur Springs. Once you get that smell on you...

BOTH

... you can't never get rid of it.

TREVOR 2017

My mama says that.

TREVOR 1987

Everybody's Mama in Sulphur Springs says that.

TREVOR 2017

Wait, get outta here! You're from Sulphur Springs, Georgia?

TREVOR 1987

Guilty.

TREVOR 2017

What are the chances of two guys named Trevor from Sulphur Springs ending up under these two beautiful bridges?

TREVOR 1987

What are the chances of two guys like us staying put in Sulphur Springs.

DEACONESS

It is an abomination, Trevor! An abomination! I don't know if there is a place for you on this Earth, but there is not one in Sulphur Springs!

TREVOR 1987

Momma! Where am I supposed to go?

DEACONESS

Your daddy catches you anywhere in this town...hell, anywhere in Georgia! Oh, Lord, Trevor! I will pray for you! Mark my words, Trevor, I will pray for you!!!

TREVOR 1987

Oh, Momma...

TREVOR 2017

I'm going back there.

TREVOR 1987

Good luck with that.

TREVOR 2017

Not to stay. Just to get married.

TREVOR 1987

What, you gonna pull one over on your Momma and Daddy? Make 'em think "their prayers done worked! Hallelujah!" What, you got a girl who's gonna play along?

TREVOR 2017

With Robert. We're gonna go to my old church. And we're gonna stand at that altar and my sister the Deaconess is gonna say

DEACONESS

Do you, Trevor, take Robert in the sight of God and the smell of sulphur to be your lawfully wedded husband?

TREVOR 2017

I do.

DEACONESS

And do you Robert, take Trevor in the sight of God and the smell of sulphur to be your lawfully wedded husband?

TREVOR 1987

They'll string you up.

TREVOR 2017

Let 'em try. Time for a revolution.

DEACONESS

What do we want? Marriage Equality! When do want it? Now! What do we want? Marriage Equality! When do want it? Now!

TREVOR 1987

What century are you from?

TREVOR 2017

What century are you from?

TREVOR 1987

You got guts, man. More than I ever got from Sulphur Springs.

DEACONESS

The lesson is from the Book of John, Chapter 5, verse 14. "For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatever disease he had."

TREVOR 2017

So how come I ain't never seen you around Sulphur Springs? We gotta be about the same age. How old are you? Where'd you go to school?

TREVOR 1987

I got outta your way. Now how about that twenty bucks.

TREVOR 2017

You go to Caswell County High?

TREVOR 1987

Yeah, I went to Caswell. Till my Daddy kicked me outta the house.

TREVOR 2017

Who was the Principal?

TREVOR 1987

Come on, man. Fifteen. I give you what you need. Safe stuff man. You'll be safe, I swear.

TREVOR 2017

Who was the Principal??!!

TREVOR 1987

Just 'cause I'm totally fucked doesn't mean you will be!! I would not do that, man!!

TREVOR 2017

Oh, I see. Bullshit artist, huh? I might be from Sulphur Springs, Georgia, but I'm not some fool. I got some writing to do.

TREVOR 1987

I need that twenty bucks so bad.

TREVOR 2017

I thought it was fifteen?

TREVOR 1987 and TREVOR 2017 fight as the DEACONESS sings

DEACONESS

Wade in the water
Wade in the water children
Wade in the water
God's gonna trouble the water

TREVOR 2017 subdues TREVOR 1987, pinning him on the ground. The DEACONESS lays hands on both men, then retires.

TREVOR 2017

Like I said, I got some writing to do.

TREVOR 2017 reaches into his pocket for his chalk. It has been broken, and he pulls out a handful of dust. TREVOR 2017 drops the dust. The DEACONESS picks up what she can and sprinkles it on TREVOR 1987 and recites.

DEACONESS

Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of his great mercy to take unto himself the soul of our dear brother here departed, we therefore commit his body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life.

Where there is Trevor there is trouble, and where there is trouble there is Trevor. Oh my baby boy...I hoped this city might save you.

TREVOR 1987

You already wrote "Marry Me." That's all that matters. He'll see that. The "Robert" doesn't matter.

TREVOR 2017

I wasn't gonna write "Robert". I was gonna write "Trebtor". That's Robert backwards.

TREVOR 1987

How cute.

TREVOR 2017

Yeah, it is! It is, OK?! I call him Trebor and he calls me Rovert, which is Trevor backwards! Our names are almost the same backwards, but not quite, and we think that's cute, and we call each other by our backwards names, and nobody else does that and we like that and we've done that for four years which is why I think we should get married, not just here where it's legal in the state of New York and under the eyes of God and these two beautiful bridges in the city that saved me but way down in Sulphur Springs in the eyes of God where it stinks of sulphur, and you had to go and break my chalk!

TREVOR 1987

People have survived jumps from both bridges. And they've died from both. Which to choose...

DEACONESS

For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatever disease he had.

TREVOR 1987

I think it doesn't much matter. Just as long as it works. I would hate to be one of those survivors. Gawd. I'd probably end up on Donahue or something.

DEACONESS

Coming up at 4 today on Donahue! A jump from the Brooklyn Bridge didn't kill him, but can he survive the gay plague?!

TREVOR 2017

I need to get to Robert's office.

TREVOR 1987

Of course you do.

TREVOR 2017 is almost gone.

TREVOR 2017

You should come to our wedding.

TREVOR 1987

Oh, well if I'm in town I certainly will. The name's Trevor. Just like you. From Sulphur Springs, Georgia, just like you. The same stench.

DEACONESS

(singing) Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come;
'Tis Grace that brought me safe thus far
and Grace will lead me home.

TREVOR 2017 approaches TREVOR 1987.

TREVOR 2017

Here's twenty bucks.

TREVOR 1987

Keep it. Wedding present. Or just buy some chalk.

*TREVOR 1987 kisses TREVOR 2017. They part.
They both walk away, in opposite directions.*

TREVOR 1987

The Brooklyn Bridge it is. Gotta go trouble the waters.

TREVOR 2017

(to an unseen passerby)

You know where I can get some chalk?

END OF PLAY