

7 Weeks. 3 Days

By Claudia I. Haas

A Ten-Minute Play

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7 Weeks, 3 Days

CHARACTERS: 2 females (they should look around the same age)

Mari, 14-15, sick and a bit lonely

Emma 14-15, friend, a bit clueless but well-meaning

SYNOPSIS: Emma visits her friend Mari. Mari's been sick. It's awkward. She's awkward. Everything is awkward.

TIME: Today, later afternoon, after school

PLACE: a living room or family room in MARI'S home. All you need are some chairs and possibly a table.

7 Weeks, 3 Days

(AT RISE, MARI is sitting. She can be reading or at her computer. She is thin and dressed in comfortable (yoga?) clothes. EMMA enters and quietly looks at MARI for a moment.)

MARI

Emma! How long have you been standing there?

EMMA

Just for you know – a second. You look ... great!

MARI

Liar.

EMMA

No – really. Absolutely. I didn't know/

MARI

/What to expect?

EMMA

Yes.

MARI

It's been ages. Well actually, seven weeks and three days but who's counting?

EMMA

I know. I'm sorry. My mom said you were "away." Hard to visit someone when you don't know where they are.

MARI

Nope. Not away. Here. Or in the hospital.

EMMA

I didn't know. Nobody did. I mean I called and my mom called/

MARI

/And then you stopped calling.

EMMA

Kind of. Sorry. (Beat.) Sooo... coming back to school anytime soon?

MARI

The prevailing theory is “maybe in two weeks.” Which I have heard for seven weeks and three days.

EMMA

How will you catch up?

MARI

I have this tutor. Comes three days a week and gives me all this – stuff. Stupid, stupid stuff. I mean who cares about extinct species when you could be extinct?

EMMA

What?

MARI

I’m sick.

EMMA

But... sick as in “Get Well Soon,” “Wishing you a Speedy Recovery,” /

MARI

/”Sending you thoughts and prayers” – that’s a personal favorite. No. Sick as in, “we’re going to try this and see what happens...”

EMMA

I didn’t know – Mari. Nobody knows anything. There were all these rumors – maybe Mari is in trouble – maybe rehab – maybe Juvie Hall – all sots of stuff -

MARI

Whaaat?

EMMA

Sorry. Shouldn’t have said –

MARI

How’s that possible – I’m the poster child for people pleasing. The original “good little girl” who never stands up for herself. Of course, what do they say? “Only the good die young?” Funny how easy it is for people to think the worst.

EMMA

Sometimes we fall overboard looking for drama.

MARI

My days are filled with drama.

EMMA

Why so quiet? I mean nobody knows anything. I finally took the plunge and called your mom. Again.

MARI

My mom wanted to keep it in the family. Till everything was settled and we had answers to all the questions people ask. She ... has a hard time answering questions right now. Most of the time she is a puddle.

MARI

- do *you* have trouble answering questions?

MARI

If that's your way of asking, what's wrong with me. It's called AML: acute myeloid leukemia.

EMMA

Is ... that bad?

MARI

Hard to say. It's different for everyone. Mine has been a bit stubborn even with chemotherapy, I had to do some targeted drug therapy which does not make me feel great.

(Beat.)

EMMA

I don't know what that means.

MARI

I wish I didn't know what it means. My white blood cells are at war with my red blood cells. The white blood cells have been winning some battles. But all is not lost! We forge on to new battlegrounds. (Beat.) It's a form of cancer.

EMMA

I'm sorry. I keep saying that! Because I don't know what to say. The only people I have known with cancer were – old.

MARI

Do I look old?

EMMA

No.

MARI

'Cause I want to be. You know – old. I want to grow old.

EMMA

You will! Of course you will! Don't talk like that!

MARI

I have to say it. Nobody let's me say it. Nobody talks about dying. I could die, Emma and nobody will talk to me about it. Please, let me talk.

EMMA

If it – will help you. (Beat.) I don't like dying talk.

MARI

I don't either. Believe me. But I think it needs to be part of the conversation.

EMMA

I don't know what to say. Again. (Beat) ... will you?

MARI

I don't know. Everyone says "looking good." But then they try a new drug. It's a guessing game.

(Beat.)

Tell me about school. I've been so out of it.

EMMA

It's kind of same-old, same-old. Oh! Mrs. Hudwalker's leaving.

MARI

Hooray! Did everyone dance in the halls?

EMMA

On the cafeteria tables. The lunch ladies were furious!

MARI

Oh I wish I was there!

EMMA

And - at the choir concert - Mr. Crane came up to the podium and laid a really bad, smelly one. The choir couldn't sing – because half of them couldn't breathe and the other half couldn't stop laughing!

MARI

Poor old smelly Crane! He's like an old dog. Faithful, well-meaning and flatulent.

EMMA

He probably wanted to curl up and die!

MARI

I don't think he wanted to die.

EMMA

I didn't mean –

MARI

No worries. Dying comes up a lot in conversation. “Do or die!” “Old habits die hard!”

EMMA

“I'd die for some chocolate!” Oh! Chocolate. The good kind.

(She takes a small box of chocolates out of her purse.)

MARI

Ohhh! Now, *this* is worth dying for.

EMMA

Can you – eat it?

MARI

I'm going to try. And I am not sharing.

(Beat.)

EMMA

It's all different now, isn't it?

MARI

It doesn't have to be. It's just – been months since we were together. If we talked more...

EMMA

We will. I promise. I'll call you every night. No. Wait. I have rehearsal. I'll call after school.

MARI

You're in a play!

EMMA

Chorus. Nothing to get excited about but yeah, I'm in a play. *Beauty and the Beast*. At least I'm not the Beast. But yeah – I'll call you.

MARI

Cross your heart and hope – cross your heart and - everything?

EMMA

Cross my heart – and everything.

MARI

I'd like that.

EMMA

Me, too.

MARI

I have to rest now. I hope you don't mind. I get this medicine and it makes me sick and tired which I am sick and tired of. Don't know which is worse! The disease or the medicine.

EMMA

You can tell me about it. Talk to me, Mari.

MARI

I won't scare you away for another seven weeks and three days?

EMMA

Not a chance.

MARI

I will. I'll call tomorrow around this time.

EMMA

I'll be waiting.

(EMMA starts to exit.)

MARI

You're going to google AML, aren't you?

EMMA

What? No/

MARI

/You're going to google it.

EMMA

Probably. How do you spell it? Acute.....

MARI

Just type in AML. It'll come up. Believe me. I know. And then we'll talk some more. Not just about this – but about everything. Music, boys, Beauty and the Beast - even – you know - the future... and you'll visit again?

EMMA

It's a promise. Save me a chocolate.

MARI

Not a chance.

(They smile. EMMA again starts to leave.)

MARI

Emma? I'm not contagious.

(There is a long pent-up hug and finally EMMA exits. MARI looks at her chocolates.)

MARI (cont'd)

Maybe tomorrow. I'll have one tomorrow. (Beat.) Thanks, Emma.

- END OF PLAY -