

Hiking by Claudia Haas
Contact: claudiahaas12@gmail.com

CAST: 2 females

Jane (20); grad student; helper; taller than Ella

Ella (15); lives in the eye of an emotional hurricane; shorter than Jane

PLACE: Grocery Store with a café

TIME: A hot summer day; today

(Lights up on a small grocery aisle. ELLA is reaching for a product on an upper shelf. It is just out of reach. She has on a sweater over a t-shirt and wears long jeans. JANE sees and comes to help. JANE also has a sweater on. As ELLA reaches, the sleeves on her sweater pulls up. There are scars on ELLA'S arms.)

JANE

Let me. The strawberry?

ELLA

Raspberry, please.

(JANE pulls down the raspberry– whatever – yoghurt, fruit bar, whatever works.)

Thanks. I always wanted to be taller.

JANE

It wasn't fun in middle school when I towered over everyone. But it comes in handy now. (Beat.) You should get that looked at. They could get infected.

(JANE pulls her sweater sleeve down.)

ELLA

It's nothing. I hike a lot and like ... blazing my own trails so when branches get in my way –

JANE

You just bull right through them.

ELLA

Yes.

(JANE takes off her sweater. She ties it around her waist. There are old scars on her arms similar to what's on ELLA'S arm. ELLA notices.)

JANE

Hot in here. You'd think they'd crank the A.C. up on a day like today. (Beat.) I was just heading to the café. Care for some coffee? Or a water?

ELLA

No. Thank-you.

JANE

If you change your mind/

ELLA

/I won't.

(JANE exits to the café. ELLA puts down any of the groceries she's collected. She looks at her arms and pulls down her sleeves. She hugs herself and then heads to the café. JANE has already gotten herself some water or coffee and is settling down. JANE is not wearing her sweater. ELLA walks to her and observes JANE'S scarred arms.)

ELLA (cont'd)

They're ugly.

JANE

I know. I used to ... hike a lot. I'm Jane. I was named after "Jane Eyre." My parents had a thing for literary heroines. But I tell people I was named after Jane Austen. Much more hip.

ELLA

Ella. Like the girl with the cinders. Only I wasn't named after her. It's an old family name and I hate it.

JANE

I think it's required that you hate your name for a few years. (Beat.) Want to talk about it?

ELLA

I really do hike.

JANE

I believe you.

ELLA

It's the best way – to get away from things. Did you hike?

JANE

I ran! In the streets. On the treadmill. Up hills. Down hills. Whenever I had a free moment, I was running.

ELLA

Did it help?

JANE

Sometimes. But at the end of the day, I always wound up alone in my room. And... with my thoughts. I couldn't stop the thoughts.

ELLA

You weren't good enough.

JANE

Or pretty enough. Or smart enough. Not fast enough. Nothing was enough. I come from a family of literary lovers. Professors. Discussions of "Outside the Doll House. Exploring images of females in Scandinavian Theatre" were considered good dinnertime conversation.

ELLA

Out of my league.

JANE

Mine, too. Plus I had no interest so I retired to my room and mourned my shortcomings.

ELLA

With a razor.

JANE

Yes.

ELLA

You don't ...

JANE

"Hike" anymore. No. I was pushing friends away. I fell for a guy – and he was pretty appalled. When he saw my stash of bloody tissues, he told my parents.

ELLA

My parents can't know.

JANE

You never know. My parents already suspected. There are only so many places you can stash stuff. After the hurt looks and some tears, we talked.

ELLA

And that fixed it?

JANE

Wish it was that easy. First, I wasn't ready.

ELLA

I like the rush. When I pierce the skin and the blood comes out, there's nothing else on my mind. I am present. Just me. My arm. My blood. I forget everything. School. Expectations. All my faults – they disappear and I am fully my own person.

JANE

Are you? Are you really your own person if cutting your arms owns you?

ELLA

I can control it.

JANE

That's what I thought.

ELLA

I'm not you.

JANE

No, and I shouldn't make assumptions. Sorry.

ELLA

Did you just ... apologize ... to me?

JANE

Yes.

ELLA

That's a first in my life.

JANE

I'm glad to finally be first in something.

ELLA

What happened with the guy – who told your parents?

JANE

He's with someone who didn't have ... issues.

ELLA

Sorry.

JANE

Don't be. That's a hurt that healed a while ago.

ELLA
Will those ever heal?

JANE
I don't know. They're fading.

ELLA
Maybe they'll always be with you.

JANE
Maybe. I don't mind. I look at it as a reminder. A reminder that, "I am enough."

(ELLA'S phone dings. She reads a text.)

ELLA
I have to go.

JANE
Do you have a contact list?

ELLA
Well... yeah. It's a phone.

JANE
May I?

(ELLA hands JANE her phone.)

JANE (cont'd)
My number. Just in case – you want to ...

ELLA
... talk about hiking.

JANE
Or why sushi is overrated or Marvel comics or – anything.

ELLA
Thanks.

(ELLA puts her phone in her pocket, straightens her sweater sleeves and with a wave good-bye to JANE, exits. JANE starts to put on her sweater. Changes her mind and takes it back off and finishes her drink.)

END OF PLAY

