

Thirteen Years

By

Jill K. Forbath

Characters

Laurel: a woman in her mid-thirties

Marsha: a woman in her early forties

Chris: a young woman in her twenties

Setting

A lakeside restaurant in a planned community in Southern California

Author's Note

This play had its West Coast Premiere by Changing Masks Theatre Company of Orange County, California in a non-equity production in 2000.

About the Author

Jill K. Forbath successfully ran the West Coast Ten Minute Play Contest and Festival for over ten years. She pioneered the production of the ten-minute play among local Southern California non-equity theaters for the benefit of local and US playwrights, directors and actors. Jill directs and writes as well as running her two recently incorporated small businesses, AnteatrWebDesign.com and OurWeddingDance.com For additional information please see her bio at the web address: <http://ourweddingdance.com/directorjillforbath.htm> or email the playwright at jillkat@cox.net

Laurel
(Spoken out to the audience to an imaginary lunch guest)

Excuse me? No, I'm waiting for a friend. Do I OWN property in this city? (Good come on line.) Well, yes, as a matter of fact, I do. It's small, a two bedroom; just down the street. You too? Well, we COULD be neighbors. (Nice shoulders.) Oh, I have plants to keep me company. Aquatic ones. (I wonder if he likes the ocean.) Lilies, hyacinths, parrot fern... You too? I can't believe I haven't see you... (I would have remembered those biceps.) I walk a lot. Oh, you run. From your neighbor... My neighbor made me cut hundreds of vines down. Said he'd sue or something if I didn't. Can we kill him? I don't think so. Yes, I hate him! Last Saturday I was hacking into those vines swearing like a fishwife and at one point I shouted, straddling my water barrels, hot weed-wacker in hand, "If I fall into this fucking water with this fucking electrified weed-wacker I'm going to sue the shit out of your sorry fucking ass."

(Marsha and Chris enter.)

Marsha
Been waiting long?

Laurel
No, why?

Marsha
You're talking to yourself again.

Laurel
What do you mean? I'm having a perfectly fine one-sided conversation with Mr. Muscleman at that table by the window – the one eating Caesar salad and slurping his iced tea. Of course, he's a plant-lover and doer of justice just like me. If you hadn't shown up we'd have been halfway to the rainforests of Brazil by now collecting orchids for my greenhouse. Besides he likes a woman who can swear, I can tell.

Marsha
Same ole Laurel. I'd like you to meet my girlfriend, Chris. This is Laurel, she's into plants and muscles.

Laurel
Mussels? No, I don't think so, besides isn't this a month with an "r" in it?

Chris
Hi, nice to meet you.

Laurel

And YOU. This is a surprise. I don't think I remember Marsha mentioning a Chris.

Chris

Probably not, we just met.

Marsha

I thought I'd introduce you two. Laurel and I have been friends for over thirteen years, Chris.

Chris

How lucky. I've only known Marsha for...

Marsha and Chris

Four months.

Laurel

Oh. Has it been thirteen years? Gosh, I'm old. I should retire. Wear purple.

Chris

I've never known anyone that long.

Laurel

(Because you're not that old.) That IS right. We met in grad school. (laughs) You won't believe this, how silly... Marsha was standing in an elevator going up to class and I got in with all my books and junk and suddenly found myself looking down at her shoes. We were wearing the same shoes. Fanfares. The company is out of business, I think. Maybe they were bought by Connie? I'm going senile. Who cares about shoes anyway? Sit down. Have some lunch. Take a menu. Marsha and I have MBAs, Chris... perhaps one of the more useless degrees available today.

Marsha

That's right. There we were two grown women staring, pointing and laughing at a couple of pair of gray, sling-back pumps.

Laurel

After that we were inseparable.

Chris

I know the feeling.

Laurel

(Beat.) We shared everything. So many secrets! So many years! (laughs)
Remember that phase you went through with the black guys. It really is true,
Chris; isn't it Marsha? Tell her!

Marsha

I don't think Chris wants to hear about it. *(Beat.)* We know what we want to
order. Waitress! Hey, busboy, could you get us a waitress?

Laurel

Then there were the foreigners; Canadians, South Africans, Israelis. You guys
aren't in a hurry? I'm so happy to be away from that computer hardware bin I
market peripherals out of, I could do an adagio for the fish in that oversized tank
there.

Chris

We're not in that much of a hurry Marsha. *(Beat)* Do you dance?

Laurel

Not any more; just scuba dive.

Chris

I'm taking judo at school. I'm learning to throw. Actually being short makes me
nervous sometimes. I carry pepper spray and a stun gun when I run in the park.

Laurel

Really? Great way to get a date. Maybe I should try that. Do you spray them
and then stun them? Or stun them and then spray them? I suppose if they
were stunned first they could watch... But then again, if they were sprayed first
it'd be like...

Marsha

As a matter of fact we ARE in a hurry. Remember, Chris? Waitress! So, how's
Mark?

Laurel

Mark-who?

Chris

Is he your boyfriend?

Laurel

Fiancé. Past tense. He hated plants. So I fed him to one of them. Seriously, I
think he prefers redheads. Orangutans to be precise.

Marsha

Mark is a zoologist. I thought he was wonderful. So earthy, full of nature, of love for his fellow animal-kind. He was good for you Laurel. I liked him.

Laurel

So you go out with him. Hey, let's drop him, or I'll pick-up where I left off with those black guys. Body builders all of them, Chris. Marsha used to say they could keep her up all night and still work-out at the gym in the morning. Such stamina. *Those* were the days.

Marsha

Chris, that was just a phase I went through... on the way. It was nothing. I'm where I want to be now.

Laurel

Marsha told me she's slept with over three-hundred men. Now that's a statistic!

Marsha

(Beat.) You want the chicken salad and an iced tea, Chris? Laurel? I'm going to grab a waitress and place our order.

Laurel

Sure, the same.
(Marsha leaves.)

Chris

Three-hundred?

Laurel

Just a round number she said. Who knows for sure. After a hundred, who'd care?

Chris

Has Marsha told you much about what she's been up to lately?

Laurel

No, not really. Same old thing, I suppose. Work and walk the dogs, try to meet normal (whatever that is) men. Call up old flames and see if they have a woman's voice on their answering machines.

Chris

We met at a self-help group.

Laurel

Marsha likes going to those things. She saw the same therapist for ten years. I don't like them very much. They make me nervous.

Chris

We went to Yosemite last month.

Laurel

Oh. *(Pause.)* Did you stay at the Awahnee?

Chris

No, we stayed in a tent with a bunch of other women.

Laurel

Oh. *(Pause.)* That sounds fun.

(Marsha returns.)

Marsha

Well, that's taken care of. You two getting to know each other?

Chris

I was just telling Laurel about our trip to Yosemite.

Laurel

Must have been nice, but chilly. Good thing you went before the government shut the place down.

Chris

Marsha kept me warm. *(giggle)* That is when she wasn't ignoring me.

Marsha

Hey, I needed a little space. You can be cloying. Besides the trip was supposed to be relaxing. You know I'm on my feet twelve hours a day. Retail!

Laurel

Hmmm. Do I detect a little animosity between friends? Oh! Gosh, I haven't seen you in so long Marsha, I almost forgot. I've got the cutest picture of you and what was that guy's name you brought to my party? Oh, here it is. Anyway, I had doubles made, so you can have it. What was his name?

Chris

Here, let me see. *(Beat.)* You look so pretty. And so happy.

Marsha
Probably not happy. What a jerk. Harry, the pool-stick man.

Laurel
Mark thought his laser pool stick was really quite fascinating.

Chris
Oh, this was before you met me.

Laurel
Marsha's known a lot of guys. Remember I told you...

Chris
I know, I know. We've talked about it.

Marsha
We're in therapy.

Laurel
You two go to the same therapist? What a coincidence.

Chris
Together.

Laurel
Marsha... *(pause)* You and I don't bullshit each other.

Marsha
I wanted YOU to meet Chris. Everyone else is being pretty cool, but I think that it's going to take some time for it to sink in. Besides, you're in theater.

Laurel
Oh, well that explains everything. Mass murders, suicides, homicidal rampages. *(Pause.)* You know, Marsha, I think a person is born a certain way. A way they can't change. They are what they are... how they're born. Are you telling me, after thirteen years –

Chris
Oh, food! I'm starved. You know I haven't really told anyone in my family about Marsha. I've had such a series of terrible relationships. I was almost superstitious that if I mentioned her she'd go away. Marsha is the best thing to happen to me in a long, long time.

(They eat in silence.)

Marsha

I'm telling you that Chris and I are very serious about each other. In fact she was going to move in, but she couldn't find anyone to rent her place. I think we're going to get a place in Long Beach in a couple of months.

Laurel

Great. Most of my really good lesbian friends live in Long Beach.

Chris

Marsha, maybe you should have had lunch without me.

Laurel

No, no. I'm fine. I really am. You two look like a great couple. I just know my friend Marsha, that's all Chris.

Marsha

How so?

Laurel

Nothing. I'll just eat my lunch and smile provocatively. Maybe I'd have better luck, too. Got any friends Chris?

Marsha

Luck has nothing to do with it Laurel. I know you think this is just another one of my phases. But it's not. Now I know why things didn't work out with Tim, and Larry, and John and, and every other guy I've met for that matter. It just wasn't meant to be.

Laurel

Has she shown you her engagement ring collection, Chris? Very impressive, she doesn't accept under two and a half carats.

Chris

I love her.

Laurel

Great! Good! I'm glad when people are happy. I understand.

Marsha

So, anyway. We are happy and I wanted you to know.

Chris

We don't fight too often.

Laurel

We used to go dancing together Marsha. We shared clothes. You were married.

Marsha

I got married in college. Come on, Laurel. What's the matter?

Chris

She's fine, Marsha. Nothing's the matter. She said she understands and she does. You can't expect people to rush around and celebrate about it. It's no big deal. You aren't super Christian, Laurel? My sister is and I just don't mention it to her. I think she guesses. *(Beat.)* I was going to bring Marsha home to meet my family at Thanksgiving but I decided it was better to wait. My family is... well, family.

Marsha

I wanted to be able to relax. I didn't want to have to put on some act. I have to be myself. *(Beat.)* So, we were wondering if we could come to your Mom's for Thanksgiving?

Laurel

Oh. Well. Sure, I suppose. Let me check and see if we're still celebrating. My Mom just had a party for fifty. We may be putting our feet in the air like dead bugs.

Marsha

Ok, good. We'll plan on coming unless we hear from you. Ready, Chris? We've got to run. Today's our only day-off together. Here's our part of the bill. Great to see you again, Laurel. We'll talk. Call me.

(Marsha and Chris exit.)

(Laurel imagines the following Thanksgiving scene out-loud, using various voices as indicated, and said out to the audience as in the opening monologue.)

Laurel

Mom. Dad. This is Marsha and her girlfriend, Chris.

Mom

You remember Marsha, dear, Laurel's friend from college? (The one with all the boyfriends.)

Dad

Ok, as long as they aren't part of that deviant theater group Laurel runs.

Dad! Laurel

Dad
Just don't want any kissing in the halls.

Marsha
What a good idea. *(The sound of a kiss.)*

Laurel
Marsha! Not before dinner!

Marsha
Laurel, we have to be ourselves.

(Black out. End of play.)