



SEVENTEEN STITCHES  
***by Tara Meddaugh***

A One-Act Play

**EXCERPT**  
**From**  
**Seventeen Stitches**

a one-act play

Tara Meddaugh

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EXCERPT

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*Seventeen Stitches* was first presented at Carnegie Mellon University in 2003 at the Wells Studio Theatre with the following cast:

Rachel *Jenny Beacraft*

Peter *Sam George*

Directed By Erin Coulter

## **Seventeen Stitches**

### Cast (1 f, 1 m)

RACHEL     A girl of about 14.

PETER       A boy of about 14.

### Setting

An empty space between two waiting lines.

EXCERPT FROM SEVENTEEN STICHES

At Rise: A girl, RACHEL, of about 14, stands near one side of the stage, as though waiting in a line. A boy, PETER, of a slightly older age enters. He does not notice her, wipes his eyes, as though he's been crying and paces a bit. She gets out of the "line" and comes closer to him.

RACHEL

You saved my life once, right?

PETER

I—what?

RACHEL

You don't remember me?

PETER

Not really.

RACHEL

First grade.

PETER

I don't think I know you. Look, I'm really—

RACHEL

We weren't in the same class, but we had recess together. Play time. I'm Rachel. You're Peter, right?

PETER

How do you know my name?

RACHEL

Of course I remember the name of someone who saved me. I was on the teeter totter with Becky Hill—she was really big, remember? She was my age—maybe six, or whatever age you are in first grade.

PETER

I really have to—

RACHEL

I think she weighed over a hundred pounds already. I weighed maybe 40, or whatever you're supposed to weigh at that age. Hey, are you crying?

PETER

No—I—just leave me alone, okay? I have, I have things I need to work out.

RACHEL

Oh, okay. Fine.

(walks back toward her line)

But I'm telling you the tale of why I know you and I really think you ought to be listening to me.

PETER

Well, I'm not going to, okay? I came over here because I didn't want to talk to anyone.

RACHEL

(pause)

Well, you can just listen then. So maybe Becky didn't like me because I stuttered when I read Dr. Seuss, or she was jealous that I still wore kids' t-shirts or maybe she didn't like me because I was just who she didn't want to like—I don't know. But when I was way up high and she was way down low, when her totter was touching the pavement, she pointed out that my hair was falling down. My dad put it in a ponytail every day—that's all he could do. She kinda laughed when she told me, and I felt embarrassed so I put my hands up to sorta smooth it back. It was really windy that day. Then, when she was sure my hands were off my totter, she grinned at me—I could see she'd lost her front vampire tooth. And then she jumped off the teeter totter.

PETER

So you fell off?

RACHEL

Good, you are listening.

PETER

I was just—

RACHEL

I toppled right over. I cracked my head open on the black top.

PETER

Were you okay?

RACHEL

I had to get seven stitches. Or maybe seventeen. I can't remember. But when I was on the ground, feeling the burning heat from the pavement scorching my face, you came over to me.

PETER

I did?

RACHEL



You touched the crack on my head, then you went to Becky and hit her hard in the stomach.

PETER

I don't remember that.

RACHEL

Well, that's what you did.

PETER

How is that saving you anyway?

RACHEL

(pause)

C'mon. Let's get back in line.  
(turns to leave)

PETER

I'm not in a line anymore.

RACHEL

What?

PETER

I was in that line,  
(points to line opposite Rachel's)  
but I got out.

RACHEL

You left your line?

PETER

I need to rethink things now. Weigh things.

RACHEL

Well, I wouldn't stay in the middle too long. They don't like it when you get out. Those lines are gonna close in on you.

PETER

I know.

RACHEL

They'll trap you and spit you out.

PETER

I know.

RACHEL

You'll be lost and alone forever.

PETER

I know!

(pause)

That's why I have to clear my head and figure this out quickly. And you're not helping.

RACHEL

(pause)

Well, my dad told me that's the best line—

(points to line near her)

and it is—so that's where we are!

PETER

You're not there now. You got out of line too!

RACHEL

No, it's different for me. I don't need to wait in the line to still be of the line. I have a number. We all have numbers over there so we can just go around and do whatever we want. Then we can check in later to make sure they aren't up to us yet. It's like the Deli. Neat, huh?

PETER

What number are you?

RACHEL

487-651. My dad'll tell me when we're close to mine.

PETER

Well, you can't walk around like that in the other line. You have to stay there the whole time, trying to clear a path for yourself, so you can make it to those little doors for the one minute they open them.

RACHEL

Sounds like discrimination to me. I knew we got the best line! I'm glad you lost your place in it. It hurts my eyes to look over there. You know you're gonna ruin your eyes if you keep staring at that awful line. Stare at my line instead. It's prettier anyway—so many jewels lining it. Hey, I'm gonna start calling my line *Diamond*! What should we call that other line?

PETER

I'm not naming it. Rachel, it was nice to see you, but I really need to—

RACHEL

I should check my number. Don't let the lines swallow you, okay?

(RACHEL runs off. There is a loud painful scream off stage.  
PETER turns. The screaming stops. RACHEL enters, skipping,  
and carrying a piece of cake on a paper plate)

We're getting closer!!

PETER

What was that?

RACHEL

Closer! Closer!

PETER

Stop skipping!

RACHEL

(giggling)

Closer!

(PETER grabs her and stops her from skipping. He stares at her.  
She stares back.)

Closer.

PETER

(releasing her)

What was that scream?

RACHEL

(begins eating the cake)

What scream?

PETER

When you left—there was a loud scream. I heard it.

RACHEL

Um . . . oh, after the number was called?

PETER

I didn't hear the number.

RACHEL

Yeah, that must have been it. It was Mrs. Comber.

(holds up piece of cake to him)

Do you want any?

(he shakes his head)

Yeah, she's had a hard life. Mmm, this is so good! Such moist buttery cake and the frosting is so creamy, rich, chocolatey.

PETER

Why did Mrs. Comber scream?

RACHEL

Peter, stop calling it that. That's not what she did.

(takes a bite of the cake)

Her husband died in the war and that made her mad because she didn't even get a prize for it. So I told her, and I think this is true too, that if any woman loses her husband in the war, the government really ought to give her a silver, or maybe even gold, platter. And they should really put the head of person who killed the husband on that platter.

PETER

Rachel!

RACHEL

Well, it's not easy living the rest of your life without your life partner!

PETER

What happened in—

RACHEL

Well, Mrs. Comber thought it was a good idea and said she was glad there were people like me coming up to rule the universe someday.

PETER

Tell me—

RACHEL

Mmm, sure you don't want a bite?

PETER

No—tell me what happened to Mrs. Comber!

RACHEL

I don't remember all the details, Peter. Just stuff. Like her husband dying and her sons maybe killing people or something about war. I can't keep it all straight.

PETER

So why was she—

RACHEL

I'm telling you!

(pause)

Anyway, she got to be quite sad, but most of all mad and full of hate toward the world. So when her number was called and she was let in, she just cried out in such joy at all the beauty she saw.

PETER

I heard a scream of pain.

RACHEL

Pleasure and pain often sound the same.

PETER

No, this was not pleasure.

RACHEL

Well, that's the only noise that came from there. I can't believe you're not trying this cake. It's soooo good. I'll save you a bite.

PETER

Where'd you get it from?

RACHEL

Mrs. Comber sent it to us after she went in. She must have been so happy. We get lots of prizes from my line. Did you get any prizes in your old line?

PETER

No. They make you wait until after you go through the doors to get your prize. They should've given me one before though. I cleared part of that path by myself. It was hard work moving all those boulders and trees out of the way.

RACHEL

You moved a tree?

PETER

Well, my dad helped me.

RACHEL

You definitely deserved a prize.

PETER

I know.

RACHEL

(pause)

Hey, I don't stutter anymore. Wanna read a book with me?

PETER

No. I don't have time.

RACHEL

That's true. You are running out of time. Are you gonna start crying again?

PETER

I don't wanna stand here with you anymore.

RACHEL

Okay, okay. Wait! I'm sorry. I just—I'm sorry you were crying before.

(pause)

Did that other line make you cry?

(pause)

Look, Peter, I have an idea that will solve all of this—why don't you just join my line?

PETER

I don't know.

RACHEL

There are only two lines. You're either with my line or with that one.

PETER

I know. . .

RACHEL

My dad brought me here and he knows what's best. And my line won't make you cry.

PETER

Stop saying I was cry—

RACHEL

Look, those lines are getting closer. It's probably getting hard for you to breathe already, isn't it?

PETER

I don't—I don't think I should be talking with you anymore.

RACHEL

Why not?

**END OF EXCERPT**

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