

THE BIG C

By John C. Havens

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ISBN 1-931000-86-7

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****Dedicated to Bill Stiles****

CAST: one performer

AT RISE: Performer walks on stage and sits center on a chair. If costumes are used, performer should be in a hospital “JOHNNY,” the thin robe-like garment tied in back. During most of the monologue the performer holds his/her arm up as if attached to an IV.

I'm really tired of this room. Can I just say that? I mean, it's a nice view and all, but it's getting really old. Man, I wish I could just go outside, you know? I've been in this room for four months now. Four months! I haven't been outside once! I haven't even been able to open the window!

Yep, but that's how it is with the “Big C”. Good old cancer. All my friends have to wear masks when they come to visit so I don't get any of their germs. Like cooties or something. I remember that game.

(HE/SHE jumps up from the chair and pretends to be a child in the schoolyard)

I'm gonna touch you! I'm gonna touch you! Ha! I got you! You've got my cooties, you've got my cooties. Now you're gonna die!

(HE/SHE returns back to the present)

I hope cooties aren't as lethal as Hodgkin's' disease. I touched a lot of kids back in kindergarten.

(pretending to be a parent on the phone with another parent)

Mrs. Johnson, I just wanted to let you know that my child has...I'm terribly embarrassed to say this, but....cooties. My child has cooties. Be sure to keep your child away. We're going to the best doctors, of course, but we're not sure how long it will take for the “de-cootying” process.

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(back to normal)

You probably have to wear a mask with all your patients, don't you? That must get tiring. Always breathing in your own air. I think I'd faint after a while. DO you always have to wear gloves, too? Most of the time. Does that white flaky stuff from inside the gloves get all over your hands? That's gotta be a pain.

What's your name again? I'm sorry. The medications (***refers to the I.V.***) make me a bit forgetful.

(listens)

Gabrielle? That's a beautiful name. Is that like Gabriel, from the Bible? The angel? Yes. That makes sense. All the nurses here sure seem like angels to me. Except maybe for that night nurse, Shelia. She does not know how to take blood, can I tell you that? It took her about four times to find a vein. I'm thinking about coloring them in with magic markers so she can find them tonight.

(as if speaking to SHELIA)

Blue is for my veins, Shelia! Right here. Do you see the things that look like little streams under my skin? The things that are popping out 'cause you tied the rubber thing around my arm? Those are veins! Congratulations! Have you been to medical school?

(back to normal)

I'm sorry, I don't mean to be mean. I'm just tired of being poked and prodded and stuck with needles.

(pause)

I guess you couldn't tell me for sure if I'm going to die or not, could you, Gabrielle? You don't have to answer that, I know you don't know. It's just that...everyday I lay here and listen to a doctor tell me about how I'm doing. One day the prognosis is positive, the next it's not so good. And every little piece of information is something I can cling to, a bit of control that I think I have. It's almost like the doctors are gods or something. If they say something, it must be true. Except, of course, for that med student the other day.

(impersonates a wild-eyed, over zealous med student)

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Hi, Cancer, right? Okay. We gotta get your white blood cell count up, so I'm gonna give you some more zenatropin and amoxalphilacin and riboglobin. These are all brand new drugs which have had great success, so they should be fine for you. We'll have you out of here within a week or two, you should be back to normal with monthly chemotherapy until remission. Unless, of course, you've got Hodgkin's disease, and then we really don't want to mess with your blood cell count. What? Oh, you do have Hodgkin's disease? Wait a second, what's your name again?

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