

DUET SCENE – THE BIG LIE

Play	Ten / Two by Lindsay Price
Stats	Comedy, Simple Set, 10 minutes
Casting	2M
Description	The typical teacher-student interaction gets turned upside-down in THE BIG LIE.
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ONE is a teacher, TWO is a student. Both characters can be of either gender. Mr. Montgomery becomes Miss Montgomery, Mrs. Nelson becomes Mr. Nelson.

ONE is at a table organizing papers. She is extremely prim with a ramrod straight back. TWO sneaks onstage and tries to get into a seat without ONE seeing. TWO slowly crawls along the floor. He gets to his seat and slowly starts to crawl into place.

Just as TWO gets into an awkward mid-crawl position around his chair, ONE looks up.

ONE: (slowly) Mr. Montgomery.

TWO freezes.

TWO: (wincing) Yes?

ONE: Are you trying to sneak into my classroom?

TWO: No.

ONE: It looks to me like you are.

TWO: Does it?

ONE: Indubitably. Are you going to sit?

TWO: Can I?

ONE: Of course. Who am I to deny the youth of today a seat? What kind of human being would

I be if I let you crouch there? What kind of cruel person would I be if I made you squat for the Whole. Entire. Class?

TWO: Is that a yes?

ONE: Sit.

TWO sits. ONE slowly approaches TWO with a certain amount of menace.

ONE: What time is it, Mr. Montgomery?

TWO: I don't know.

ONE: Well, look at the clock. We're very lucky here to have been provided with timepieces in every classroom. It's the wave of the future. The time, please?

TWO: Ten o'clock.

ONE: Look closer, please. What time is it?

TWO: Ten-oh-two.

ONE: Ten-oh-two. Very precise. Thank you. And what makes you think you can waltz into MY class at Ten-oh-Two?

TWO: (blurting out) I just wanted –

Continued Over...

ONE: You wanted? You wanted something? Someone call the presses! A teenager wanted something. That's certainly never happened before.

TWO: Mrs. Nelson, if you'd just let me –

ONE: What time does class start?

TWO: (*very dejected*) Ten fifteen.

ONE: What was that?

TWO: Ten fifteen. Class starts at ten fifteen.

ONE: Precisely. Ten fifteen. Not ten, not ten oh two, but ten fifteen. Why have you come to class early?

TWO: (*as if this is a bad thing*) It's just that we're studying The Depression and I think it's a really interesting time and I thought I would come early... and ask... you... some... questions.

ONE: Are you actually saying the reason you came to class early is because (*with disgust*) you're interested in learning?

TWO: I didn't know that was wrong!

ONE: Don't be smart with me!

TWO: (*sincere*) Sorry!

ONE: Do you want to give your fellow students a bad name?

TWO: No.

ONE: No one comes to class early, and they certainly don't ask questions. Haven't you seen them? Don't you know how you're supposed to behave?

TWO: I guess not.

ONE: Are you trying to give me a bad name? Make me look like I care about my students?

TWO: (*blurting out, frustrated*) But you're a good teacher!

There is a long pause as ONE slowly gives TWO an evil look.

ONE: What did you say?

TWO: (*getting more confident*) You're a good teacher.

ONE: Be quiet.

TWO: You make history fun and exciting -

ONE: Don't say that.

TWO: And I know something else, too -

ONE: (*looking around with panic*) I can't believe you're doing this, someone will hear.

TWO: This whole tough guy thing is a sham, an act!

ONE: No!

TWO: A lie!

ONE: It is not!

TWO: Liar, liar, pants on fire! You love teaching!

ONE: Shut up, shut up!

TWO: And you love kids!

ONE shrieks.

TWO: You DO care about your students!

ONE claps her hands to her chest. She staggers back onto the desk.

ONE: (*defeated*) Low blow, Mr. Montgomery. Low blow.

Now it is TWO who advances slowly on ONE.

TWO: Try to deny it. Just try it. I've seen the way you teach. You're the best teacher I've ever had and I don't care who knows it. (*calling out*) Mrs. Nelson's a good teacher!

ONE: (*holding out her hands as if warding off blows*) Enough! No more! (*she takes a breath*) Well. Mr. Montgomery. Clearly you have me behind the eight ball. (*she stands up straight and looks TWO in the eye*) What are your terms?

TWO: What do you mean?

ONE: What's your price? What do I have to do to stop you spreading this vicious, malevolent, gossip about me?

Continued Next...

TWO: Hmmmmmmm. (*he thinks*) You let me come in early, AND ask questions...

ONE: Too much, you ask for too much!

TWO: AND ask questions, then I won't tell anyone what I know. I'll even throw in a few bad stories 'cause I'm in a good mood.

ONE: What about nicknames? Can you call me some rotten awful nicknames where lots of students can hear?

TWO: (*putting hands on hips*) Now who's asking too much!

ONE: Please? Battle Axe? Death Breath? No Neck Nelson?

TWO: All right. But I'm not doing the one about the bad breath. That's just cruel. Deal?

ONE: Deal.

They shake hands on it.