



**Sample Pages from
Ten / Two**

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TEN/TWO

TEN PLAYS FOR TWO ACTORS BY
Lindsay Price



Ten/Two

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..... Welcome!

Welcome to *Ten/Two!* 10 two-hander scenes, all of which are inspired by the numbers 10 and 2.

The plays can be performed together for a full evening of theatre. Appendix A (p.79) contains Intro/Intermission/Extro sections to add if you are doing all ten plays in an evening. Appendix B (p.81) has a set arrangement.

You don't have to perform all ten plays. You can do eight or two or six or any of the other wonderful numbers between one and ten. You're even welcome to change the order of the plays. Each individual play, however, must be performed as written.

Royalty rates vary depending on the number of plays being performed. See our website for current pricing.

..... The Plays / Characters

Many of the plays are gender flexible. Below is the gender breakdown for each play. If the play calls for "2 Either" feel free to change the genders to suit your group.

1. Quippage (1M 1W)
2. The Big Lie (2 Either)
3. Pretty Girl Plain Girl (2W)
4. Santa Runs a Sweat Shop (2 Either)
5. Ms. Spitspot's Spick and Span Play Place (1W 1 Either)
6. My Father Went to Switzerland and All I Got Was This Lousy T-Shirt. (1W 1 Either)
7. Time, What Is It? (2 Either)
8. The Last Dance (1W)
9. Ten Minutes, Ten Minutes, Ten Minutes, Ten Minutes (2 Either)
10. The Itsy-Bitsy Spider Or Else (2M)

Quippage

ONE is a boy. TWO is a girl.

ONE and TWO sit side-by-side, not looking at each other. They are on a date. It's very awkward. ONE's knee bounces up and down nervously. He clamps his hand on it to stop the bouncing. TWO sighs.

ONE: Sorry?

TWO: Nothing.

There is silence again. ONE slowly, slowly turns to the side, and tries to look at his watch subtly, but TWO catches him. She shakes her head.

TWO: What time is it?

ONE: *(with a start)* Huh?

TWO: What time is it?

ONE: I don't know.

TWO: You just looked at your watch.

ONE: Oh. I guess I did.

TWO: What time is it?

ONE: *(sheepishly)* Ten to two.

TWO: That bad, huh?

ONE: What?

TWO: The date.

ONE: No!

TWO: So why are you looking at your watch?

ONE: No – I – just – It's me. It's not you, it's me. Me.

TWO: Aren't you supposed to pull that out of your hat when you're breaking up with someone? This date isn't even one hour in.

ONE: It is me! I'm screwing things up.

TWO: How?

ONE: I planned this, I thought about it and I had everything planned. I even wrote it out. See?

ONE pulls a crumpled piece of paper from his pocket and shows it to TWO.

TWO: That's... organized.

ONE: It's a disaster. *(tossing the paper to the side)* I screwed up the time for the movie. We're here half an hour early and we're not sitting in there enjoying The Coffee Dripped Sideways having a laugh –

TWO: I want to see that!

ONE: I know! I planned it! But now... we're out here and my piece of paper is useless and I don't know what to do. I didn't plan for this... this...

There is a pause before TWO speaks.

TWO: Awkward silence.

ONE: Awkward awful silence thing. That's why it's me and not you.

TWO: You don't have to plan everything.

ONE: I didn't plan on awkward awful silence and see how well that's turning out.

TWO: That's not what I meant.

ONE: So what should we do?

TWO: Well, in a situation like this, all unplanned and everything, I think we're supposed to talk.

ONE: *(looking horrified)* We ARE?

TWO: Don't look so terrified.

ONE: *(he lets out a big breath)* You must go on a lot of dates.

TWO: *(little bit harsh)* What makes you say that?

ONE: You're so calm. You suggest talking like it's the easiest thing in the world. *(he wipes his forehead)* I'm a nervous wreck.

TWO: Oh, you're fine.

ONE: You're just saying that.

TWO: Trust me, I never just say anything.

ONE: (*looking at TWO*) No, you wouldn't.

TWO: What makes you say that?

ONE: You seem very straightforward. You're not one of those people who say things to make people feel better – (*realizing that might have sounded insulting*) That didn't sound as good out loud as it did in my head. That was a compliment. Really.

TWO: I'll take it as one.

ONE: (*looks at TWO*) You're not making fun of me, are you?

TWO: Not yet. We hardly know each other. (*she pauses before deciding to speak again*) And I never go out on dates. I...in fact... I've never been on one before.

ONE: (*very surprised*) REALLY?

TWO: Could you try not to make that sound so horrible?

ONE: Sorry, sorry.

TWO: You don't believe me?

ONE: Of course I do.

TWO: Why would I lie?

ONE: Sure, sure. I just didn't expect – never mind. We're both starting from square one then.

TWO: (*making fun*) What, YOU'VE never been on a date either?

ONE: See, now you're making fun of me.

TWO: The piece of paper kind of gave you away.

ONE: I guess people don't usually do that.

TWO: I wouldn't know.

ONE: Me either. (*there is a pause*) What do we do now?

TWO: I think the talking part.

ONE: Right. See, I can't believe you've never done this before. You're so calm and collected. I know I look like an idiot. OK. Talking. *(he rubs his hands on his pants and then holds a hand out to TWO)* Hi.

TWO: *(shaking his hand warily)* Hi...

ONE: *(still shaking hands)* I'm Greg.

TWO: *(still shaking hands)* I know. What are we doing?

ONE: I thought this would be a good way to break the ice. *(pulling his hand away)* Isn't this good?

TWO: Maybe we should ask each other questions. To break the ice.

ONE: OK. *(he claps his hands together and talks really fast)* Where were you when Jimmy Mellon got his head stuck in the banister of the back staircase by the gym and did you or did you not bet on the outcome of whether he'd have to stay there until he lost enough weight in his face to get out? *(Pause. TWO stares at ONE.)* Not a good question?

TWO: *(she clears her throat)* Jimmy Mellon, ever so aptly named...

ONE: Big head.

TWO: Jimmy is a moron of the highest degree, if degrees of moronity existed, and the only thing that surprised me about the whole event is that it took him till senior year to be provoked into sticking his head through the banister.

ONE: That's a good point.

TWO: I was in the library. And no, I didn't bet. Next question?

ONE: Oh. *(with a little bit of panic)* I don't have a backup...

TWO: I have one.

ONE: Oh good.

TWO: Why did you ask me out?

ONE: Huh?

TWO: Why did you ask me out?

ONE: Is that a trick question?

TWO: No.

ONE: You're not recording this, are you?

TWO: (*puzzled*) No.

ONE: No one's going to leap out from behind the garbage cans? Candid Camera-like?

TWO: What are you talking about?

ONE: OK. OK. I asked you out because... (*he looks around him before answering*) I asked you out because I like you. You're funny in class. I thought it would be great; we'd be trading quips all night.

TWO: Not so much.

ONE: No. (*he sighs*) So far we're quipless.

TWO: Sorry.

ONE: No, no! It's fine. You can't force a quip. I know that, everyone knows that. You can't hem them in to be used at will; you gotta let the quips run free.

TWO laughs.

ONE: You see! Let them free and they pop out of nowhere.

TWO: Now, why was that such a big deal?

ONE: What? The quippage?

TWO: No. You went into spy mode before saying why you asked me out. Why is it something to keep secret?

ONE: It's not.

TWO: Then why did you –

ONE: I didn't. I just, well, you, you know –

TWO: No.

ONE: OK. (*he takes a deep breath*) I'm just, I'm surprised. I'm still surprised you said yes. I've been waiting for that friend of yours, the one who shaved her head and gets angry when people eat hot dogs...

TWO: Sheila?

ONE: I keep waiting for Sheila to leap out, pull my underwear up over my head and you both go cackling off into the night calling 'loser, loser.'

TWO: We don't cackle.

ONE: So why did you say yes?

TWO: And atomic wedgies are not our style.

ONE: You're avoiding the question.

TWO: Ordinary wedgies, maybe.

ONE: Julia!

TWO: *(she rolls her eyes)* Why do you think I said yes? I think you're funny too!

ONE: Really?

TWO: Really.

ONE: You're not just saying that?

TWO: Haven't we already established I don't do that?

ONE: Right. Right! That's good.

TWO: Good.

ONE: Great! No wedgies then?

TWO: Not at the moment, no.

ONE: Ah ha! Let the quippage begin!

TWO: Onward and upward!

ONE: Tally ho!

TWO makes the sound of a trumpet call.

ONE: And we're talking. I can't believe it.

TWO: *(with a laugh)* Amazing.

ONE: I want to tell you, I don't believe a word of what's been going round and I think what those guys said was –

ONE stops. His mouth is open in mid-sentence. He closes it. TWO stares at him, but ONE looks down at his knees.

TWO: What?

ONE: Nothing.

TWO: What were you about to say?

ONE: Nothing.

TWO: And I quote: "I think what those guys said was..." Finish the sentence.

ONE: It's nothing.

TWO: It's not nothing to me.

ONE: I took the talking thing too far.

TWO: It's clearly on your mind and I think it's incredibly... *(she pauses and lets out a noisy breath)* Never mind. It doesn't matter.

ONE: I shouldn't have brought it up. It was stupid to bring up. You're not going to sick Sheila on me, are you?

TWO: *(leaping up)* Tell me, was Phil Shaw one of "those guys?" One of your friends? I bet he was. That little – *(she grunts in frustration)* I can't believe I still have to deal with this. It's been over a year! Is that what this is about? This date? Is this why I'm so funny?

ONE: *(standing)* No!

TWO: *(continuing overtop)* 'Cause I'm a big joke? *(turns to leave)* Something to take back to YOUR guys? 'Cause if so, we can end things right –

ONE: First of all, they're not MY guys. They're just guys and I was sitting nearby. Near them, not with them, not in their guy circle...

TWO: But you still –

ONE: What they said has nothing to do with why I asked you out.

TWO: Sure.

ONE: It's the truth. I think you're funny. Truly funny, not a joke. Last week when Mrs. Carlisle said, "What do you do when you see an integer?" and you said, "Run!" I thought, "That's funny." And

I decided to ask you out. That's all. I swear. (*he puts a hand to his heart*) On pain of death.

TWO: Don't be so dramatic.

ONE: On pain of life, then. On pain of wedgies?

There is a long pause. TWO sits.

TWO: Phil Shaw was my science partner.

ONE: (*sitting*) I don't need to –

TWO: Yes you do. I need you to hear my side. We were working on a project; it wasn't anything close to a date. He tried something. I pushed him. I wish I'd hit him, given him a black eye. I pushed him away, and the next thing I know I'm the topic of conversation. The subject of guy circle – what is a guy circle?

ONE: I don't know. A sewing circle on testosterone?

TWO: Funny.

ONE: Can't force a quip.

Pause.

TWO: Last month I won first place in a piano festival.

ONE: I know.

TWO: You're the only one. How come no one talks about that, huh? I practiced every day. I won. I deserved to win. It was nice being around people who don't know me as Jump-On Julia. (*pause*) So. Where are we?

ONE: Well, I'm still on a date. Where are you? Still want to go to the movie?

TWO: What if I say I do?

ONE: Then you have to share a box of popcorn with me.

TWO: What if I want my own box?

ONE: That's a hard bargain but I think I can swing it.

TWO: Hey, I pay for my own popcorn.

ONE: What about liquorice? Can I buy you some liquorice?

The Big Lie

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 some papers. She is extremely prim with a ramrod straight back. TWO sneaks onstage and tries to get into a seat without ONE seeing. ONE looks up with a frown and narrowed eyes, TWO dives to the floor. After a second, ONE goes back to her papers. 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: Thanks.

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 –

ONE: You wanted? You wanted something? Someone call the presses! A teenager wanted something. That's certainly never happened before. What about me? What about what I want? What do I want, Mr. Montgomery?

TWO: I don't know.

ONE: (*mocking him*) I don't know. Pathetic. Mr. Montgomery. You have entered my classroom at ten-oh-two in the morning. Could you please tell me what time class starts?

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: (*circling around TWO*) Are you having me on? Pulling my leg? Pulling the proverbial wool over my proverbial eyes?

TWO: Um, I don't think so. That last one confused me.

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? All slouching, glowering, doodling on their textbooks. Don't you know how you're supposed to behave?

TWO: I guess not.

ONE: You're throwing off the entire learning curve!

TWO: I didn't mean to.

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!

Pretty Girl Plain Girl

ONE and TWO are teenage girls. ONE is typically plain. TWO is typically pretty.

TWO is sitting in a chair, filing her nails. ONE enters and walks tentatively up to her.

ONE: Hi.

TWO: (*with disgust*) What?

ONE: Is this the registration desk for the Galaxy Girl Pageant?

TWO: What?

ONE: Is this the registration desk for the Galaxy Girl Pageant?

TWO: What if it is?

ONE: I'd like to register.

TWO: You? You want to be in the pageant?

ONE: Yes.

TWO laughs.

ONE: What's so funny?

TWO: What do you think you're doing?

ONE: Registering for the Galaxy Girl Pageant.

TWO: You can't register.

ONE: Why not?

TWO: Look at you.

ONE: What?

TWO: It's obvious. Look!

ONE: I still don't see why –

TWO: Look at the difference between us. I am clearly a ten. You are clearly a two. (*pointing at herself*) Ten. (*pointing at ONE*) Two. Tens enter beauty pageants. Twos don't. Now get out.

*ONE slumps her shoulders and slowly turns away.
TWO immediately changes her demeanour, leaps up,
looks worried and runs to block ONE.*

TWO: Jan, are you OK? Are you OK? That was too much. I told you it would be too much. See, I told you.

ONE: (*not that fine*) No, I'm fine. I'm fine. I just need to sit down.

She sits down. TWO continues to flutter around her.

TWO: You can't look crushed like that. A pageant girl sees that look on your face and she'll go in for the kill.

ONE: They'll really be that mean?

TWO: I was just getting started.

ONE: (*slumping her shoulders again*) Oh.

TWO: See, you're not up for this.

ONE: I am, I am. You're doing the right thing. I need to be prepared. Let's go again.

TWO: I don't understand why you need to do it at all.

ONE: I told you.

TWO: Yeah, and it doesn't get any less crazy the more you say it.

ONE: I want to be a girl.

TWO: News flash. You're a girl.

ONE: A girly girl.

TWO: Trust me, it's no great shakes.

ONE: Just once. A girly girl. I know it's not in my future so I want to make sure it happens.

TWO: Still sounds crazy.

ONE: I don't want to look back on my life and regret I never tried to be girly.

TWO: Can't you just go to prom? Get a nice dress; I'll do your hair. I'll even nominate you for Prom Queen. Isn't that enough?

ONE: This is what I want to do.

TWO: But a beauty pageant? They'll humiliate you!

ONE: I can take it.

TWO: You can't. You don't have a thick skin.

ONE: If I practice I can make it tougher. (*she stands*) I'm ready, insult me again.

TWO: (*sits*) I can't. I can't see that look on your face.

ONE: You have to. I want to take it on the chin and do that cool cucumber thing you do so well.

TWO: What thing?

ONE: That shoulder roll, ice stare, thing you do. When we were in the mall and those girls were ragging on you? You just cool cumbered them. Right off the shoulder. It was great.

TWO: Girls are so mean. I didn't even know them.

ONE: When I do it, it looks like I'm trying to throw my back out. (*She does a very awkward shoulder roll, trying to be cool. She winces and holds her shoulder.*) I think I gave myself whiplash.

TWO: Jan...

ONE: I'm going to practice my walk.

ONE puts on a pair of high heels. She teeters around unsuccessfully.

TWO: I don't think you'll ever be ready for pageant girls.

ONE: You're just trying to scare me. Heel, toe. Heel, toe. You see? I almost have the hang of this.

TWO: (*not convinced*) Almost...

ONE: I'm getting better, aren't I? Practice makes... uh oh (*wind-milling her arms as she walks*) How do you stay up on these things? (*she starts to lose her balance*) Whoa, whoa...

TWO: Careful...

ONE: I got it... I got it... (*falling*) I don't got it...

TWO: Jan!

ONE careens back to the chair.

ONE: Maybe I'll take a break from the shoes.

TWO: (*false enthusiasm*) I'm sure you'll get it.

ONE: You don't believe that.

TWO: I believe you're going to take out the whole first row. Especially with those arm moves.

They both laugh.

ONE: I can do this. Thousands of girls enter pageants.

TWO: Yeah and thousands don't.

ONE: Help me up.

TWO helps ONE up and the two walk back and forth.

ONE: Don't you have a date tonight?

TWO: Huh? Oh, I cancelled.

ONE: Why?

TWO: Because you asked me to help you.

ONE: But you had a date.

TWO: I was just going to watch Dean and Frick and Frack watch basketball. Trust me, I can do that any time.

ONE: Won't Dean get mad?

TWO: He better not. He's not that special.

ONE: Don't you love him?

TWO: Oh, sure. Maybe. Maybe not. I don't worry about it.

ONE turns and stares at TWO.

ONE: Tara, you are not normal.

TWO: Why?

ONE: You don't want me to be in a pageant. You cancelled on your boyfriend instead of me. You're supposed to dump me for a guy. You're supposed to dump me, period.

TWO: (*puzzled*) Dump you how?

ONE: You're not supposed to be my friend. You're not supposed to still like me. Haven't you read, like, every teen story ever written? You're pretty, I'm not. Pretty girls do not stay friends with plain girls.

TWO: Don't say that. You're not plain.

ONE: I am! I'm fine with it.

TWO: Then why are you trying to kill yourself with those heels?

ONE: Pretty people are friends with pretty people. Period. End of story.

TWO: Is that right?

ONE: I wish you'd just hurry up and get it over with.

TWO: Get what over with?

ONE: The writing's on the wall. You'll talk to me a little less, and a little less and then one day you'll stop talking to me altogether. You won't even look at me in the halls. We won't be friends anymore. It'll be like we never were friends.

TWO: That's ridiculous.

ONE: Selene doesn't think so.

TWO turns to ONE.

TWO: When did you –

ONE: In the bathrooms on the second floor. I was in a stall when you came in. I heard what she said about me. I'm plain. Boring. Not worth hanging out with.

TWO: And did you hear what I said? I stood up for you!

ONE: But how long will that go on?

TWO: You should have come out. We could have stood up to her together.

ONE: What's the point? She's popular and pretty. I'm going to be a scientist and that is as far away from pretty as it gets. You know just as well as I do there's a gap bigger than the Grand Canyon between the Selene's and the me's of the world. You can't hover in the middle. You have to pick a side.

TWO: And you think I would pick her over you?

ONE: It's not your fault. It's inevitable. It's the way things have worked since the beginning of time. (*ONE teeters on her heels*) Oh crap.

ONE windmills her arms and has trouble with her balance. She knocks TWO away with her windmilling arms.

ONE: Double crap!

TWO: Watch out!

TWO tries to catch ONE but she's too late. ONE crashes to the floor.

TWO: Are you all right?

ONE: I think the heels won.

TWO: Take those stupid things off.

TWO grabs a foot and ONE cries out.

TWO: Oh oh.

ONE: Oh oh is right. (*she touches her ankle, hissing in pain*) I think I did some damage.

TWO: Do you want to stay on the floor or go to the chair?

ONE: Chair.

TWO helps ONE up. They start hobbling to the chair.

TWO: I hate to disappoint you, but I don't do what Selene tells me.

ONE: But what if she stops being your friend?

TWO: Then she wasn't worth it to begin with.

ONE: Don't you read magazines? You're not supposed to think for yourself! You are totally abnormal.

TWO gets ONE in the chair.

TWO: So what are you saying? If you were pretty and I was plain, you'd dump me as a friend?

Santa Runs A Sweat Shop

ONE and TWO are siblings. ONE is six years old and TWO is eight years old. Both can be either gender.

ONE and TWO sit side-by-side. TWO has a look of fierce determination on her face. ONE is desperately trying to stay awake. ONE closes his eyes and droops on TWO's shoulder. TWO pokes ONE to make him wake up.

ONE: *(sitting up)* I'm awake, I'm awake!

They sit silently. ONE instantly begins to droop again. He drops his chin to his chest and starts to snore. TWO looks annoyed and pokes ONE to wake him up.

ONE: *(sitting up)* I'm awake, I'm awake!

TWO: Shhhhhh. They'll hear you.

ONE: *(rubbing his eyes)* What time is it?

TWO: *(looking at her watch)* 10:01 – wait, 10:02.

ONE: *(stretching and yawning)* How much longer?

TWO: We've got hours to go.

ONE: Hours? How many hours?

TWO: Till after Mom and Dad go to bed, for sure.

ONE: They're still awake?

TWO: Uh huh.

ONE: Can't we tell them to hurry up?

TWO: Then we'd have to tell them why we want them to hurry up.

ONE: Oh.

TWO: I couldn't fall asleep if I tried. I'm too excited to sleep.

ONE yawns, his mouth as wide as it will go.

TWO: Aren't you excited?

ONE: I am, I am. I'm just tired excited. I'm tired and I'm excited. I'm tire-cited.

TWO: That's stupid.

ONE: What if we fall asleep like last year?

TWO: We won't. I'm not falling asleep for anything. This is an important moment. It could be the most important moment of our lives.

ONE: I know, I know.

ONE gives another jaw-cracking yawn and slumps down in his seat.

TWO: Would you stop yawning!

ONE: But I'm so tired. I don't know why. I'm never tired. (*this just occurs to him, he sits straight up*) You think Mom and Dad know what we're up to? They know and they put something in the food to make us sleepy?

TWO: I'm not sleepy.

ONE: What did I eat that you didn't eat? (*he gasps*) Mom made me eat sweet potato! (*imitating*) "How do you know you don't like something if you don't try it? Try it for Mommy!" She put sleeping potion in the sweet potato!

TWO: She did not.

ONE: Did you eat it?

TWO: No.

ONE: Then how do you know if she did or didn't?

TWO: They don't know we're staying up. If they did, they'd be checking on us every five seconds.

ONE: Not if they know we ate sweet potato potion.

TWO: That's stupid. There's no potion.

There is a pause. TWO looks wide awake. ONE begins to droop.

ONE: (*yawns again*) I don't know if I'm gonna make it. I can hardly keep my eyes open.

TWO: Use your fingers to hold the lids up.

ONE: That's a good idea. (*trying to hold eyes open with fingers*) Do you know what you're going to ask?

TWO: Sure. Do you?

ONE: Oh yeah. I thought about it all day. Maybe that's why I'm so tired. I worked my brain so hard, it's in a coma!

TWO: Somehow I doubt it. What are you gonna ask him?

ONE: I wanna know... (*fast and excited*) what he feeds the reindeer. Do reindeer really like carrots? I think they'd like oats better, or grass, 'cause there's never any grass at the North Pole. I bet they'd love grass. It's like a special treat or something, and that would be a good thing to leave out, but how do you keep grass from the summer till now? And I wanna know... if Santa's fat all the time, or does he lose weight during the year. Mom says that's not nice, and you shouldn't ask people about their weight. But I wanna know. He wouldn't mind if I asked, would he? And I wanna know... if the snow at the North Pole is light and fluffy or if it's packing snow and if the elves have snowball fights. I think it's packing snow, but if he's going to be standing right in front of me, I'm gonna ask him for sure. So. (*pause*) What are you gonna ask about?

TWO: Labour relations.

ONE: Huh?

TWO: I think Santa's extorting the elves.

ONE: He's doing what?

TWO: I'm talking a North Pole Sweat Shop. How else is he able to make so many toys? Those elves seem happy but I'll bet it's a front. I'll bet there's something, someone making those elves act happy.

ONE: But he's Santa. He'd never do anything bad.

TWO: That's what he wants us to believe. I'll bet he pays those elves peanuts and they're supposed to take it 'cause they work for the big guy in the red suit.

ONE: But he's Santa. Ho, ho, ho. He laughs like a bowl full of jelly?

Ms. Spitspot's Spick and Span Play Place

ONE is a children's entertainer and TWO is her assistant. TWO can be either gender. ONE must be a girl.

ONE enters. She waves energetically to the audience. She's on a children's TV show.

ONE: Hello my little friends! Welcome to *Ms. Spitspot's Spick and Span Play Place*. I'm so glad you could join me here today. We're going to have a lot of fun and what's one thing we're going to do a lot of? *(she listens exaggeratedly and then claps her hands together)* That's right! We're going to PLAY. It wouldn't be called the Play Place if we weren't going to do any playing! But we're not going to play alone, are we? No. *(she puts her hand to her forehead as if she's searching for someone)* Where is Swab? Where is Swab? *(she points out)* Do you know? *(she points again)* Do you know? *(she puts her hands exaggeratedly on her hips)* I wonder where she could be? *(she calls out)* Swab! Swab! *(she scratches her head)* Hmmmmmm. That doesn't seem to be working. *(she claps her hands together)* I know! We should call for Swab, all together. I'll count to three and then you call out, "Swab!" Ready? In your loudest voice, OK? One, two, three – SWAB!!!! *(she looks offstage, clearly expecting TWO, who doesn't appear)* Gee. That usually works. *(She looks left and right. She puts her hands on her hips. She speaks just a little bit out of character.)* Usually Swab has very good hearing. *(she claps her hands together)* Let's try it again my little friends. Ready? One, two –

TWO comes running on, holding a mop. She looks a little frazzled and out of sorts, like it's hard work to keep up the cheery demeanour.

TWO: I'm here, I'm here. Swab is here. Here I am with mop and broom and... no, that's not it. *(she takes a breath and starts again)* Here I am with broom and mop, for the cleaning I just can't stop. There's only one way I'll drop my mop, and that's the call of Ms. Spitspot! Hello, Ms. Spitspot! *(she waves at the audience)* Hello, friends.

ONE: *(cheerful, but tense)* What kept you, Swab? Where were you when we called?

TWO: *(cheerful, but tense)* You know where I was, Ms. Spitspot.

ONE: (*she gives an exaggerated laugh*) I! I had no idea, Swab.

TWO: Oh no?

ONE: Of course not! I was out here, talking to our little friends.

TWO: Okay-dokey. That surprises me 'cause-

ONE: (*interrupting*) Please, Swab, tell all our little friends out there in the world what you were doing. I'm sure they'd love to know. (*to the audience*) Wouldn't you like to know? Me too! Where was Swab?

TWO: (*tense*) "Swab" was in the control room.

ONE: Control room? (*she shrugs her shoulders very dramatically*) I have no idea what that place is. It's certainly nowhere around here! You must have been very very far away from Ms. Spitspot's house in this place called (*she makes air quotation marks*) "control room."

TWO: Ms. Spitspot, I think we need to –

ONE: Come, Swab, where were you? Were you in the dale? On the hill? Behind the cherry tree? Tell our friends the truth.

TWO: The truth? The truth. Ms Spitspot wants to know the truth, does she?

ONE: (*staring at TWO*) Yes she does, Swab.

TWO: Okey-dokey. If it's the truth you want... (*TWO chickens out*) I was cleaning. I'm always cleaning, aren't I! That's what Swab loves to do. Clean, clean, clean. Never stops. Yippee. (*she shakes the mop*)

ONE: (*clapping her hands together*) There you are! I'll bet the dust got in your ears. That's why you didn't hear us.

TWO: You always have the right answer, Ms. Spitspot.

ONE: Oh Swab, you're always cleaning! (*to audience*) And you know what, my little friends? Ms. Spitspot loves to clean, too! Swab loves to clean and Ms. Spitspot loves to clean. We love to make things spick-and-span! Cleaning is a very good thing. It's fun! Why, it's as much fun as playing! What do we do when we see a mess?

ONE moves forward to do her actions. TWO stares off, leaning on her mop, not paying attention.

ONE: You scrunch your face up tight! You shake your head! And then your hips and then your knees! And now all together, please. (*she shakes all over*) Then you say the mess rhyme: If there's a mess, Ms. Spitspot must stress: Clean it up, before you sup, Before you sip, from a cup! Isn't that right, Swab? (*TWO doesn't answer. ONE speaks a little sharper.*) Swab!

TWO: (*turning back*) Huh? Oh. Yup, yup. That's what I'm supposed to say. Yup, yup! Cause "yup" rhymes with "cup," doesn't it, Ms. Spitspot?

ONE puts her hands on her hips and stares at TWO.

ONE: You don't seem your cheery cleaning self today, Swab.

TWO: No?

ONE: We have friends over. Turn that frown upside-down!

TWO: I don't feel like it.

ONE: Swab. That's not like you. You're always so happy. Say how happy you are, Swab.

TWO: (*to audience*) Don't YOU want to know how I'm feeling?

ONE grabs TWO by the shoulders and turns TWO to her.

ONE: Say it. Say, "I'm tip top, Ms. Spitspot." Say it!

TWO: I'm tip top, Ms. Spitspot.

ONE: And what makes Swab so happy?

TWO: Cleaning.

ONE: Cleaning! (*she spins TWO away*) You know, what my little friends? Let's do some cleaning right now! It's time for the cleaning up song! We can all sing together and put our toys away. (*she claps her hands*) Yay! Yay!

TWO: I don't know why you bother.

ONE: (*not looking at TWO*) Because cleaning is fun!

TWO: There's no one out there.

ONE is now really getting frustrated with TWO's behaviour. She puts her hands on her hips. It takes everything she has to keep cheerful.

ONE: Swab, Swab, Swaby Swab, Swab. *(she wags her finger exaggeratedly)*
What has come over you today?

TWO: There's no one out there. That's what's come over me. You know it. I know it. And I'm done with it.

ONE: *(she speaks very firmly)* How can you say that, Swab? All our little friends are out there. *(she waves to the audience)* Hello there! I see you. I see you *(she points)* and you *(she points)* and you! *(back to TWO)* That's not no one, is it?

TWO: If anyone is watching they think it's a stupid show. Cleaning is as much fun as playing? It's ridiculous.

TWO slumps in a chair. ONE looks conflicted over going on or breaking character. She stays in character, barely.

ONE: You know cleaning is very important to Ms. Spitspot.

TWO: Children don't want to clean! They want to be dirty! They want to roll around in the dirt, get paint all over their hands, all over their clothes, all over everything. They want to throw food, jump in puddles, and scatter their toys everywhere. Kids want to be messy! More than anything else in the whole wide world they want to make a mess. And you're stopping them! That is wrong.

ONE: *(still holding on to the character)* Now Swab, I know you feel like a Grumpy Gus, but remember, the show must go on!

TWO: Gwen...

ONE: Ms. Spitspot...

TWO: No one is watching. There's no one out there, there's no one in here. It's just you and me. The cameras are locked down and I'm the one who pushed the buttons in the control room. We're totally alone.

ONE: Well, I...

TWO: We're at the bottom of the barrel and I can't take it one second longer.

ONE: I... I... Aw, nuts!

ONE plops herself down beside TWO. ONE now completely comes out of character.

ONE: Do you think you could have brought this up before we started? Maybe give me a little heads-up off the air?

TWO: I tried! You were too busy getting “in character.”

ONE: You said you wanted to talk! You didn’t say anything about ruining everything we’ve worked for.

TWO: Please, it’s community television! We’re not even on cable. *(gesturing at the set)* We did not work for this.

ONE: *(with a sigh)* I know.

TWO: This is not what I wanted when I got into the business.

ONE: *(looking around)* You think it’s what I want?

TWO: I had dreams. Visions. Making a difference to kids everywhere.

ONE: You blame me, don’t you?

TWO: I don’t blame you.

ONE: You say you don’t blame me but you blame me.

TWO: I don’t blame you!

ONE: You blame me for getting kicked off the network.

TWO: It wasn’t your fault. Entirely.

ONE: See? Blame.

TWO: They didn’t want a kids’ cleaning show! We had a perfectly good show all ready to go with puppets, and brightly-coloured costumes, and I got to wear roller skates, and we were going to sing and play games and throw out kisses and hugs every day. Ten kisses! *(she blows out kisses)* Two hugs. *(she hugs herself)* Ten kisses, two hugs! Ten hugs, two kisses! *(waving out to the audience with a big smile on her face)* Bye bye, everybody! See you tomorrow! *(she drops her hand and her smile)* And you had to go and make a fuss. Forced those Brillo Pads right down their throats and funnily enough they didn’t want Brillo Pads forced down their throats.

ONE: It's the fingers. I hate sticky fingers! I can't stand being pawed with sticky fingers! Do you know how many germs sticky fingers carry? Ten kisses and two hugs? Ten hugs and two kisses? (*with defeat*) I couldn't do it. I just couldn't.

TWO: Now you don't have to. No one's coming near us with any fingers, sticky or otherwise.

They both sigh.

ONE: I had visions too, you know. A national show. Syndication. Specials. Books. Dolls.

TWO: Tours.

ONE: Huge Auditoriums.

TWO: *Ms. Spitspot's Play Place on Ice.*

ONE: Madison Square Garden filled day after day after day. We'd be bigger than big.

TWO: Screaming, adoring kids.

ONE: Singing along to every song. Knowing all the rhymes.

TWO: The Rolling Stones of the under-five set.

ONE: It wasn't meant to be, I guess. I guess... a cleaning kids' show isn't the greatest idea.

TWO: (*speaking upwards*) Finally! She admits it!

ONE: All right. No need to rub it in. (*she sighs*) It was when we went to those children's hospitals – when we were on Pickle Train Station? (*she shudders*) That was the beginning of the end.

TWO: The kids with cancer? The dying kids?

ONE: They kept touching me.

TWO: Did you think you were going to catch cancer?

ONE: I know, I know. I have no excuse. But they kept trying to grab my hand and tug on my shirt and hug me and ugh! Maybe I was never meant to work with kids. Are you going to look for another show?

TWO: I don't know. I'm not sure what else I'm good at. Maybe there's an opening at Molly Maid. I'm pretty good with the mop.

ONE: Maybe I'll write a book. A tell-all. I'm sure there are lots of people out there who'd want to know the ins and outs of a germophobic children's entertainer.

TWO: Maybe.

ONE: Maybe.

TWO: (*pause*) I guess we're done. I should go turn off the cameras.

ONE: I think we should finish the show.

TWO: Gwen...

ONE: Now, Swab, (*she takes a big breath*) I think we should finish the show. Obviously, it's our last show. We'll be turning the lights out on Ms. Spitspot's house. (*to the audience, right back in character*) Which is a good thing, my little friends. If you leave the house you want to be sure you turn off all the lights. Conserve energy! (*she gives a bit of a desperate look at TWO*) Well, Swab? What do you think?

They look at each other. TWO stands.

TWO: Where's my mop, Ms. Spitspot?

ONE: That's the spirit!

TWO: Oh Ms. Spitspot!

ONE: What is it, Swab?

TWO: Something's happening to me.

ONE: What is it? (*to the audience*) Do you know what it is?

TWO: I think I'm getting...

ONE: What? What?

TWO: I'm really getting...

ONE: What is it?

TWO: (*bouncing*) THE CLEANING BUG!!

ONE: (*bouncing*) THE CLEANING BUG!!

TWO: Chug, chug, chug!

ONE: It's the cleaning bug!

My Father Went To Switzerland And All I Got Was This Lousy T-Shirt

ONE is a driving student. TWO is a driving teacher. TWO can be either gender. If male, change the name to Mr. Jackson.

There are two chairs seated side-by-side, to imitate the front seat of a car. TWO sits with a clipboard in the passenger seat, impatiently. ONE runs on. She throws herself into the driver's side chair. ONE is bubbly and talks extremely fast. TWO is snobby and formal.

ONE: Hi! I'm sorry I'm late, I'm not too late am I?

TWO: *(looking at watch)* Actually you're –

ONE: *(continuing overtop)* Mrs. Kushko is just a – oh she's so *(she waves her hands about)* about talking in class and I said I don't do it on purpose, and she said if I was going to waste her time by talking in class, then she was going to waste my time by talking after class. And I had to listen to her talk! Can you imagine? Do you think she's allowed to do that?

TWO: Perhaps we should –

ONE: *(continuing overtop)* I explained to her it wasn't on purpose and I explained about my driving lesson, but she wouldn't listen. *(imitating)* “Every time you open your mouth I add another five minutes.” That's what she said. I really tried to explain but “Every time you open your mouth I add another five minutes.” That's what happened. That's why I'm late.

There is a pause.

TWO: Are you finished?

ONE: Um, I think so.

TWO: Fine. Hands in the ten and two position, please.

ONE: *(as if thinking about something else to say)* Switzerland!

TWO: What?

ONE: Switzerland. That's what she talked about.

TWO: Who?

ONE: Mrs. Kusko! Can you believe it?

TWO: When?

ONE: In my detention. She goes to Switzerland every summer. I go to the mall, she goes to Switzerland. And she has so much fun in Switzerland. And they make the best chocolate in Switzerland. I think I know everything there is to know about Switzerland.

TWO: (*impatient*) Eugenie.

ONE: Go ahead. Ask me something. I'm positive I know it.

TWO: I would prefer to SEE you driving rather than HEAR you talk about Switzerland. Hands in the ten and two position, please.

ONE: And you know what else?

TWO: (*with a sigh*) I'm sure you'll tell me.

ONE: She's been going to Switzerland ever since she was ten years old. Can you imagine? Her father wanted her to see the world. And he took her. To Switzerland!

TWO: (*almost muttering*) Well, bully for her.

ONE: Huh?

TWO: Will we be driving at any point today, Eugenie?

ONE: Oh. Right. (*she sighs*) Sorry. (*she looks out the window*)

TWO: Hands in the ten and two position. (*ONE doesn't move*) Eugenie. You're not doing it.

ONE: Huh?

TWO: Driving? Hands? Ten and two?

ONE: Oh. Right. Ms. Jackson?

TWO: Yes?

ONE: Did your father ever take you anywhere?

TWO: What?

ONE: I don't mean Switzerland. Who's dad does that? I guess Mrs. Kushko's does but that's not normal. That's psycho.

TWO: This is a driving lesson. This is not therapy.

ONE: I just wondered. I mean, we've been sitting here, side-by-side for weeks now and –

TWO: Eugenie. We're not friends. I am the teacher and you are the student.

ONE: I know but –

TWO: I'm not going to discuss this further with you. We are here to drive. Driving is the only appropriate topic of discussion. That is the only thing I want to hear come out of your mouth for the remainder of this lesson and for any future lessons. Is that understood?

ONE: *(very small)* Yes.

TWO: Now, for the last time, hands in the ten and two position. Perhaps we can leave the parking lot before sundown.

ONE does not move. She turns her head away and gives a little sniff.

TWO: Eugenie.

ONE: I'm fine.

TWO: Are you upset?

ONE: No.

TWO: There's nothing to be upset about.

ONE: I know.

TWO: *(she sighs)* I'm sorry. I snapped. I shouldn't have. Forget I said anything.

ONE: *(with a bigger sniff)* Oh-k.

TWO: *(can't believe it)* Are you crying?

ONE: *(trying not to cry)* Uh uh.

TWO: You are!

ONE: *(crying out)* No I'm not!

*ONE puts her face in her hands and gives a big wail.
NOTE: Even though this is serious for ONE, the actor should strive to make this a comedic wail. Make the audience laugh.*

TWO: Really, Eugenie. Don't cry. I'm begging you. I'm not good with crying. I've never been good with crying.

ONE gives a big wail.

TWO: OK. OK. It was the Switzerland thing. That really bugged me. Not you telling me, but that someone had a father who would...

ONE amps up her crying.

TWO: I'll tell you anything you want, just don't cry! Take a breath, take a big breath and suck those tears back into your head. Suck them right back into your head. Suck 'em back. (*ONE is still crying*) OK, don't suck. Let them all out. Get it all out of your system. Sure. Ah, ah, Eugenie! You were wondering, you wanted to know if my father ever took me anywhere. I'll tell you. OK? Will that help?

ONE makes some noises, that might be words, but can't be understood because of her crying.

TWO: Did my father ever take me anywhere? No, he never did. He's a lawyer. A big shot lawyer. Big cases. Always working and he was always busy. I was supposed to understand. But a kid doesn't understand squat. How's this? Is this working?

ONE gives a whimper, clearly listening. As this monologue goes on TWO loses her snobby demeanour and REALLY gets into the story.

TWO: OK. The only time my dad ever paid attention to me is when I worked, too. When I had homework, or when I was working on a project, we were peas in a pod. I would make up homework, just so he would spend time with me. Then I started doing spelling bees. He would quiz me for hours. And one year, I went all the way to nationals. I got to the finals of nationals. My dad was beaming, I saw him in the audience. I was so happy. I was making my dad happy. I got to the finals and I was centre stage, looking right at my dad and I missed. On my last word. Suffrutescent (*pronounced suf-froo-TESS-ent*). Suffrutescent. Shrub-like. Somewhat Shrubby. Language of origin? Can you use it in a sentence? Are there any other pronunciations? Suffrutescent. Suffrutescent. (*really taking time with this*) S-U-F-R-U-T-E-S-C-E-

N-T. I thought I had it. I was all set to sit down and “ping.” The bell that tells you the word is spelled wrong. The bell of doom. For whom the spelling bell tolls. “Ping!” S-U-F-F-R-U-T-E-S-C-E-N-T. I knew it had two “F’s.” I knew it. I’d spelled it right before. I was... just... and my dad, he didn’t congratulate me for how far I’d gone. He didn’t say, “Good show. Better luck next time. You did great. I love you.” He said, “You didn’t try hard enough.” If I had tried I would have won. I would have got the word and then, and only then, would he have been proud of me.

By now ONE is completely wrapped in the story and has stopped crying.

ONE: That’s terrible!

TWO: That’s when I knew my dad was an ass. That’s when I concocted my plan for... (*savour this word*) revenge.

ONE: (*with wide eyes*) What did you do?

TWO: Ha ha! I went to high school. Top marks every year. The highest marks in my class. Scholarships to wherever I wanted to go and whatever I wanted to do. I was a star. Star quality. Something really to be proud of. University, same thing. The highest marks in my class. I’m really going to be somebody. But then, oh then, right in the last year, right in the last second. BOOM!

ONE: What?

TWO: I dropped the ball. Dropped it from space. Dropped out of everything. Failed it all. Ignored all protests and pleas. Toppled my tower and laid it to ruin. And with the rubble scattered at my feet, I looked my dad in the eye and said, (*triumphantly*) “That’s for the spelling bee, Dad!” And he... kicked me out of the house. And now... I live in a rat hole. And I teach brain-dead teenagers. No offence.

ONE: None taken.

TWO: And I teach them how to drive. I teach driving. (*all of a sudden puzzled, realizing this isn’t really a triumph*) Boy. I sure showed him.

ONE: How come we got stuck with the mean dads? How come we didn’t get the dads who take us to Switzerland?

TWO: (*really grumpy*) Oh, what could be so wrong with your dad? I’m sure my story is a thousand times worse than yours.

ONE: It's not revenge worthy, I guess... It's still mean though.

TWO: What happened?

ONE: I asked my dad to go driving with me. To practice? And he laughed. He said no. He said he'd never get in a car with me. I'm too silly. I'm just a silly girl and I'll probably be silly for the rest of my life. And it wasn't a nice, "You're so silly." It was mean. Silly is a bad thing to be.

TWO: Yeah, that would suck.

ONE: I know I'm not... I'll never be a brain surgeon. But I thought that was OK. He wrote me off. For the rest of my life. I don't like that. He's supposed to be there for me, isn't he? That's what I thought.

TWO: (*very revengeful*) You should show him. Show him he's wrong.

ONE: You really hold a grudge, don't you? (*she sighs*) Forget it. (*she wipes her eyes*) OK. Let's drive.

TWO: Ah, Eugenie, I don't think you're in the best frame of mind –

ONE: I want to drive. I want to do something right today.

TWO: I think the best thing to do would be for me to drive, and we go get a coffee somewhere.

ONE: You said it yourself. We're not friends. You don't have to baby me.

TWO: Eugenie –

ONE: Am I silly? Do you think I'm silly?

TWO: I –

ONE: Come on, what do you think?

TWO: You do... talk... a lot.

ONE: About silly things.

TWO: I didn't say that.

ONE: But you're thinking it, aren't you? Aren't you?!

TWO: You don't have to get mad at me. I'm not your dad.

ONE: Am I a good driver?

TWO: Please don't make me answer that.

ONE: Am I a good driver? Tell me!

TWO: You... talk... a lot.

ONE: That makes me a bad driver?

TWO: It doesn't exactly help.

ONE: We should be on the same side here. Our dads suck. Help me!
Tell me I'm a bad driver. Tell it to my face! Tell me!

TWO: (*really letting loose*) Yes, you're a bad driver! A terrible driver. You hardly look at the road, you're always searching for your friends, you want to play loud music, you never brake properly and you never, never, never hold your hands in the ten and two position. It drives me crazy! I hate the days when I have lessons with you because I'm never entirely sure the car is going to make it out alive! I'm waiting for the day you smash into a telephone poll because you want to drive with your feet!

There is a pause. ONE looks happy. TWO looks spent.

ONE: Thank you.

TWO: I shouldn't have said that. I never should have said that.

ONE: I asked you to.

TWO: It's not professional. I have officially thrown every shred of professionalism out the window. My dad was right. I do deserve to live in a rat hole and teach brain-dead teenagers. I'm a failure.

ONE: Don't say that.

TWO: Why not? It's true.

TWO groans and smushes her face into the clipboard.

ONE: Ms. Jackson?

TWO: (*still with her face in the clipboard*) What?

ONE: Can I become a better driver?

TWO: What?

ONE: Can I get better? Can I improve?

Time, What Is It?

ONE is a hippy, TWO is a teenager. Both can be of either gender.

ONE is sitting cross-legged with eyes closed in a meditative state. TWO runs onstage, clearly frazzled, looking frantically through a knapsack.

TWO: (*muttering to self*) I'm late, I'm late, for a very important – (*sees ONE and runs over*) Hey! Hey!

ONE: (*slowly opening eyes*) Yes?

TWO: Do you have the time?

ONE: Hmmmm?

TWO: Time, time. (*taping wrist*) Do you have it?

ONE: Time. Do I have the time? Do I have time? Time, what is it? What is time?

TWO: The thing I need to know?

ONE: Sedentary thought. Time is nothing but a shackle. A handcuff. A ball and chain. What do you need to know the time for?

TWO: To catch a bus, to get to work, to open the pool, so kids can go swimming, to get rid of their energy, and not freak out on my head.

ONE: Sedentary thought indeed.

TWO: Look, bud, do you have the time or not?

ONE: Yes.

TWO: Great.

ONE: Indeed.

TWO: So? What time is it?

ONE: That depends.

TWO: On what?

ONE: Your state of mind.

TWO: Come again?

ONE: It depends on your state of mind. If you're feeling one way, it could be ten o'clock in the morning. If you're feeling another way, it could be two o'clock in the afternoon.

TWO: Are you for real?

ONE: And of course the opposite is true. It could be ten o'clock at night or two in the morning. The choice is yours. (*looking at TWO*) You look more of a two in the morning type of person. Yes, two in the morning. For you, it is two in the morning.

TWO: If you don't have the time, just say so!

TWO dumps the contents of the backpack on the ground.

ONE: Sh, sh, sh. Not so frantic, my friend.

TWO: My watch has to be in here somewhere.

ONE: You have to expand your mind.

TWO: (*searching through stuff*) Those kids turn into big bouncing balls of hyper if I don't open the pool on time.

ONE: Expand your horizons.

TWO: Big bouncing hyper balls. Boing! Boing! Boing!

ONE: My friend, you are terribly tied to time. It's scary.

TWO: (*looking up*) I'm scary? I'm scary.

ONE: Very.

TWO: Great. (*throws stuff back into the bag*) Never mind. I'll find someone else.

ONE: All those rushing thoughts, it can't be good for your soul.

TWO: Whatever. Thanks for nothing.

TWO turns to leave.

ONE: Wait! I have the time.

TWO: For real?

ONE: (*holds up wrist which has a watch on it*) See?

TWO: And?

ONE: It's ten to two.

TWO: (*with big relief*) Thank you.

ONE: In Hong Kong.

TWO: WHAT???

ONE: It's ten to two in Hong Kong. You see?

TWO: No.

ONE: Oh. That's too bad.

ONE goes back to meditative state. TWO stares at ONE.

TWO: (*to self*) I have to ask. (*turns away*) I don't have to ask. I can leave and live a happy life without asking. (*turns back*) I have to ask. I'll never be able to sleep if I don't ask. (*to ONE*) Not that I really want to know, but, why do you have your watch set to Hong Kong time?

ONE: Do you really want to know?

TWO: Yes.

ONE: Are you sure?

TWO: Yes.

ONE: (*with a smile*) Because I can.

TWO groans in frustration.

ONE: I also wear my pants backwards, I eat breakfast for dinner and sometimes I say exactly what's on my mind – that child is fat, that girl's hair is too blond, that man is going bald and he is in complete denial. Go free! Go bald! Let that scalp run wild! (*to TWO*) You see?

TWO: Yes.

ONE: Good!

TWO: You're crazy.

ONE: No.

TWO: Yes!

ONE: No.

TWO: I'm pretty sure you are.

ONE: Just because I live my life the way I want? Because I have a little fun? I say things that are not socially acceptable and defy society's rules?

TWO: Rules are good!

ONE: Not all rules.

TWO: You are whacko!

ONE: It is you, dear child, who are the whack-of-o.

TWO: That's complete whacko talk!

ONE: Look at you. Running in circles, flapping about inconsolably, completely delirious simply because you don't know the time. Frantically trying to get somewhere to open a pool so the bouncing children don't combust.

TWO: You don't know what it's like when kids combust!

ONE: What kind of life is that?

TWO: I'm sixteen, what do you want me to be, an astronaut?

ONE: Sixteen or sixty, you will never go against the grain. You will always follow time to the millisecond and never swim upstream when the world says sit down.

TWO: Now you're patronizing me. (*staring to freak out a little*) I'm being patronized by a crazy person. (*grabbing ONE by the collar*) Listen, you –

ONE: OK friend, take it easy. Easy.

TWO: (*freaking out*) I live a full life!

ONE: (*trying to ease away*) Of course you do.

TWO: (*letting go of ONE*) I am not boring!

ONE: Of course you're not.

TWO: I have fun! I frolic!

ONE: *(now very freaked out over TWO)* No need to go into the shrieky voice.

TWO: I have a good job at the pool and there's nothing wrong with it!

ONE: The shrieky place is not a happy place.

TWO grabs ONE by both shoulders.

ONE: Ack!

TWO: I'm giving you one last chance. WHAT TIME IS IT?

There's a pause.

ONE: *(quietly)* One o'clock.

TWO: Where? Where is it one o'clock?

ONE: Here, here! In our time.

TWO: I don't believe you!

ONE: It's true.

TWO: One o'clock.

ONE: Yes.

TWO: Not ten to two?

ONE: No.

TWO: One o'clock.

ONE: I swear on my mother's life. It's one o'clock. *(rolling into a small ball)* Please don't hurt me!

TWO: OK then. Good. *(Takes a big breath in and out. Lets ONE go and completely changes tone – instantly happy.)* Well. My bus doesn't come for another twenty minutes. I had nothing to worry about!

ONE: Imagine that.

TWO: I was delirious over nothing.

ONE: Looks like.

TWO: What did you say?

ONE: *(cowering)* Nothing.

The Last Dance

ONE and TWO are teenage girls.

TWO sits at a table, with head buried in arms, passed out asleep. ONE enters, sees TWO asleep and runs over to the table.

ONE: (*poking TWO*) Rise and shine! Up and at 'em! Wakey, wakey!

TWO: (*raising head very sleepily*) What?

ONE: You were sleeping.

TWO: Uh huh. OK.

TWO plonks head right back on the table. ONE pokes her again.

ONE: Rise and Shine! Up and at 'em! Wakey, wakey!

TWO: OK, OK. Stop poking me.

TWO sits up and yawns.

TWO: I was having the greatest dream.

ONE: There's no time for dreaming. There's no room in the schedule for dreaming of any kind.

TWO: I was a mountain climber and I was able to leap from peak to peak, like those mountain goats? It was amazing.

ONE: I can't leave you for five minutes.

TWO: Why not? I might actually get some sleep.

ONE: You can't sleep. We're not finished.

TWO: (*squinting at ONE*) Isn't it night time?

ONE: Technically.

TWO: (*looking at watch*) Isn't it two in the morning?

ONE: Not even close.

TWO: It's ten to. That's pretty close.

ONE: You can't sleep. I just figured out polynomials. I don't know where to start with complex numbers and quadratic equations. Whose bright idea was it to stay up all night?

TWO: Yours.

ONE: You went along with it! You said it was a great idea! "Sure Kari, it'll be fun."

TWO: Yeah but that was at two in the afternoon, not two in the morning.

ONE: It's not two. It's ten to.

TWO: Same thing. (*she yawns*) We've done a lot, Kar. We're doing good.

ONE: I can't believe this. Why didn't I take better notes? Why didn't I study this week? My whole life is flashing before my eyes. I can see it. I'm going to go to the exam tomorrow. I will sit down and everyone else will sit down all together in the gym, row after row after row. The bell will sound and everyone but me will open their papers, pick up their pencils and off they'll go. Everyone around me writing, writing, writing. Pencils scritch scratching across the page. Everyone with their heads bent low and their hands moving faster than the speed of light. They'll know all the answers. Not me. I'll sit there and my paper will remain closed and my pencil will sit on the desk. And then, because my pencil is not supposed to sit on the desk, it's supposed to be in my hand doing equations, it'll start talking to me.

TWO stands behind ONE, talking as ONE's pencil.

TWO: Hey. Psst. Psst! What're you doing?

ONE: Nothing.

TWO: I can see that. Everyone else has started.

ONE: I know.

TWO: Pick me up.

ONE: I can't.

TWO: Do it.

ONE: No.

TWO: Here's an interesting fact: you can't actually pass the exam unless you pick me up and start writing. I'm no good sitting here on the desk. I can't answer questions by osmosis. Here, let me try. (*TWO closes her eyes and scrunches up her face*) Hmm. Hmm. Nope, no good. Pick me up.

ONE: I can't.

TWO: Do it.

ONE: I don't know the answers! I don't know anything. I'll open that exam and I won't know the first thing.

TWO: Why not? You did study, didn't you?

ONE: Of course I did.

TWO: Did you?

ONE: Sort of.

TWO: You didn't study?

ONE: I did, I did. I just didn't study properly. I stayed up all night and nothing stuck.

TWO: That was stupid.

ONE: I know.

TWO: That was a loser move.

ONE: I know.

TWO: I mean there's loser and there's loser and **THAT** was really –

ONE: OK, OK, I got it. A loser move. Loud and clear.

TWO: The biggest exam of the year and you pulled an all-nighter? What were you thinking?

ONE: I don't need to be lectured to by my pencil.

TWO: Fine I won't say anything. Good luck, loser.

TWO turns her back on ONE.

ONE: I'll fail this exam and automatically fail the course. I won't get into the school I want, and everyone else will. Everyone will get these great jobs and I'll be left behind.

ONE crosses to the edge of the stage.

ONE: At the 10 year reunion I'll be alone and bitter. I'll probably smoke, too. Bitter, bitter cigarettes. Everyone else will be happy and fulfilled and I'll have lived a wasted, ruin of a life, all because I didn't take this exam seriously.

TWO turns, a totally different energy. This is the 10 year reunion.

TWO: Hey, hey, hey! How are you! (*flings arms around ONE*) It is so good to see you! I didn't expect to see you here. (*holds ONE out at arm's length, with hands on both shoulders*) Let me have a look at you. You look... great! You sure do! (*forcefully pats ONE on both shoulders*) How do I look? (*turns away, causing ONE to spin off balance*) Oh, don't tell me. I know I look tired. I know I look a little worn. That's what happens when you're a senior partner in the hottest law firm in New York. You have to live with tired and worn. Oh, but every time I see that view of Central Park from my window, I know it's worth it! (*seeing someone behind ONE*) Hey, is that Donny? Didn't you used to date? Didn't you dump him because he wore glasses? His wife is GORGEOUS! Look at the rock on her finger. He's one of the hottest actors in Hollywood now, did you know? Hey Donny! Donny!

TWO completely knocks over ONE. She makes her way back to the table and plonks her head on it. We're back in the present.

ONE: Yep, that's the way it's going to be. Everybody with hot jobs and big rocks and nice views and I'll be standing in the corner, sucking on cigarettes.

TWO: (*turning her head to the side, keeping her head on the table*) You know, if you actually studied, instead of complaining about studying, maybe you won't have to take up smoking.

ONE turns and looks at TWO, as if seeing something for the first time.

TWO: Wouldn't that be some excuse, though. Someone could be all, 'smoking kills' at you and you could say, "Back off. I just ruined my life." And they would say, "Yeah, you really did. Go ahead, light up. Peace out."

ONE: (*sitting at the table*) Why aren't you panicking?

TWO: (*lifting her head*) Hmm?

ONE: Why aren't you in a grand mal panic? Why aren't the sirens going off and the red lights flashing?

TWO: Sometimes if I lift my head too quickly I see a whole bunch of white lights.

ONE: We're in the same boat, aren't we?

TWO: What do you mean?

ONE: We sat at the back of the same class, spent the same amount of time not paying attention, took the same pitiful notes, studied for the same exact amount of time and you are sleeping like a baby. Why?

TWO: (*she sure does know*) I don't know.

ONE: You have a C in the class just like me, right? (*TWO doesn't say anything, she stares at the table*) Don't you have a C in the class? Won't you fail the class if you fail the exam? Like I will? (*TWO doesn't say anything*) Chelsey.

TWO: Yeah. This is probably a bad time to bring this up...

ONE: What?

TWO: I don't really, exactly have a C.

ONE: You don't?

TWO: Uh uh.

ONE: You told me you did.

TWO: Yeah. That was a mistake.

ONE: You said, after every quiz, after every test – “What did you get, Kari,” and I'd tell you and then you'd say, “Oh yeah, me too, me too.”

TWO: Yeah. This is such bad timing...

ONE: You were lying.

TWO: Umm...

ONE: You lied!

TWO: Yeah.

ONE: So what do you have?

TWO: Let's make some coffee and we'll do those espresso shots and then we can knock complex numbers on their head, no problem. Everything will work out.

ONE: You have an A. Don't you.

TWO: Something like that.

ONE: A plus? You have an A plus.

TWO: I guess I do. Yeah.

ONE sits with a stunned look on her face.

ONE: Why didn't you tell me?

TWO: I didn't want to make you feel bad!

ONE: Yeah, I'm much happier finding out this way. You really eased my mind, Chelsey. Way to go!

TWO: You were having so much trouble and I didn't want to hurt your feelings.

ONE: I don't believe this. How did you get an A plus?

TWO: I don't know. I just *(she waves her fingers about)* did.

ONE: No one just *(she imitates the way TWO waved her fingers about)* gets an A plus in Algebra. Did you bribe Mr. Curry?

TWO: No.

ONE: Did you bribe one of those Math Club geeks?

TWO: No! Why do you think I need to bribe someone to get a good grade? And they're not geeks.

ONE: So how did you do it?

TWO: Math just comes, you know, easy, sort of, for me. I like it. That's all.

ONE: Algebra comes easy for you.

TWO: See, I didn't want to say that.

ONE: Algebra comes easy. For you. You find Algebra easy.

TWO: Yeah. I get math. I like it. I don't mind doing the homework. So I don't... *(she doesn't want to say this)* really have to study.

ONE stares at TWO and then turns to stare out. She's in total disbelief.

ONE: Fine. (*pause*) Fine.

TWO: Now you're mad.

ONE: I'm not mad. I'm just – now you bring this up. Now is not the greatest time to bring this up. It's two in the morning Chels. It's not ten to anymore. It's full on two.

TWO: Yeah.

ONE: You and I are supposed to be in the same boat. We're supposed to be in the boat with the leaky bottom, together. We're supposed to be bailing as fast as we can, together. Laughing, together. Sinking, together. Now I'm in the boat and I'm going down. There are fifty circling sharks and you're on some luxury cruise ship sipping pineapple juice and getting a suntan.

TWO: (*a little annoyed*) It's not like that.

ONE: This is all your fault. You encouraged me to slack off, to not take notes, to not study.

TWO: I didn't encourage anything –

ONE: You planned all this didn't you!

TWO: What?

ONE: You did this on purpose. You've harboured some deep-seeded resentment against me and you've been planning for years to take me down at this exact moment. I will fail this exam and I will fail this course and I will not be able to graduate and you're going to go on and that's it. You're standing on the deck of your fancy boat waving, "Bye bye, Kari! Have a nice life sucking on cigarettes! Hope you like being bitter till the end of time!" You make me sick, you really do. This is a sick trick and I'll never forgive you for it. Not in a million, trillion –

TWO: (*standing*) I should go.

ONE: What?

TWO: I'm leaving.

ONE: You can't go, it's late.

Ten Minutes, Ten Minutes, Ten Minutes, Ten Minutes

ONE and TWO are students. Both could be either gender.

ONE and TWO sit side-by-side. They are in class. ONE has his eyes clenched tight and he has his fingers crossed on both hands. TWO watches ONE with curiosity.

ONE: Ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes. *(breathes in and out)* Ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes. *(breathes in and out)* Ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes.

Finally TWO can't hold out any longer.

TWO: Hey. *(She taps ONE on the shoulder.)* What are you doing?

ONE: *(still with eyes closed)* Nothing. Ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes. *(breathes in and out)* Ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes.

TWO taps ONE on the shoulder again.

ONE: What?

TWO: What are you doing?

ONE: If you must know, I'm doing my mantra. Ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes.

TWO: I didn't know you were Buddhist!

ONE: Ten minutes – what?

TWO: I didn't know you were a Buddhist. How cool is that, I've been sitting next to you all year and you haven't said anything and I haven't said anything and here we could have been talking the whole time! You learn new things every day. *(she chants a Buddhist mantra, with expertise)* Om mani padme hum. Om mani padme hum. Om mani padme hum.

ONE: What are you doing?

TWO: A Buddhist mantra. Om mani padme hum. You know it, right?

ONE: Uh, right. Look, why don't you do yours and I'll do mine and we'll all be happy campers. Ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes, ten

—

TWO: (*interrupting*) But aren't mantras supposed to be soothing? "Ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes" doesn't sound very soothing.

ONE: It doesn't have to sound soothing to you. It has to sound soothing to me.

TWO: Does it?

ONE: What?

TWO: Sound soothing.

ONE: It's incredibly soothing. It is the soothingest soothing mantra in the whole wide world.

TWO: Wow. That's pretty soothing.

ONE: Ten minutes, ten minute, ten minute, ten minutes. (*breathes in and out*) Ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes.

TWO taps ONE on the shoulder again.

ONE: What?

TWO: Why?

ONE: Why what?

TWO: Why is that your mantra?

ONE: Why do you care?

TWO: Because now we're talking —

ONE: We're not really talking.

TWO: I'm curious about you. I have an inherent curiosity. I am curious about everything.

ONE: You should get that checked out.

TWO: Why?

ONE: Because it's not good to be curious about everything. Curiosity killed the cat. Ever hear of that one?

TWO: Of course I have. There's silly curiosity and there's perfectly normal curiosity. For example, I don't have any curiosity toward whether or not bulls are colour blind. They wave red capes at bulls, but it's apparently the movement and not the colour that makes them charge. But I have no desire to find that out for myself, and so, that is silly curiosity and not something I'm interested in pursuing.

ONE: How did we manage to go the whole year without speaking?

TWO: You're insular.

ONE: And you're bizarre.

TWO: You might think I would take that as an insult. But I do not. Bizarre equals unique and I think unique is the new red. It's the "in" thing. Unique is riding the "what's hot" wave.

ONE: Swell.

TWO: So are you going to tell me?

ONE: What?

TWO: Why "Ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes" is your mantra.

ONE: Are you going to leave me alone if I don't?

TWO: No.

ONE: It's my mantra because it's the start of class and the teacher's not here.

TWO: So?

ONE: If the teacher doesn't show up in ten minutes, we get to leave and we won't get penalized. I am channelling all my energy into moving the clock to that magic moment where I can get up and get out.

TWO: (*very sceptical*) Where'd you hear that?

ONE: Everywhere.

TWO: From who?

ONE: Ask anyone! Ask Jimbo, or Krissy, or Wease, or Ace, or Tina Tina Bo Beena.

TWO: All very reliable sources.

ONE: Everybody knows it.

TWO: I've never heard of it.

ONE: And you've heard of everything?

TWO: Pretty much.

ONE: It's the ten minute rule. Teacher doesn't show up, we don't have to stay. End of story. Period. Full stop. Stamped it no erasies.

TWO: You just get up and leave?

ONE: Yes.

TWO: Right at the ten minute mark.

ONE: Right on the nose.

TWO: And you won't get in trouble.

ONE: 'Cause it's a bonafide rule.

TWO: That's ludicrous.

ONE: It's not. It happens all the time.

TWO: Since when?

ONE: Since forever. Ten minutes go by, you pick up your books and leave.

TWO: That's just, that's – that's absolutely ludicrous. I'm not going anywhere.

ONE: Why not?

TWO: The teacher will be here any second.

ONE: But what if she's not?

TWO: She will be.

ONE: Maybe not.

TWO: I'm sure she has a perfectly good reason why she's late.

ONE: Or maybe she's not coming at all. Maybe ten minutes will go by and she won't be here. This whole class is going to leave and you'll be the only one left.

TWO: I'm sure I won't be.

ONE: Yes you will. You'll be all alone. Alone in your bizarre little world. Like always.

TWO: What does that mean?

ONE: I've got your number.

TWO: You do not. We've never exchanged one word before today.

ONE: I don't need to. You, like the cheese, stand alone. You do your homework, you're never late for class, your hair is very neat, and your shoelaces are never untied. You eat fruit voluntarily, don't deny it, I've seen you. I'm glad you won't be leaving with the rest of us. We don't want you to leave with us. We don't want to be associated with you. The cheese stands alone for a reason.

TWO: I don't follow some stupid non-existent rule and all of a sudden I'm a what, a what, an outcast? A cheese outcast? Mold who eats the occasional apple? That is downright hogwash, and I won't be bullied by you, you, fake Buddhist. I won't be bullied by you at all. I'm glad we've not spoken all year. I'm glad this year is almost up and this is the one and only conversation you and I will have to have. Go back to your fake mantra and your untied shoelaces.

TWO turns away. She's clearly steamed. ONE didn't mean to go quite that far.

ONE: Hey.

TWO: *(holds her hand up – as if to say “don't talk to me”)* Pfft.

ONE: I'm sorry.

TWO: *(holds her hand up – as if to say “don't talk to me”)* Pfft. Pfft!

ONE: Really, I'm –

TWO: *(clenching her eyes tightly shut)* Ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes.

ONE: What are you doing?

TWO: Ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes.

ONE: What are you doing?

TWO: *(louder)* Ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes –

ONE: Cut it out! Stop it. (*TWO stops*) What are you doing?

TWO: If you must know, I'm doing my mantra.

ONE: It's my mantra.

TWO: I don't see your name on it. You can't copyright a mantra, you know.

ONE: Fine. It's your mantra. Have it in good health.

TWO: Thank you. I will. Ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes – Don't you want to know why it's my mantra?

ONE: No.

TWO: Fine. (*breathes in and out*) Ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes. (*Breathes in and out. Louder.*) Ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes. (*Breathes in and out. Even louder, directly at ONE.*) Ten minutes, ten minutes, ten –

ONE: OK, OK, OK! Why is "Ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes, ten minutes" YOUR mantra?

TWO: Who's the cat killing now?

ONE: All right, you win, hooray for you.

TWO: It is my mantra because in ten minutes, you will follow your stupid rule and you'll be out the door. That is why it's my mantra.

ONE: It's not ten minutes anymore anyway.

TWO: Two minutes and twenty seven seconds doesn't have the same ring to it.

ONE: Is that it? Really? You wouldn't lie to me, would you?

TWO: What, with us being lifelong friends and everything?

ONE: I'm sorry. I'm truly sorry. I didn't mean to upset you.

TWO: I'll bet you're not so different than me.

ONE: Of course I am!

TWO: (*fast and furious*) Pop quiz! Have you ever removed the tag off a mattress that says, "Do not remove under penalty of law!!"

ONE: (*taken off guard*) Of course not, it says not to!

TWO: Ah ha!

ONE: That's not fair!

TWO: Your subconscious answered loud and clear.

ONE: You caught me off guard.

TWO: I'll bet you eat apples by the dozen.

ONE: I do not!

TWO: Do too.

ONE: Do not!

TWO: Do too.

ONE: Do not, do not, do – look, in a few seconds, the ten minutes will be up and I'll go and next class we can go back to not speaking to each other and everything will go back to normal.

TWO: You mean in ten seconds?

ONE: Yes, yes!

TWO: Nine seconds, eight,

ONE: Come on,

TWO: Seven, six, five,

ONE: Five more seconds...

TWO: Four, Three, Ten minutes and two seconds and –

ONE: (*leaping up and jumping up and down*) YES! YES! YES! That's it! Let's go! Move 'em out everybody! Moooooove it! Mooooooove it!

TWO: (*looking up*) Why hello, Mrs. Hynick!

ONE: (*freezing in mid-jump*) Mrs. Hynick?

TWO: (*to teacher*) We were just wondering where you were.

ONE: (*sitting down, slowly and painfully*) Yes we were. I was just jumping up and down... for the pain... of not knowing where you were. In pain... 'cause we weren't... being... taught... every last second of class. Yep, that's it. Good to see you. Glad you're not lost or under a bus. Or something.

The Itsy Bitsy Spider Or Else

ONE is a businessman. TWO is a deliveryman.

ONE enters with TWO following behind. TWO has a clipboard.

ONE: Thank you for coming so quickly.

TWO: Our pleasure.

ONE: I was in a complete panic. You've really saved me.

TWO: Glad we could help.

ONE: I'm having a party tonight. I want everything to be perfect. This will really do the trick.

TWO: I just need you to sign on the dotted line.

ONE: *(takes clipboard)* Sure.

TWO: And I'll get your 10 dash 2 out of the truck.

ONE: *(stops with pen in mid air)* What?

TWO: I'll get your 10 dash 2 out of the truck.

ONE: You mean my 2 dash 10.

TWO: 10 dash 2.

ONE: 2 dash 10.

TWO: I got a 10 dash 2 in the truck.

ONE: But I didn't ask for a 10 dash 2. I asked for a 2 dash 10. I ordered a 2 dash 10.

TWO: *(he scratches his head)* Huh. I wonder what happened. I confirmed the order. 10 dash 2's are a bear to move. I wouldn't put a 10 dash 2 in the truck unless I was absolutely sure.

ONE: I didn't order a 10 dash 2. I would never order a 10 dash 2. What kind of person do you think I am?

TWO: I'm sure I don't know.

ONE: I'm the kind of person who orders 2 dash 10's. I have 2 dash 10 written all over me!

TWO: I see.

ONE: (*pacing*) This is terrible. I have people coming over. The legal department has been talking about this party for weeks. I have a lot of expectations to live up to.

TWO: Well, a 10 dash 2 would certainly be a conversation starter. You could have a ton of conversations about a 10 dash 2.

ONE: I don't want a conversation starter. I want my 2 dash 10! The whole night is planned around the 2 dash 10! The canapés have been colour-coordinated to the 2 dash 10. I had a string quartet compose a piece of music dedicated to the 2 dash 10.

TWO: This is some party.

ONE: Darn right it is. Without, it seems, a 2 dash 10!

TWO: Seems a little much, though. If you want my opinion.

ONE: If I what?

TWO: Sounds like you're putting a lot of pressure on yourself. What if the party doesn't go smoothly? What if someone spills a drink, or has an allergic reaction to the shrimp? You may feel relieved to have a 10 dash 2 around. The 10 dash 2 can really come in handy. Sure your 2 dash 10 is fine when things are going well. But when there's a problem, that's when a 10 dash 2 can really save the day.

ONE stares and TWO. He points accusingly at TWO.

ONE: This is a conspiracy.

TWO: Huh?

ONE: A plot. A plan. This is a company conspiracy.

TWO: Oh, come on now...

ONE: I know it. I can smell it. This has nothing to do with confirming orders. That 10 dash 2 is here on purpose! You want to get rid of your 10 dash 2's and you're foisting them on unsuspecting 2 dash 10ers! A conspiracy I tell you! A downright evil conspiracy. Conspiracy! Conspiracy! Conspiracy!

ONE turns away and crosses his arms. There's a pause. TWO scratches his head and finally answers.

TWO: Well...

ONE: (*turning back to TWO*) What?

TWO: I'm saying... There's might be...

ONE: (*totally surprised*) You mean I'm right?

TWO: There might be... something to your theory.

ONE: Are you kidding? (*whispering and leaning in*) This is a conspiracy? A honest to goodness conspiracy?

TWO: (*leaning in and whispering*) Why are you whispering?

ONE: (*whispering*) I don't know. You're not bugged, are you?

TWO: (*whispering*) No.

ONE stands up straight. So does TWO.

ONE: (*full voice*) What do you know?

TWO: I shouldn't say.

ONE: But there is something?

TWO: There is.

ONE: About my 2 dash 10?

TWO: I shouldn't say.

ONE: You have to.

TWO: I can't.

ONE: You've already started. You can't stop now.

TWO: I shouldn't say.

ONE: You can't leave me in the lurch.

TWO: Well...

ONE: I have to know. Please!

TWO: OK. I'll tell you. You may not like it.

ONE: I can take it.

TWO: It might make you mad.

ONE: I'm all ears.

ONE sits down and gestures TWO to join him. TWO also sits.

TWO: It's about your tone.

ONE: My tone? My dial tone? On my phone?

TWO: Your voice tone.

ONE: *(he holds his throat)* What about it?

TWO: When you talk, you give tone. You speak condescendingly to people you believe are beneath you. You give attitude.

ONE: And what's wrong with that?

TWO: Milly doesn't like it.

ONE: Who's Milly?

TWO: That's another thing. Milly has been taking your orders for three years now. 7 dash 38's, 14 dash 3's, and 9 dash 9 dash 5's. She says her name every time she answers the phone. And you don't know it.

ONE: Of course I know her name...

TWO: You call her Maude.

ONE: I do?

TWO: She doesn't like it.

ONE: Wait a second, wait a second. *(getting mad)* Am I hearing what I think I'm hearing?

TWO: I told you it might make you mad.

ONE: I've got a 10 dash 2 instead of a 2 dash 10 because I offended some... secretary? Some plebe who answers the phone? She thinks I give her tone? *(he stands and starts to pace)* Just wait, just wait, she hasn't begun to see tone. Who's your manager? Who's your president? I want the president of the company and I am going to tell him a thing or two about tone. I will show him an ocean and a seas worth of tone. I will give him mountains of tone. I will –

TWO: Milly's the president.

ONE: Milly?

TWO: Yep.

ONE: The girl who answers the phone?

TWO: She'll be real pleased to hear you call her a girl. And that you automatically assumed the president was a guy. She's always cracking up over people who do that.

ONE: What's the president doing answering the phone? How am I supposed to know it's the president on the phone?

TWO: You're not supposed to know.

ONE: That is downright sneaky.

TWO: Depends on how you look at it.

ONE: I'm looking at it as sneaky.

TWO: That's your prerogative.

ONE: Darn right it is. So what do we do now? Am I getting my 2 dash 10 or not?

TWO: I only got a 10 dash 2 in the truck.

ONE: Does she want me to apologize?

TWO: Nope.

ONE: Does she want me to write a letter?

TWO: Nope.

ONE: Give to charity? Throw a cream pie in my face? What?

TWO: She wants you to sing to her cat.

There is a pause. ONE is sure he's heard wrong.

ONE: I beg your pardon?

TWO: Milly wants you to sing to her cat. She's very connected to her. If you call Milly up and sing to her cat, she'll forget the whole tone thing and she'll OK the delivery of a 2 dash 10.

ONE: Is Milly serious?

TWO: Milly is dead serious.

ONE: Milly is a lunatic.

TWO: (*with a shrug*) Milly's the boss.

ONE: I don't have to apologize, which would be the sane move in this situation, but if I sing to a cat everything's hunky dory?

TWO: The cat likes nursery rhymes. Makes her happy. Cat's happy, Milly's happy.

ONE: I refuse. I absolutely refuse. It's ridiculous, and no, no. I won't do it. Take your 10 dash 2 and get out.

TWO: OK. (*turns to go*) But the 10 dash 2 stays.

TWO starts to cross the stage to exit and ONE tries to do everything to stop him, without actually physically stopping him.

ONE: What?

TWO: I gotta fulfil the order.

ONE: You can't.

TWO: My paperwork says I gotta deliver a 10 dash 2 to this address, and that's what I'm going to do.

ONE: I didn't sign the paperwork. I don't want it. I refuse the delivery!

TWO: I'll just put it out on the lawn then?

ONE: You can't do that! I'm giving a party tonight. How will it look with a 10 dash 2 on the lawn? What will the neighbours say?

TWO: I'm sure you'll be able to move it to the side. You just need one of those mini forklifts.

ONE: I'm going to call the papers on you. All the news stations. Radio, TV, the works!

TWO: Yeah they love Milly. She's always winning awards, she's even got a key to the city. I'm sure they'd love to talk to you about her.

ONE: This is blackmail! Extortion!

TWO: (*exiting*) Have a nice day!

ONE: (*calling out*) I won't back down! I won't! I really won't! You think I will but I won't!

ONE pauses, trying not to give in. Finally he gives a big sigh and calls out.

ONE: Wait! Come back!

TWO comes sauntering back in.

ONE: If I sing, I get my 2 dash 10.

TWO: Yep.

ONE: And you won't leave that thing on my lawn?

TWO: If the order changes, I will fulfil it completely.

ONE: And it has to be singing?

TWO: Nursery rhymes.

ONE: And it has to be nursery rhymes?

TWO: The Itsy Bitsy Spider or else.

ONE: All right. *(he pulls out a cell phone and presses a number)*

TWO: You have our company on speed dial! That's cool.

ONE: *(he grimaces at TWO and speaks into the phone)* Good afternoon.
May I speak to Milly, please? Milly! Milly it's so good to talk to you.
I have one of your deliverymen here...

TWO: Hank.

ONE: I have Hank here, Milly, and – *(to TWO)* She wants to know if your niece is feeling better.

TWO: Oh, she is.

ONE: *(on phone)* She is.

TWO: All the kids in her class signed her cast.

ONE: *(on phone)* All the kids in her class signed her cast.

TWO: But she says it itches like crazy!

ONE: *(on phone)* But she says – *(to HANK)* Do you want to talk to her?

TWO: There's that tone...

ONE: (*takes a deep breath in and then talks on the phone*) But, he says, her cast is itching like crazy. Yes, isn't that always the way. Anyway, Milly, I am calling because it has been brought to my attention there's been a misunderstanding which has led to a 10 dash 2 in a truck in my driveway instead of the 2 dash 10, which I clearly remember ordering this morning.

TWO: (*wagging his finger at ONE*) Ah, ah ah...

ONE: (*he clears his throat*) I understand that my – that the manner in which I spoke with you was unacceptable. And I'd like to remedy that right now. By singing to your cat. Oh, I insist. It would be my utmost honour if you would allow me to sing The Itsy Bitsy Spider to your cat, Princess Pattycakes? Yes, Princess Pattycakes! Please let me sing to Princess Pattycakes. (*to HANK*) She's very touched.

TWO: That's our Milly!

ONE: (*to TWO*) She's holding up the cat to the phone. (*to phone*) Ready Princess Pattycakes? OK... (*starts to sing*) The Itsy Bitsy Spider went up the – (*he is suddenly stopped*) No, I'm not doing the gestures. Because I'm holding the phone.

TWO: I'll hold the phone for you.

ONE: But the cat won't see the gestures.

TWO: She'll know if you don't.

ONE: But it's – (*he controls himself*) Fine, fine.

ONE gives the phone to TWO who holds it to ONE's mouth so he can sing and do the gestures.

ONE: (*singing*) The Itsy Bitsy Spider went up the water spout.

TWO: And be happy, too. She'll know if you're not happy.

ONE: (*singing, now with a smile on his face*) Down came the rain and washed the spider out! Out came the sun and dried up all the rain, so the Itsy Bitsy spider went up the spout again.

ONE ends in a pose. TWO takes the phone and talks to Milly.

TWO: Yep, he did it. Hand gestures and all. Did she like it? Awwwwww. (*looking at ONE*) He was relatively happy. Happy enough. (*he laughs at something Milly says*) Too true. OK, you got it, Boss.



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