

TEN MINUTES

By Jonathan Dorf

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Cast of Characters

JUDE, female, a 17-year-old high school student
SIMON, male, same age and her classmate

Setting Notes

A high school custodian's closet. The play can be performed on a bare stage or, more elaborately, a production may use a door and various props or set pieces to create the feel of the closet.

Acknowledgements

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Afternoon. A high school custodian's closet. JUDE, short for Judith, 17, and SIMON, same age, are in hiding. Though they're hiding in the dark except for some light coming from under the door, the stage can't be completely dark.

JUDE: I don't hear anything.

SIMON: I know.

JUDE: Maybe they're gone.

SIMON: I don't know. Everybody's quiet.

JUDE: You'd think there'd be some sound. Something.

SIMON: You'd think.

JUDE: It's been ten minutes... *(beat)* What if we're the only ones left?

SIMON: You mean except for...

JUDE: Yeah. Except for John and...

SIMON: Peter. It's Peter. It's like his only friend.

JUDE: I could hear John's voice. He didn't even sound angry.

SIMON: I couldn't tell. Everybody was screaming. I could tell John was saying something, but I couldn't hear a word he said. She was standing this close to me... *(indicates a short distance with his hands, one of which is starting to shake—beat)* And then she

stopped. (*grabs his left hand, which is the trembling one*) My hand won't stop shaking.

JUDE: What if I crack the door?

SIMON: I don't know. If the police were here, wouldn't they be making noise?

JUDE: Maybe they're outside. Did it just start?

SIMON: Then where's the bullhorn? Don't they say "this is the police—come out with your hands up"?

JUDE: Maybe they're on the phone. Maybe they got John or Peter's cell number, and they're talking to them on the phone right now.

SIMON: Maybe. (*beat*) What period is it?

JUDE: End of sixth?

SIMON: You wonder why they waited half the day.

JUDE: (*beat*) Lunch.

SIMON: I don't understand. They wanted to have lunch first?

JUDE: Fourth lunch ends, half the school's in the cafeteria. Other half's waiting to get in.

SIMON: The whole school...

JUDE: John's smart that way, I guess.

SIMON: I was supposed to have a history test after lunch. Vietnam.

JUDE: I'm in your class. Remember—I'm in your study group.

SIMON: (*grabbing his shaking hand*) Sorry—this is freaking me out.

JUDE: I'm gonna crack the door. (*gets up and starts for the door*)

SIMON: No! Don't!

JUDE: It's quiet.

SIMON: We don't know where they are. We don't know!

(*Beat. JUDE sits.*)

JUDE: So what do we do? If we're not going out, what do we do?

SIMON: I don't know. Listen. See if we hear anything.

JUDE: It stinks in here.

SIMON: Sorry. The flower garden's on the other side of the building.

JUDE: (*beat*) How thick is this door?

SIMON: Thick.

JUDE: Like we could scream and nobody would hear us thick, or thick we could talk and nobody would hear us?

SIMON: (*beat*): He was on my team. In Minor B.

JUDE: Minor B?

SIMON: Little league. The coaches pitch, but it's not T-ball. John was the worst player on the team. (*beat*) The coaches lob the ball in. It's overhand, but it's like slow-mo, and he can't hit it. Every pitch, he falls out of the box. Like he's afraid of it. This slow-mo ball that's

being thrown by our own coach. And everybody hates him cause he's an automatic out, but it's little league, so he has to play.

JUDE: How old were you?

SIMON: Nine.

JUDE: I don't think this is about little league.

SIMON: People hold grudges.

JUDE: That would be insane.

SIMON: They burn slow. Look at Vietnam.

JUDE: This isn't—

SIMON: How long did that last?

JUDE: *(beat)* The first American military advisors enter Vietnam in 1950 to aid the French, and the last Americans leave at 8:35 A.M. on April 30th, 1975, when the final ten Marines evacuate the US Embassy by helicopter. The United States does not normalize relations with Vietnam and reopen the embassy until 1995. But that's different.

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