

LESLIE AND THE BOYS

TEN MINUTE PLAY

By **Tim Mogford**

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SYNOPSIS: Leslie arrives at Alex's place to get a male perspective on something. Instead, she encounters Luke, who has little perspective on anything. When Alex does arrive, it is clear that Leslie's approach to the whole Tony thing will put her at odds with some of Alex's priorities, and Luke's attempts to contribute usefully to the world of high school romance complicate communication even further. This is a funny, poignant and evocative take on the pain and absurdity of young love and on the difficulties both genders experience when trying to talk about them.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 MALES, 1 FEMALE)

LESLIE (f) Teen. Warm, chatty and outgoing, Leslie is bright enough to see that she is not always being heard, but she is too insecure to stop trying and too impatient to really listen.

LUKE (m) Teen. Luke isn't mean, but his understanding of people and relationships is hampered by a lack of sustained effort and attention.

ALEX (m) Teen. Alex is a nice boy trapped in a world that seems to be full of Tonys on one hand and Lukes on the other. He's had a crush on Leslie for years but (surprise, surprise) he hasn't been able to tell her.

SETTING

A room in Alex's house. The play is designed to work in any kind of space and with a range of budgets. The original actors worked with little more than two folding chairs, but feel free to choose a room and set it as elaborately as you wish.

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AT RISE:

Two chairs on stage. LUKE sits at one of them. He's doing something with his phone/handheld game/etc. He is totally engrossed. Enter LESLIE.

LESLIE: Oh. *(She seems surprised.)* Hi. *(He doesn't answer.)* Hi!
Where's Alex?

LUKE: *(Not looking up.)* What?

LESLIE: Alex. This is his house. His mom said he was up here. I live next door - - he's not in my grade, but we've known each other like ages; he's kind of like my brother. Except I have a brother, who's not Alex, obviously. Actually, Alex and me don't really know each other much, but I live across the road. So where is he? I kind of need to speak to him.

LUKE: *(Long pause.)* What?

LESLIE: I don't think you're listening. Luke, right? You were on my bus two years ago. You sat with Missi Kauffman, who was sweet then but she's really mean now, like she's too good. I mean - - what's *that* about? No one did anything to her. *(Long pause.)* Look - - I don't want to bother you with whatever you're doing - - Luke? I guess you're Luke, since you didn't say I got it wrong. But Luke, listen - - where's Alex? I was hoping he could help me with this little - - problem.

LUKE: Where's - - who? Missi Kauffman? *(Genuinely mystified.)*

LESLIE: No - - Alex. Alex - - where's Alex? I want to speak to him, and it's kind of urgent.

LUKE: Oh. Alex isn't here. *(He returns to his game.)*

LESLIE: Yes. Yes, I see that. Okay - - look, maybe you can help.

LUKE doesn't respond

LESLIE: OK. Well, thanks for not - - saying no. Or . . . anything. I just need to talk to someone about this, and Michelle is at soccer and Lisa's parents took her phone away and now they've hidden it somewhere new so she can't find it. And anyway, I kind of need a male . . . take on this whole Tony situation I've got going on. You know the Tony I'm talking about, I'm assuming?

LUKE: (*After a pause, looks up.*) Uh huh.

LESLIE: Yeah - - see? Everybody does. Even you know about Tony and me. Well, I only wish it *was* Tony and me. Right now there's Tony (*She demonstrates.*) and then, a long way away, there's me. And that's really just not fair, and I don't know why because I've done just about everything I can think of to make him notice me, and he's not getting it. I mean, everyone else sees it, but not Tony! Oh, no. He just keeps smiling at me in the hallway, and texting me to say well done on the play thing, and then he goes and practically *gets engaged* to Joanna "I'm so snotty I even annoy myself" Matthews. I mean - - arm around her shoulder in the hallway, little notes in study hall, working together as partners in Bio. You know, it makes me want to throw up - - I mean physically *nauseous*. I mean - - what's next? Paint colors and a new kitchen? (*Pause.*) And then I think. Maybe I *wouldn't* throw up if it was me doing those things. And this is the first question I need help with. Do you think I'm being kind of a hypocrite? My girlfriends will say "no," because that's what you say when someone asks that kind of question. That's what *I* say, anyway. I need an objective opinion from someone who knows nothing about anything (*Looks at LUKE.*) romantic . . . or emotional. Or . . . human. So what do you think?

ALEX: (*He has entered, unseen.*) What do we think about what? Hey, Luke!

LUKE: Hey. (*About to return to his game, he suddenly pauses in thought.*) Wait - - someone was here, looking for you. Missi Kauffman, I think.

LESLIE: Alex! Thank goodness you're here. I need your help with something.

ALEX: (*To LUKE.*) No - - I think it was Leslie.

LUKE: Really? (Sees *her.*) Oh, yeah. She wanted something.
What did you want?

LESLIE: Weren't you listening?

LUKE: Listening to what?

LESLIE: I was asking your opinion about something quite important.

LUKE: Really?

ALEX: Don't ask him. He won't know anything!

LUKE: Shut up, yes I do. Know - - stuff.

ALEX: Oh, really?

LUKE: Yeah - - ask me anything. Anything you like!

ALEX: What's the capital of Zambia?

LUKE: What's Zambia?

ALEX: It's a country, moron.

LUKE: Where?

ALEX: (*Irritated pause.*) Do you know the answer or not?

LUKE: Why should I - -

LESLIE: (*Breaking in.*) Okay - - if I could just bring this all back to me. That is what we're supposed to be talking about. I need your opinion on the whole Tony thing.

ALEX: Oh. (*Seems deflated.*)

LESLIE: Apparently it's no secret that I like him. Even Luke knew, and he's . . .

LUKE: Knew what?

LESLIE: About me and Tony.

LUKE: Who's Tony?

LESLIE: Tony - - oh, look. Maybe this was a dumb idea. Can one of you please just tell me what I have to do to make this guy notice me? I mean - - what would get a guy's attention?

LUKE: (*Pause. Then seriously.*) Do you have a bikini?

LESLIE looks at him witheringly.

LESLIE: Alex - - help me. What does Tony want? What does he see in that Joanna girl? How can I go from being the "friend you text" to the "girlfriend you date"?

ALEX: I don't really know the answers to any of those questions.

LUKE: See? Now who's the moron?

ALEX: Oh, shut up. Why do you even like this guy anyway?

LESLIE: You're not serious?

LUKE: Yeah, Alex. Duh.

ALEX: You don't even know who we're talking about! (To *LESLIE*.)

Let's suppose I am. What's so great about him?

LESLIE: Well, he has great hair. He's gorgeous. His eyes are really warm, and he has this cute smile that sort of begins in the corner of his mouth and . . .

ALEX: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay - - I get it! But I'm saying there's more to life than being - - like good-looking and everything.

LESLIE: Oh, I know that!

ALEX: So - - now what's so great about him?

LESLIE: He plays the guitar - - like, really well, and he starts for the football team. He always gets As, and last summer he spent a month building houses for poor people in Peru. You mean *that* kind of thing?

ALEX: (*Slight pause.*) Okay - - fine. But how about this? Is he interested in you?

LESLIE: That's what I'm saying. How do I *make* him . . . ?

ALEX: See, maybe you can't. Maybe that's just something that's *there* - - or *isn't*. (*LESLIE looks confused. ALEX turns to LUKE, who's back in his game again.*) Like - - Luke, for example.

LUKE: What?

ALEX: I mean, Luke's lazy. And a bit weird, and he doesn't really - - pay attention to stuff. I mean, no offense, buddy.

LUKE: No, no. That's true.

ALEX: But let's say he wasn't those things. Let's say he was actually - - like, witty and cool and stayed awake in class and stuff . . .

LUKE: (*Chuckling.*) Yeah, right!

ALEX: I mean - - if he was all those things, instead of what he is now - - lazy and weird, I mean. Then maybe he *wouldn't be my friend*. Like he is now.

LUKE: Thanks, man.

ALEX: No problem. (To *LESLIE*.) Do you get what I'm saying?

LESLIE: Not really.

ALEX: Maybe this Tony guy can't - - like, *change*. Maybe it's just not supposed to work that way.

LESLIE: You mean, if he was lazy and weird . . .

LUKE: Like me, for instance . . .

LESLIE: Okay, then if he was lazy and weird, he'd like me?

ALEX: Not really. I'm just saying maybe there's someone else who'd like you without you having to *make* him.

LESLIE: Oh.

ALEX: Someone who you've probably not even thought about - - like that. Someone completely unexpected. And yet, maybe someone who's *right under your nose*. And if you gave that guy a chance, maybe you'd see that - -

LESLIE: *(She's been thinking hard.)* Oh my gosh! Alex! *(She pulls him DS, away from LUKE. His face lights up.)* I've just thought of something. It's a little crazy, but it occurred to me when you were going on about lazy and weird people what you might be talking about!

ALEX: Oh, really?

LESLIE: I'm thinking - - maybe I've been blinded by my crush on Tony. Maybe there are actually tons of people who really like me, but I'm just not picking up the signals!

ALEX: Well, not *tons*. I mean - -

LESLIE: For example, there *is* someone in here, in this room, who I would never suspect might be interested in me, but now you've got me thinking about it, the signs are there.

ALEX: Signs?

LESLIE: Yeah - - lazy, weird behavior, a seeming lack of interest, someone I've not thought about. *(She pulls ALEX to her.)* It's Luke, isn't it?

LUKE: *(He's achieved something on his handheld game.)* Yes! All right! Alex! Listen - - *(He looks up. LESLIE is smiling, anxiously, right at him. ALEX stares straight ahead.)* I just got - - It took me ages to - - I - - What?

LESLIE: I don't know how to say this.

LUKE: What?

LESLIE: Alex has explained everything. I - - oh, look, this isn't easy for anyone to say.

LUKE: What isn't?

LESLIE: Look. You're very sweet and everything.

LUKE: Thanks. (*A look at ALEX - - "what's she going on about?"*)

LESLIE: But I don't think of you - - that way. Only as a friend. Who I value as - - a friend and everything.

LUKE: Okay. (*Back in his game again now.*)

LESLIE: But we really need to keep our relationship on a totally simple and friendly basis.

LUKE: (*Looks up.*) Are you talking to me still?

LESLIE: (*A little taken aback.*) Yes. I must say, you're taking this pretty well.

LUKE: Uh huh.

LESLIE: I mean, for someone whose romantic dreams have been crushed. You seem fine about it.

LUKE: Oh, yeah.

LESLIE: I mean, it's a relief to know that I haven't actually wounded anyone's pride or brought their world crashing down around them or anything. Because that would be difficult for me to forgive. In myself.

LUKE: (*Pause.*) I'm sorry - - are you still talking to me?

LESLIE: (*Turns to ALEX.*) Ooh - - that's cold! That's so - - ooh! Are all guys like that?

ALEX: (*Edge to his voice now.*) No, Leslie! No, all guys are *not* like that!

LESLIE: Oh - - good. That's a relief. Maybe the next one will be better.

ALEX: The next one?

LESLIE: Yeah. You were right. You were right about everything. I don't need to waste my time on a guy who doesn't want me. There must be tons of guys out there. Thank you, Alex!

ALEX: For what?

LESLIE: For making everything better. I knew you would. You always do! Thanks! (*She turns to go.*)

ALEX: Leslie!

LESLIE: Yeah?

ALEX: Look -- I --

LUKE: No! You're *kidding* me! Alex!

ALEX: I -- look, maybe . . .

LUKE: Check out this *stupid* game, Alex!

LESLIE: Did you want to say something?

ALEX: Yeah. I --

LUKE: No! Holy -- ! Alex, you have *got* to try this. Alex! (*He looks up.*) Oh -- sorry! Are you still here, Missi?

LESLIE: Leslie --

LUKE: Right. Alex, what are you doing?

LESLIE: Everything okay, Alex?

ALEX: Sure. Sure.

LESLIE: Okay, then. I'll see ya. Thanks for your help!

ALEX: Sure, no problem.

LUKE: Alex! You see their brains come out, dude. You have *got* to try this.

ALEX: Their brains come out?

LUKE: Uh huh!

ALEX: Sounds about right. All right, then.

Moves over to LUKE.

LUKE: Alex, man. Listen -- that girl who was here. Missi.

ALEX: Leslie.

LUKE: Yeah. I think she likes me, man.

ALEX: Wow. You think?

LUKE: Yeah. Not much gets past me, buddy.

ALEX: Right.

BLACKOUT.

THE END