

SENSITIVITY, U.S.A.

TEN-MINUTE PLAY

By **Emmett Loverde**

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SYNOPSIS: A disillusioned teenager decides to expose the shallowness of his classmates by interviewing the most popular girl in his small-town high school. However, she's not as superficial as she first seems, and he's not the bundle of sensitivity he thinks he is. When love blossoms, it's a surprise to them both, so they do what any normal teenager would do – they fight it.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

LARS, 16

CHRISSY, 16

SET

A high school cafeteria. Lunch garbage is scattered on the floor and tables.

TIME: The present, late afternoon on a school day in early fall.

AT RISE:

The stage is set as a high school cafeteria. The tables are empty except for LARS GROLSCH, 16, who sits at a table. He sports long sideburns, dark clothes, an army jacket, and a black knitted cap. His dark scowl hides his good looks, even from himself. Two cheap microphones have been set on the table. They connect to a cheap tape recorder. LARS is glancing over his typed list of questions when CHRISSY enters. She sparkles good-naturedly in slightly sickening pastels, including pink.

LARS: Hey. Are you ready?

CHRISSY: Sure! This'll be so fun!

LARS: *(Presses record on tape recorder.)* This is Lars Grolsch for the Beechwood High Chronicle, and I'm interviewing Christine Parker—

CHRISSY: Chrissy.

LARS: I'm interviewing Chrissy Parker for the November 16 issue. So Chrissy, when did you first realize that you were popular?

CHRISSY: Oh, when I was . . . *(Smiles uneasily.)* What's this interview about?

LARS: You.

CHRISSY: Why me?

LARS: *(Reviews his notes.)* Class president two years in a row, head cheerleader as a sophomore—

CHRISSY: Nobody else wanted it.

LARS: *(From his list.)* Spirit Club. Glee Club. Candy Stripers. 4-H. Peer Health Counselors. Spanish Club. Close-Up. Mock Legislature. Monkeybrains . . . *(Stares at her.)* "Monkeybrains"?

CHRISSY: You still haven't told me why you're interviewing me.

LARS: I figure you're somebody a lot of kids look up to.

CHRISSY: *(Touched.)* Thanks. I try to be.

LARS: And I just want them to see who you really are. Next question . . . Who's the best kisser in school?

CHRISSY: What paper is this for?

LARS: So you're avoiding that subject. Okay, next question! How can poor kids—

CHRISSY: Do you write a gossip column?

LARS: Hundreds of girls at this school need to know who to kiss!

CHRISSY: That's nice, but I'm getting very uncomfortable with this "interview," so—

LARS: Why are you uncomfortable? What are you hiding?

CHRISSY: Hiding? You don't even know me. *(Gathers her things to leave.)* And you never will. *(She starts to walk away.)*

LARS: Don't you want to dispel the myths?

CHRISSY: (*Stops.*) What myths?

LARS: Like that you've kissed twenty-five guys in two years—and two girls.

CHRISSY: She was drunk, and she kissed *me*, then blabbed it all over the place. I was her coming-out story!

LARS: How long have you been in this school district?

CHRISSY: Since I was eight. What about you?

LARS: Since I was five. I guess you never noticed me before.

CHRISSY: No, I didn't. There. Satisfied? I'm self-absorbed. Print that.

LARS: You were in Miss Nagle's class.

CHRISSY: I guess you did your research.

LARS: I was in that class, too.

CHRISSY: You were? Thanks for helping make me miserable.

LARS: I never—

CHRISSY: When I arrived in that classroom, no one talked to me for three days except Julie Foss—and all she did was tell me my hair was ugly.

LARS: Your hair was pretty. I remember. With a little pink bow.

CHRISSY: You remember my bow?

LARS: (*Boy, does he ever.*) Vaguely.

CHRISSY: You could have said something.

LARS: I was eight!

CHRISSY: Exactly. Before high school. Before cliques and cheerleaders and who's-dating-who. *You* never took the time to get to know *me*. That makes you a hypocrite.

LARS: (*Shakes head.*) With every word, you're doing exactly what I expected.

CHRISSY: What you "expected"? I can guess what you "expected." Fine. That's exactly what I'm going to give you. You aren't listening to me, anyway.

LARS: Can we get back to my questions?

CHRISSY: (*Pretends to be the shallowest person on Earth.*) Yes, let's. I have to get to a nail appointment.

LARS: A nail appointment?

CHRISSY: (*Shows him her ring finger.*) Today, we're doing this one.

LARS: (*Reads from list.*) How can poor kids stay in fashion?

CHRISSY: They can't. They shouldn't try. Fashion isn't for the poor.

LARS: Any thrift shops you would recommend?

CHRISSY: What's a "thrift shop"?

LARS: Do you follow religion?

CHRISSY: Religion follows me.

LARS: What's the longest you've ever held onto a boyfriend?

CHRISSY: Boyfriends hold onto me. Lovers are a sign of weakness,

anyway.

LARS: Weakness?

CHRISSY: Having a lover suggests a need for love. I have no needs.

LARS: Do you get along with your mother?

CHRISSY: Mothers are for hanging-up on, slamming doors on, and soaking for birthday gifts. Mine serves her purpose.

LARS: Do you smoke?

CHRISSY: Only in the company of people who are bothered by it. I'm killing them, they know it, and they respect me for it.

LARS: Do you screen your phone calls?

CHRISSY: I do not accept phone calls. I speak to no individual more than once every thirty to sixty days. Naturally, this precludes having something so crass as a job. School is also problematic. I accept written social invitations only when given six weeks' notice or longer. I then cancel at least half of those the day before or the day of. Or I don't show up.

LARS: Do you read?

CHRISSY: I am read to. When I permit it.

LARS: (*From list.*) Uh . . . which colors are the popular kids currently wearing to mourn mass-murdered classmates?

CHRISSY'S face falls. It's no longer funny.

CHRISSY: What?

LARS: Which colors are the popular kids currently wearing—

CHRISSY: I heard. I just can't believe my ears.

LARS: I figured since you're so into fashion—

CHRISSY: (*Shuts off tape recorder.*) Do you actually think anybody cares what colors they wear when one of their friends has been murdered?

LARS: Why are you so hostile?

CHRISSY: You really thought you were onto something, didn't you? (*LARS tries to turn on the tape recorder. She holds it out of his reach.*) I'll smash it! I swear.

LARS: That's school property!

CHRISSY: Do you dislike me personally? Did some popular boy trip you in the locker room or some popular girl turn you down?

LARS: You've never talked to me before, so I don't even know you. But the stuff you've been saying . . . it makes me not want to know you.

CHRISSY: I was kidding.

LARS: You sounded serious to me. (*Indicates tape recorder.*) I want to turn that on.

CHRISSY: No. This is off the record.

LARS: Fine. I'll remember what I need.

CHRISSY: What you need to *what*?

LARS: What I need to remember.

CHRISSY: I knew it! You're just out to get me. Why do I bug you so much?

LARS: Bug me? You're just some white girl.

CHRISSY: Some white girl you made a list of questions for. What else bugs you about me?

LARS: Your hair.

CHRISSY: You said you liked my hair!

LARS: When you were eight.

CHRISSY: I'm a white girl with ugly hair.

LARS: I didn't say it was ugly. Just . . . the same as everyone else's.

CHRISSY: You mean Judy, Penny, Nancy, Kelly, Tina, Trina, Holly, and Bunny?

LARS: Who are they?

CHRISSY: The members of my hair club. Seriously.

LARS: You're lying.

CHRISSY: Of course I'm lying. You were really going to have a ball with this, weren't you?

LARS: The article?

CHRISSY: Sure. Show the school how ditzy the head cheerleader is.

LARS: All I did was ask questions.

CHRISSY: Sure, questions like, "What colors should teens wear to their murdered friends' funerals?"

LARS: I'm just amazed that you actually thought you were important enough to interview in the first place.

CHRISSY: *You're* the one who thought that!

LARS: I look at you and your little problems: "Omigod, who's going to take me to the prom?"

CHRISSY: (*Looks directly at him.*) I can tell you who *isn't*.

LARS: Oh, poor me! The prettiest girl in school doesn't want to go out with me! What'll I do?

CHRISSY: Excuse me?

LARS: God, you're so arrogant!

CHRISSY: *You* called me the prettiest girl in school. *I* didn't.

LARS: (*Embarrassed.*) I just meant that a lot of people know who you are.

CHRISSY: Because I've kissed them all.

LARS: I don't mean you're a—

CHRISSY: Of course you do.

LARS: Are you ready to tell me who the best kisser is?

CHRISSY: I wouldn't know.

LARS: (*Sarcastic.*) Gosh, who'd you miss?

CHRISSY: Besides you?

LARS: (*Hurt.*) Why do you keep saying mean things to me?

CHRISSY: You're the mean one! You've been trying to make a fool out of me. Right away, you asked, "When did you first know you were popular?"

LARS: That's a valid question!

CHRISSY: It's an asinine question.

LARS: Then why didn't you object when I asked it?

CHRISSY: I thought you were a freshman and didn't know any better. You wanted me to say something stupid like, "Oooh, I always knew I was popular!" so you could hate me.

LARS: I was hoping I would *like* you.

CHRISSY: Do you know the story of the fox and the grapes? The *sour* grapes?

LARS: The only sour one around here is you! Are you saying I've got a *crush* on you?

CHRISSY: If you wanted to ask me out, why didn't you just walk up and do it? Why this stupid interview?

LARS: You'd never go out with me!

CHRISSY: There you go again: making judgments without any evidence.

LARS: Have you ever gone out with someone like me?

CHRISSY: Even if I had gone out with someone *like* you, that doesn't mean I'd go out with *you*. And it doesn't mean I wouldn't.

LARS: So what's your answer?

CHRISSY: My answer is: Until you find the guts to ask me out yourself, you get no answer. (*Waits for LARS to say something.*) I take it this concludes the interview. (*Starts to exit.*)

LARS: Chrissy! Do you want to go . . .

CHRISSY: (*Stops.*) What?

LARS: Uh, do you want to go out with a bang? This being your senior year and all.

CHRISSY: I thought I made it clear that I don't want to do your interview.

LARS: I'm just making friendly conversation.

CHRISSY: Hey, that's new.

LARS: You're not who I thought you were. I'm sorry for asking you what to wear to funerals.

CHRISSY: Accepted. (*She waits for him to say something more. He's not ready to.*) Do you really think I'm the prettiest girl in school?

LARS: Which answer will get me a date?

CHRISSY: You're still trying to weasel out of simply asking me out, aren't you?

LARS: *(Takes a deep breath.)* Chrissy . . . will you have dinner with me Friday night?

CHRISSY: No. *(His face falls.)* I will Saturday night. I just need to get out of something first.

LARS: Do you really not take phone calls?

CHRISSY: I'll take *your* phone call, how's that?

LARS: That's . . . that sounds great. Saturday. Great.

CHRISSY: *(Smiles.)* Careful, Lars. You might end up liking me.

She walks away. The curtain falls on his excited smile.

THE END