

OUT OF TIME

By Patrick Gabridge

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CAST: MARY and JENNA

SCENE: Bare stage with a single chair. Various locations will be represented.

AT RISE: JENNA sits in the chair, facing the audience. SHE will serve as narrator and many other roles. Next to her chair might be a basket for hand props.

JENNA: It begins at 5:01 pm, Tuesday afternoon. At the bank.

(JENNA starts counting money. SHE's a teller. MARY runs on stage in a hurry, carrying an envelope in her hand.)

MARY: Hello? Hello?

JENNA: Sorry, we're closed.

MARY: What?

JENNA: We're closed.

MARY: But I have to deposit my —

JENNA: We're closed.

MARY: But I ran here from —

JENNA: We're closed.

MARY: My watch says —

JENNA: We're closed.

MARY: Can't I just —

JENNA: We're closed.

(MARY finally gives up and exits, confused and dejected.)

JENNA: And at the post office.

(JENNA stands up to lock an imaginary door. MARY runs on stage, with letters in her hand.)

MARY: Wait! Wait!

JENNA: Sorry, we're closed.

MARY: What? It's only 5:15.

JENNA: 5:30.

MARY: Oh. My watch...Will you take these?

JENNA: Sure.

MARY: Thanks.

(JENNA takes the letters. MARY runs off stage again.)

JENNA: Her daughter waits on the bus from camp. They won't let her off if no one is there to pick her up.

(JENNA stands up on the chair and looks around, anxiously. SHE's a child waiting on a bus.)

JENNA: She'll be here. Just give her a minute. Just one more minute. She'd never forget me. She's always here to pick me up. Shut up, Ashley. Can't we just wait a little longer. Please? But where is she? She'd never forget about me. Can I get off the bus and see if she's coming? Please. Come on, Mom. Okay. I know, she can come out to camp and get me. But she should have been here.

(JENNA sits down, heartbroken. MARY runs on stage, frantic.)

MARY: Wait, wait, wait! Stop the bus. I'm here. Stop! Wait...I'm here. I was here. She'll never forgive me. I was here. On time. ***(checks her watch)*** I'm early. How can they leave early? Oh, Jenna.

(MARY smacks her watch, confused. MARY exits.)

JENNA: It starts to get even worse. Out of control. Her boss notices, of course.

(MARY enters with a briefcase. JENNA looks at her watch.)

JENNA: Mary.

MARY: Yes, Mr. Hudson?

JENNA: You're an hour late. That's the third time this week.

MARY: But it's only...How can I...

JENNA: Are you having problems at home?

MARY: No, sir. Well, not what you'd think.

JENNA: We try to be flexible here, knowing you're a parent. But every day? This is too much.

MARY: It's my watch.

JENNA: Buy a new one.

MARY: This is my third this week. And it's all my clocks at home.

JENNA: Replace them. Do whatever you have to do, Mary. I'm running a business, and I need you here on time.

MARY: I'm sorry. I'll try harder.

(MARY paces.)

JENNA: They suggest a therapist – certain that she has somehow become unbalanced mentally, never thinking that it might be much more serious than that.

(JENNA sits, now a therapist.)

JENNA: So tell me, Mary. How does that make you feel?

MARY: I'm confused. Is it something about me?

JENNA: Do you think everything is about you?

MARY: No, that's not what I'm saying. If I put on a watch, it slows down, until it's at least an hour behind. The clocks in my house are the same way, even though I reset them constantly. It's as if my very presence wrecks them.

JENNA: You're a busy woman, a working Mom. I'm sure you always feel a little behind.

MARY: You're not listening. Something about me is...I don't know how to define it. It's like I can't keep up. Time has started to move at a different speed for me. You all keep moving ahead, just a little bit at a time. I try to adjust, to catch up, but I can't make it last.

JENNA: Lots of women feel this way. I recommend that you take a little time off from work, go for long walks and soak in the tub. Watch Oprah.

MARY: That all sounds nice, but I don't see how –

(JENNA hands MARY a slip of paper.)

JENNA: Take this to the pharmacy. Three times a day. Should make you feel a little peppier.

(MARY steps away, looks at the paper and crinkles it up.)

MARY: I don't want to feel peppy. I just want to feel normal.

JENNA: But she never does. Her daughter is her point of reference, her benchmark. ***(as young JENNA again)*** Mom. Mom, we're going to be late for school.

MARY: How can...Sorry, I thought it was earlier.

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