OUT OF TIME
TEN MINUTE PLAY

By Patrick Gabridge

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SYNOPSIS: The fast pace of modern life engulfs Mary in a surrealistic whirlwind as she becomes unstuck from time. Mary struggles to connect with her daughter, Jenna, before it's too late. The clock is ticking in this acting challenge.

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(2 WOMEN)

MARY (f)........................................A young mother, in her 30s-40s.

JENNA (f).......................................20-30s. Plays multiple roles, including Jenna (who is Mary's daughter), Bank Clerk, Postal Clerk, Mr. Hudson, therapist, Mary's Cousin, Dr. Murphy, and another scientist.

SETTING

America.

TIME: From 5:01pm Tuesday, until now (many years later).
SCENE:
Bare stage with a single chair. Various locations will be represented.

AT RISE:
JENNA sits in the chair. Next to her chair might be a basket of hand props. On the other side of the stage, MARY faces the audience.

MARY: It began at 5:01pm, Tuesday afternoon. At the bank.

JENNA starts counting money. She's a bank teller. MARY runs over to JENNA with an envelope in her hand.

MARY: Hello. Hello?
JENNA: Sorry, 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 finally gives up, confused and dejected.

MARY: (To the audience.) And at the post office.

JENNA crosses to lock an imaginary door. MARY runs over to her with letters in her hand.

MARY: Wait! Wait!
JENNA: We're closed.
MARY: It's only 5:15.
JENNA: 5:30.
MARY: What? Oh my god. (To audience.) I'm late for Jenna's bus.

MARY runs in a long slow circle around the stage. 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 one more minute. She'd never forget me. She's always here to pick me up. Shut up, Ashley. But where is she? Can I get off the bus and see if she's coming? Please. Come on, Mom. Okay. She should have been here.

JENNA sits down, heartbroken. MARY waves frantically.

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.

A briefcase slides on stage. MARY grabs it and turns to see JENNA, now as MARY's boss, looking angrily at her watch.

JENNA: Mary.
MARY: Yes, Mr. Hudson?
JENNA: You're 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: I try to be flexible, knowing you're a parent. But every day 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, too.
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'm trying. I really am. I'll try harder.

JENNA sits and picks up a clipboard, now a therapist. MARY paces.

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 fifteen minutes behind. I have to constantly reset the clocks in my house. It's as if my very presence wrecks them.

JENNA: You're a busy woman, a working mother. 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. I can't keep up. Time moves 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: Many women feel this way. I recommend that you take time off from work, soak in the tub, watch Oprah.

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

JENNA hands MARY a slip of paper and starts to walk away.

JENNA: Take that 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 be feel peppy. I just want to feel normal.

JENNA circles MARY - - with each revolution she's an older version of JENNA.

JENNA: (As young JENNA again.) Mom! Mom, we're going to be late for school.

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

JENNA: Arianna pushed me yesterday.

MARY: Tell her you don't like that.

JENNA: (Slightly older JENNA now.) Mom, I need money for a band uniform.

MARY: You just started taking lessons.

JENNA: (Even older JENNA.) Our big concert is tomorrow. Try not to miss it.

MARY: I'll be there. I'll leave right now, so I won't be late.
\textbf{JENNA:} (College-aged JENNA. Takes an envelope from her pocket.)

This is it. Acceptance or rejection. Should I open it?

\textbf{MARY:} You have to. Don't you?

\textbf{JENNA:} (She opens it.) I'm in. I'm in. Juilliard here I come.

\textbf{MARY:} Be careful.

\textbf{JENNA:} I will. I'll call. I'll write.

\textbf{MARY:} (To audience.) She doesn't. And I get worse.

\textbf{JENNA:} (Now as MARY's boss.) Mary, this is unacceptable. You do value this job, don't you?

\textbf{MARY:} I'm trying so hard. Sometimes I even sleep in my car, just so I'll be here. But I can't catch up.

\textbf{JENNA:} I'm sorry, but we're going to have to let you go.

\textbf{MARY:} But . . . How will I . . .

\textbf{JENNA:} (Adult JENNA now.) Mom.

\textbf{MARY:} I can't catch up.

\textbf{JENNA:} We're getting married.

\textbf{MARY:} You're too young. What about your career? How will you travel to concerts? You'll never see each other. Are you sure you're ready?

\textbf{JENNA:} We're in love. He'll travel with me. It'll just be a simple wedding.

\textbf{MARY:} We'll plan it together.

\textbf{JENNA:} Of course. Come stay with me, for a while. So you won't get lost. I want you there. Stay by my side.

\textbf{MARY:} I'm here. And you're so beautiful. So happy. I'm so happy for you. What a day this is. A once in a lifetime event. And we're all here to celebrate you, your happiness, your future. The world is still yours, Jenna. Yours to live and love. All the friends and family. We haven't seen them for years. (To audience.) They notice that something is wrong. Or not wrong. Not different.

\textbf{JENNA:} (As wedding guest.) Mary, how are you? You look simply divine. Hard to believe you're finally mother of a bride, eh? Look at you, it's like you haven't aged a day. Not a wrinkle. How do you do it? You didn't get your face done did, you? You did, didn't you. It's miraculous. You must give me his name. Gerry, come see Mary, you won't get over how she looks. Gorgeous.

\textbf{MARY:} Thanks, Frances. I really haven't . . . No, I'm older. Really.
MARY sits. JENNA paces behind her, a scientist now, looking serious, taking notes.

JENNA: And they didn’t know what to make of you?
MARY: Suddenly they were all around me, my cousins and aunts and uncles, staring at me as if I were some freak under glass.
JENNA: Because you still look so young?
MARY: Because I still look the same. Or almost the same. I have a wrinkle or two, honest. See? Oh, I’m so tired. I’m always tired. I can't keep up. Plus, Jenna and the kids are staying with me, and Matthew is teething.
JENNA: I thought they just got married.
MARY: They did. Or so it seems. But I’m getting worse.
JENNA: We'll need to run some tests.
MARY: I don't mind. If there's any way you can help.
JENNA: I have to call some colleagues. I'm not even sure what kind. This will require extensive testing. But we can make you quite comfortable, I promise you. The university will pay for everything.
MARY: That would be fine. If there's some way you can help me. I need it all to slow down again. I used to be a part of things. I was connected to people, to friends and family, but now it's so hard. Passing me by.
JENNA: (As a different scientist now.) Thank you for your patience.
MARY: Where is Doctor Murphy?
JENNA: She retired. After all you've done for her and her career, I'm sure she'll stop by to say thank you.
MARY: She'll never make it.
JENNA: Our team has made excellent progress, Mary. We've known that time is not constant, but the variations are usually at the gravitational extremes. Time seems to wash over and around you, but it won't touch you.
MARY: Why?
JENNA: I wish I could say. We'll keep running tests.
MARY: I'm leaving.
JENNA: We're starting to make progress.
MARY: It doesn't matter. I need to see my daughter.
JENNA: (JENNA is quite old now. She's dying.) Hi, Mom. I'm glad you're here.
MARY: How are the girls taking it? Matthew?

JENNA: Hard. They're trying to cope. They put on brave faces for their kids, but none of us is ready to say goodbye.

MARY: How do you feel?

JENNA: Old. Weak. Sad. Sick. The medication keeps the pain down for now. Very tired. The nurses take good care of me. I'm glad you're here. So glad.

MARY: I'm not. Look at me. Look at me. It's not right, not this way. But if it's a help to you, then I'm grateful to be here.

JENNA: You were always there.

MARY: Was I? I tried. But I couldn't keep up.

JENNA: You were my role model.

MARY: You're kind. Even now.

JENNA: You taught me.

MARY: What will I do without you?

JENNA: You'll be fine.

MARY: I'll be lonely.

JENNA: You'll be fine.

MARY: I'll be alone.

JENNA: The kids will visit you. I love you. I love you.

JENNA exits. MARY sits in the chair.

MARY: I'll be so all alone.

BLACKOUT.

THE END