

FIVE MINUTES

by

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FIVE MINUTES

CAST OF CHARACTERS

<u>CORINNE</u>	Black female, early sixties.
<u>BETTY</u>	Black female, late thirties.
<u>PAUL</u>	Male, late twenties.
<u>TAD</u>	Male, mid-thirties.
<u>MATT</u>	Male, mid-twenties.
<u>KEVIN</u>	Male, late-twenties.

FIVE MINUTESScene One

SETTING *A wrecked office in a high-rise building, though the stage will be bare. The women will be, roughly, stage right.*

AT RISE *Two black women will be getting up from the floor beside two overturned chairs. They will be dressed in the uniforms of restaurant workers. Their shoulder bags will be on the floor, some contents of the bags, including small billfolds with large photo sections, will have spilled.*

SOUND *In darkness there will be a huge, thundering crash followed by the whooshing sound of a firestorm, then a deep, omnipresent rumbling that will continue through all the scenes.*

Both characters rise and right the two overturned chairs. CORINNE retrieves her bag and places it on her shoulder. BETTY's bag remains on the floor. Both sit down in the chairs. All this is done with great dignity.

CORINNE

(Coughing) Well, it was a nice office. Now it's beginning to look like the rest of 'em.

BETTY

Honey, *(coughing)* all them offices are gone now. Just this 'un left.

CORINNE

(Disturbed) The people!

BETTY

(nods "yes") (Pauses, looks around) I guess it was a nice office.

CORINNE

(Indicates offstage) Their's, you think?

BETTY

No, they were in the stairs with us, coming down from Windows. Maybe Mr. Cell-phone over there?

CORINNE

Too young. Probably just squattin' here for a little while...like us.

BETTY

Yeah...like us. Just for this little while. Until the fire...(shudders, pauses) but we've got a little *time*, girl. (coughing) So...come on...show me the rest of your grandbabies again! I showed you mine.

CORINNE

(Looks searchingly at BETTY) Time...yes, (nods) it's His blessing. It must be.

She fumbles through her billfold and its photo section. She points to a photo. As she speaks, she will stroke this and subsequent photos, absently, with two fingers.

Well, now, you know here's Eric. That's Sonya's oldest. He's sixteen and's gonnal be *some* basketball player if he can stay away from all that street trash he used to hang around with. But, oh he loves his grandma! Always has.

BETTY

He's a good-looking boy. I bet them girls just *love* him!

CORRINE

He's had some girlfriends. But nothin' ever serious. (*Indicating another photo.*) Now this one's Robert Lee. Sonya's youngest. He's ten and his brother's biggest fan. Eric's his hero. Now he'll be his own man, though. There's a tough streak in him. I don't know his mom notices, but I do. He love's Eric, but he's not gonna let his brother get him in trouble. I' done seen way too much of that in my family. But, Robert Lee...he's strong.

BETTY

Sounds like my Tommy. Tough. That's a good thing to see in a boy.

CORRINE

Now this is Shawwna. Sonya's girl. Fourteen and the best student of all the grandkids. Wants to be a doctor. And she will be! I just know it! (*Pause*) But...when she was a little girl...I could *never* get her out of my kitchen. She followed me everywhere. Had to know how *everything* was made. She...(pause) now her mother never wanted to cook. Anything. But I had to give that girl every recipe I had! I swear, last Christmas, me and Shawwna did the whole thing together....twenty-seven people and enough food left over to last to New Year's!

BETTY

She knows what grandma loves.

CORINNE

She knows her grandma loves her. They all do.

BETTY

Oh, Corinne. Is that going to help? Tomorrow? Tomorrow (*pause*) tomorrow's gonna be *hard* on 'em. And next year? What's our lovin' do? When things get hard?

CORINNE

We love our children. That's what we do. What they do...

BETTY

What *do* they do?

CORINNE

They love theirs? I pray they do.

BETTY

My kids...I don't know. Sometimes they don't act like they're mine at all. And sometimes...they make me so happy I cry.

CORINNE

Good for you, girl! That's how the Lord meant it to work.

BETTY

Honey, you know the Lord and I haven't been on speaking terms for years.

CORINNE

You still listen, though. Even when it seems like someone else is doin' the talkin'. I know you.

BETTY

Tell me then...what's it gonna matter? I love. I've had love. It all goes away. Like my Roy. He never even got to *see* his Tommy.

CORINNE

And you won't never see Tommy's kids...or their kids...or theirs. But you *know* something of you will be in them. If you hadn't *loved*, they'd never *be*. *Whatever* more can you pray for than that?

BETTY

To see them all? To be here and see them all? To *know*? To know...*my children*? Oh, Corinne...it's like an ache...my arms just wanna stretch and hug them...every one. It just *hurts* not to do that. So, what do we do?

CORINNE

Honey...I think...what we do is...we seed the world with love. What grows...well, we don't always get to see. But, the *Lord* can see the harvest. It rolls on down

the years after us and I have faith it can be just....glory! *(Begins to sing a gospel song, then hums and rocks in her chair.)*

There is a loud crash and sound of breaking glass. The women reach for each other in alarm, then seem to calm somewhat.

BETTY

Your faith...

CORINNE

It's what I *have*...I know...*(hand raised, head down, seeming to be reassuring herself)*...I *know*...things work out...*will* work out for the good...and my kids will have my love to keep them and their kids and theirs...*(raises head and seems to have been reassured.)*

BETTY

You...

CORINNE

...trust in the Lord.

BETTY

...yes...you do. It's...good. *(Hugs CORINNE)*

Crashing sound.

(Coughing, then, breathing heavily, stands) Honey, we need to go. That fire's coming fast now.

CORINNE

There's still some time. It's...

BETTY

(Interrupting, agitated) We need to *go*. You *know* what will happen here. Just like back there. Them people didn't get no choice. We *did*. What we talked about. There's no other way out, now.

CORINNE

I know, I know...but...

BETTY

Oh, girl, it's not just *us*. *(Indicating offstage)* Sometime men needs strength. *They* will. *(Pause)* Real soon. *(Stands)*

CORINNE

(Stands, increasing agitation) I know...but... *(pause)* Oh, Betty, I am so scared! Honey, I am...just so...very...

BETTY

(Comes closer to CORINNE, touches her). Oh, Corrine. I'm scared, too. I truly am. But I know...I know the good Lord's just going to reach down...*(pause)*...and take us *up* in his hands.

CORINNE

(Surprised) Betty?

BETTY

We're speaking again.

With great dignity, CORINNE puts her bag on her shoulder and takes a few steps toward the audience with BETTY, then stops.

CORINNE

Don't leave your purse!

BETTY

Why? It doesn't matter.

CORINNE

They need to *know* us. Know who we *are*. Who are *families* are. That's *important!*

BETTY retrieves her shoulder bag. Puts it securely on her shoulder and rejoins CORINNE.

BETTY

Hold me?

They embrace, their bags clutched between them. They both turn toward the audience with BETTY singing a gospel song, they move slowly toward the edge of the stage, stop, take a deep breath.

BLACKOUT AND SOUND OUT

END OF SCENE

Scene Two

SETTING *Same, a few moments later.*

AT RISE *Two men in their thirties will be sitting on the floor, roughly up center stage.*

SOUND *From the first scene, the same deep, omnipresent rumbling. This sound will intensify during the scene.*

PAUL

(Coughing) Where?

TAD

Pisca... *(coughs)* cadawada *(deep breath)* ...quaddywoggin.

PAUL

There. *(Pause, then choking with emotion...)* They've...gone.

TAD

Yeah. There's not much time...not much. *(Pause)* In Maine. Means "slimy bog of loudly chirping crickets" in Algonquian. Or that was the joke in elementary school.

PAUL

I'm a native. Manhattan. I think it means *(coughs)* "we got screwed by the Dutch" in...whatever. *(Pause...then almost crying)* Oh, shit!

TAD

(Quickly) Family?

PAUL

Oh, god, yes. Yes! *(choking with emotion)* They... *(calming, somewhat)* Sherry...married six years. And the twins...

TAD

Boys?

PAUL

Girls. They're four. Dana and Cady. *(choking with emotion)* Oh! *(Calming again...)* ...and....and...you?

TAD

Karen. No kids. Not yet. *(An involuntary anguished...)* Yet? *(Pause, more calmly...)* No. No kids. *(Pause)* God you're lucky. *(Quickly)* Sherry? Where is she? What does she do?

PAUL

Now? It's such a beautiful day...she was going to take the girls to Central Park... I hope she can't see...this...but she must! Oh, Sher!

TAD

Don't think... *(pause)* Karen's in the Bay Area to meet her new publisher She writes poetry. Probably isn't even up yet. I hope...I hope she isn't...

PAUL

No.....no....it must be too early there. *(Pause, then more calmly)* Tad...it's Tad?

TAD

For Thaddeus. Maine. My dark secret. And...it's Paul?

PAUL

Yeah...it's for...guess it's just Paul. *(Coughing violently)*

TAD

Over here. It's clearer.

PAUL follows TAD to a different part of the stage.

PAUL

What's happening back there? It's getting hotter!

TAD

I know. Here, Paul...look, the view's better.

PAUL

(Almost playfully) Fuck you. *(Pause)* Oh, god...there's not much time, is there?

TAD

There's time. There'll be enough, *(Quickly)* School?

PAUL

School? School...uhm...Yale and Harvard Law. You?

TAD
City College.

PAUL
Ah. *(Pause)* Clinton, then?

TAD
Yeah. *(Pause)* Giuliani?

PAUL
Afraid so. *(Pause)* Brooklyn?

TAD
No, Queens. *(Pause)* Upper West?

PAUL
You got it.

Both have a fit of violent coughing

This is crazy! What's going on here?! What can we do?!

TAD
Hold...hold...just...hold... *(Pause)* Sunday....what did you do last Sunday?

PAUL
Sunday? Sunday...uhm...brunch...her parents...then...then... Fuck! I can't remember!

TAD
I went to the Yankees-Red Sox game. Boston got creamed. It was good.

PAUL
Damn! That was it! I was late and missed the first two innings. You were there?

TAD
Yes! Do you remember it? Jeter's bases loaded homer in the 7th? Wasn't that awesome?!

PAUL
It was incredible! *(coughing)* There's no air!

TAD
Over here....it's a little better.

PAUL again follows TAD to a different part of the stage.

PAUL

(After a long pause.) We have to go, too?

TAD

Yeah. Yeah. *(Pause)* Yeah. *(Pause)* Soon....otherwise...

PAUL

I know...I saw... *(Pause)* I played little league and prep and college for a while. Fuck, how I loved that!

TAD

I could never play worth shit. But I went to almost every Yankees game after I got here. Screwed the shit out of my grades. Baseball!

PAUL

The perfect game, we...

Sound of shattering glass.

Fuck!

TAD

Over here! Get down!

TAD moves downstage and PAUL follows.

PAUL

The ladies from the restaurant...they...they...

TAD

Yes. *(Pause, then agitated)* It's hotter. That wall...

PAUL

My cell-phone is back there...shit.

TAD

I know. Mine, too. When I really need it...

PAUL

That guy...he has one.

TAD

He's talking to someone. *(Somber)* I think he needs it.

PAUL

Tad...what...*(long pause, then tentatively)* What do you love?

TAD

Huh? *(Pause)* Karen...

PAUL

(Interrupting) I know...but....deeper. Just the “you” part. I wanna know who you are. I need to know. *(Seeming abashed.)* Now. *(Pause, then more resolute)* What do you love?

TAD

Oh...yeah. That. *(Pause)* I guess it’d be...*(almost surprised)* simplicity. *(Pause)* First. *(Slowly)* Clarity. Honesty. Strength. Courage. Integrity. *(Pause)* Baseball.

PAUL

(Slowly) Caring. Feeling. Touching. *(Pause)* Tenderness. What’s open and honest. What’s wild and a little crazy, maybe. *(Pause)* Baseball.

TAD

Beauty.

PAUL

Beauty.

Crashing sound. The pervasive rumbling sound becomes more intense.

TAD

Paul. *(Pause)* It’s now.

PAUL

Yeah. *(Pause)* Yeah, I know.

They move to the edge of the stage.

TAD

(Slowly, with emotion) My god! The view! It’s beautiful!

PAUL

(Slowly) Yes...yes. You’re right! It is!

TAD

Paul? *(Pause)* Here. Take my hand.

PAUL

Yes. *(Pause, then choking with emotion)* Thanks Tad. For... *(pause)*. Thanks.

TAD

(Long pause, then slowly) Three...

PAUL

...two...

TAD

...one.

BLACKOUT AND SOUND OUT WITH THE LAST LINE

END OF SCENE

Scene ThreeTIME *A moment later.*SETTING *Same and an apartment in the city.*AT RISE *Two men in their mid-twenties stand, roughly stage left, facing the audience. They will be separately lighted. The one furthest stage left will be standing on carpet...an area rug or oriental rug to indicate the different location. Both have cell-phones to their ears. One will be barefoot, dressed in jeans and t-shirt and facing the audience. The other, nearer center stage, will be in business dress, without a coat and will be facing to his right, away from the audience. They will be wearing matching wedding bands. The sound will be from the end of the previous scene but muted for a while.*

MATT

I knew I should have stayed home with you today.

KEVIN

I'd have fixed waffles for us.

MATT

They've gone. Now it's just me.

KEVIN

(Almost to himself.) Oh, god!

MATT

They were...*(struggles for control, then calmer)* They were...*(almost in awe)* holding hands...

KEVIN

(Choking) What? *(Distraught, then regains control somewhat)* Do you...were they...were they friends?

MATT

(Calmly) No. *(Pause)* Yes. *(Long pause)* Now.

KEVIN

(Fighting for control) Matt, baby...

The rumbling sound intensifies in a spike, then recedes.

MATT

(Interrupting, in panic again) Shit, it's coming! The wall's down! The fire! There's not much time! Kevin!

KEVIN

I'm here. Matt, I'm here.

MATT

I love you.

KEVIN

I know, baby I know. I love you so much.

MATT

(Coughing, then...) I can't be here when the fire... I can't!

KEVIN

You won't be, baby, you won't...

KEVIN doubles over in grief, cell-phone still to his ear, but his tone does not reflect the physical anguish the audience sees. This will be the case throughout the scene.

Matt, Matt...

MATT

I want to be with you! Oh, god! I'm losing it, Kevin...it's...it's...horrible! I'm so fuckin' scared!

KEVIN

You won't be there...you...

MATT

This can't be happening! Kevin! This is all there is! Oh, shit!

KEVIN

I'm here, baby...

MATT

Talk to me, Kev. I need to hear you...now!

KEVIN

Matt...Matt...Please, please listen. *(Pause)* There's something you have to do now...Just...just do this. For me. Listen to me baby. Carefully. *(Pause)* Do you remember when we met?

MATT

What?

KEVIN

Yosemite. Remember that. Think of it.

MATT

The wall's down! The fire is...

KEVIN

For me...now...think of Yosemite. When we met.

MATT

I don't want to be here! I want to be with you! Kev!

KEVIN

I am with you, Matt. Everything else is gone.

MATT

It's...

KEVIN

There's just you and me, now. *(Pause)* Matt...baby...listen to me. Just to me. Now...think of Yosemite. Think of when we met.

MATT

OK. Let me just...hold on. *(Pause)* I can't...*(Calming a bit)* OK. *(Long pause)*
Yeah. *(Long pause as he struggles to calm more, then with a faint smile)* Yeah.

KEVIN

Remember?

MATT

Yeah. *(Calmer, a bigger, dreamier smile)* *(A bit surprised and delighted)*
Sentinel Dome!

KEVIN

You were cruising me.

MATT

I was not!

KEVIN

Circling the rock with your camera, taking pictures, getting closer. Then all that
stuff with your trail map. I thought you were lost. That's why I came up to you.

MATT

(Timid smile) Well, it was my first trip to Yosemite.

KEVIN

Right. After hiking every national park from Maine to Alaska. You could read a
trail map better than the guy who drew it. You cruised me.

MATT

It worked, didn't it? Got me out of my tent and into your comfy room at the
lodge.

KEVIN

Yes! And that's what I want you to remember. Now.

MATT

Kev, I could never forget that night...it was incredible!

KEVIN

It was *(choking with emotion)*...but now I want you to remember something else.
Remember I woke you up at 4 AM...do you remember the meadow? We went out
on the balcony...

MATT

The meadow! Yes! The full moon! It was a harvest moon!

KEVIN

We pulled on some clothes, went downstairs and ran out through the trees and into Yosemite meadow...under that full moon.

MATT

Oh, god! That was so fucking beautiful! The most beautiful night in the most beautiful place on the face of the earth!

KEVIN

(Cringing again, distraught...but his voice is still calm, soothing) OK, baby, I want you to do something. Will you? Now close your eyes...

MATT

Yes. Yes. They're closed.

KEVIN

Now, concentrate. Don't think of anything but the meadow under that full moon.

MATT

Yes.

KEVIN

Remember how the meadow looked. The moonlight was so bright and white...

MATT

...that there were shadows under the trees!

KEVIN

...and the meadow was flooded with this bright silver light...

MATT

...and the granite walls of the valley gleamed in silver!

KEVIN

...like huge silver gods on every side!

MATT

(Opening his eyes) They were blessing us!

KEVIN

...with a cascade of moonlight down bright air over everything and us!

MATT

Yes! It was magic!

KEVIN

...the air was cold...

MATT

...your breath was warm when I kissed you...*(smiling)* your nose was cold.

KEVIN

Remember the sounds?

MATT

Yes. The river. An owl? The quiet,,then another bird somewhere. This breeze making the leaves rustle...and the meadow grass. My god it was beautiful!

KEVIN

OK, Matt. You've got it! Just hold that memory in your mind. Hold it tight, *tight!* Baby, now bend your knees just a little bit...and *fly there!* Go to that place. Not just a memory, now...*be there.* Move every bit of *you* to that place. Surround yourself with that place. You're in the meadow...*now.*

MATT

I...*(hesitant, losing some of the calm)*

KEVIN

I'm hugging you and the air is cold and the moon is so bright! The shadows under the trees. It's magic! You're there...Matt...you *are* there.

MATT

(Struggling) I'm... *(Long pause as the calm returns, then in wonder...)* I am! I'm there...it's quiet. Oh, wow! Incredible! The air is...it's glittering!

KEVIN

That's my *love!* It's all around you and you'll always be there and I'll always be there with you and never leave and we'll never stop *loving.* Oh, Matt! Stay there, baby. Stay there, *now...*

MATT

I will...how could I ever leave this?!

KEVIN

We won't. We'll stay here, together. Always.

MATT

Kev...

KEVIN

Baby...

MATT

Take my hand?

MATT reaches out into the open space between the two onstage.

KEVIN again cringes in anguish, then reaches out. Their hands do not touch.

KEVIN

I will. *(Pause)* There, I'm touching your fingertips. *(Pause)* The back of your hand. *(Pause)* Now I'm holding your hand, baby.

MATT

Yes.! *(Pause)* *(Smiling)* I can feel you. *(Pause)* Your hand. *(Pause)* You're holding mine. Like you always do. Just like you always do. *(Pause)* Soft and tender and so strong.

KEVIN

Yes, baby...like always.

MATT

Kev, now I'm not alone. *(Pause)* I'll never be alone. *(Pause)* Ever. *(Pause)* Here.

KEVIN

I love you.

MATT

I love you.

The SOUND stops abruptly as the spot on MATT goes out, leaving KEVIN in light. KEVIN drops the cell-phone and goes to his knees, sobbing.

BLACKOUT

END OF SCENE

END OF PLAY