



Every Fifteen Minutes

By Maggie Munday Odom

Characters

TIME: A physical manifestation of the minutes passing, counting towards another tragedy. Time is at first indifferently doing its job by marching onwards, but as the plays unfold, Time grows sympathetic and even pained by its role. (Ideally played by the same actor reading stage directions for the reading.)

OTHER CHARACTERS: All other characters come from the script preceding each “Every Fifteen Minutes” segment.

Notes

LINE ASSIGNMENTS: The lines in the Opening are assigned so that the victim or closest surviving relative character from each of this year’s plays are featured. These lines, and the character lines in the Closing, can be reassigned as needed to accommodate doubling.

LIST OF NAMES: The goal of this end section is to create a crescendoing cacophony of sound, an avalanche of the names. You should have more names than you could ever possibly get through. You can use [this list of gun violence deaths among 13-19 year olds from the start of 2022](#), tailor-make a list based on the names of gun violence victims in your community (city, county, state), or some combination. [Gun Violence Memorial](#) is a great resource for this.

Citation

Statistic: “Every fifteen minutes, a person is killed with a gun”

Source: <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/gun-violence-america-state-state-analysis/>

Statistic: 58% percent of adults reported that they or someone they care for have experienced gun violence in their lifetime

Source:

<https://everytownresearch.org/report/the-impact-of-gun-violence-on-survivors-in-america/>

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Opening

*Actors stand in a line, their hopeful faces illuminated by spotlights:
a portrait of America dreaming.*

ALL

Welcome to America. Land of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

*From offstage a “ticking” sound is heard. TIME enters making the
sound. TIME weaves between everyone on stage.*

LOURDES (*From “Rehearsal”*)

I’ve always wanted to watch the sunrise on a beach.

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH (*From “Allegiance”*)

I’m going to work in my community and make it better.

ALEX (*From “In My Sights”*)

I want to take up a new hobby, do something artistic in my spare time.

JACKIE (*From “Salted Lemonade”*)

I want to see my nephew turn the tassel on his graduation cap.

MOTHER (*From “It’s Okay”*)

I dream to see my daughter grow up. But not too quickly.

EVA (*From “Southside Summer”*)

I wanna be a poet and make my momma proud.

RACHEL (*From “Undo, Redo”*)

I’ve got a crush on a senior who plays basketball. I hope he asks me to prom.

LYDIA (*From “Write Their Wrongs”*)

I want to start a family, have all sorts of traditions, like huge Christmas dinners with the whole extended family.

TIME stops ticking.

TIME

Look at this! Hopes! Dreams! What could possibly be more American than dreaming?

ALL

Welcome to America.

TIME

Where every fifteen minutes, a person is killed with a gun.

Beat.

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TIME (cont.)

I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but, as Time, that is so often my job. In fifteen minutes, someone's dreams will never come true. It could be one of them. It could be you. Don't shoot the messenger.

You've heard the statistics. But you've been talking statistics for years, and where has that gotten things? So stop talking statistics, and start talking stories.

After all, the clock is ticking.

All exit, except TIME.

“Rehearsal” by Willa Colleary.

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Rehearsal

By Willa Colleary

Characters

GABRIEL: 17 years old, Latino, male. Disciplined.

LOURDES: 17 years old, Latina, female. Laconic.

MS. MURPHY: 35-45 years old, white, female. Soft.

PRINCE: 17 years old, Black, male. Sardonic.

QUESTIONER: 30s-40s, male. Formal.

WILLEM: 18 years old, white, male. Guileless.

Setting

The play is set in a spare, unspecified place with an emphasis on order. Each player with the exception of that playing the Questioner is seated on stage visibly, facing the audience. They will address their answers to the fourth wall. The Questioner may be offstage entirely, or seated in a way that masks his presence.

Note

The play is a series of intercut interviews of 4 students and 1 teacher, led by one unseen or veiled Questioner. The play will go back and forth between the conversations, sometimes cutting through the middle of exchanges, into snippets of discourse.

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Lights rise on LOURDES alone.

QUESTIONER

OK, let's begin. Can you tell me your name?

LOURDES

Lourdes.

QUESTIONER

And where do you go to school, Lourdes?

LOURDES

I go to LaDana Preparatory.

QUESTIONER

Would you tell me a little bit about your school, please?

LOURDES

OK. It's in Malibu. Little private school, very exclusive. The campus is beautiful, old Spanish bungalows and eucalyptus trees.

QUESTIONER

And it's expensive?

LOURDES

Yes, it's very costly.

QUESTIONER

Is it a good school, in your opinion?

LOURDES

I would say it is. Everyone is really nice most of the time, so.

Lights up on PRINCE.

QUESTIONER

Prince? (*PRINCE nods.*) OK, Prince, and how would you describe LaDana?

PRINCE

Well, let me see. There's only like 300 people at the whole school. So that's around...eighty in our grade, right?

QUESTIONER

Do you like having that few people around?

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PRINCE

Yeah, I like it. It's what I'm used to, so.

QUESTIONER

And what do you think of Ms. Murphy?

Lights on PRINCE/LOURDES.

PRINCE/LOURDES

Ms. Murphy?

QUESTIONER

Yes.

On PRINCE.

PRINCE

(Long beat.) Oh.

QUESTIONER

What?

PRINCE

Nothing. It's just—OK. I didn't know that that's what today was about.

QUESTIONER

Do you have anything to say about her, anything that comes to mind?

On WILLEM.

WILLEM

Willem Davies.

QUESTIONER

You're Willem Davies?

WILLEM

Yes? *(Nervous smile.)* Is that a bad thing?

QUESTIONER

No...no.

On GABRIEL.

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GABRIEL

My name's Gabriel. I'm eighteen.

QUESTIONER

It says here that you refer to the events of the summer as “Rehearsal?”

GABRIEL

Yeah.

On GABRIEL/LOURDES/PRINCE.

GABRIEL/LOURDES/PRINCE

Rehearsal.

GABRIEL.

QUESTIONER

How did that title come about?

GABRIEL

I think Ms. Murphy started saying it. Like: “OK folks, who can stay for rehearsal?” And yeah, that was it. That's how it came about.

QUESTIONER

And what did you think about it? When she started calling it that?

GABRIEL

I didn't really think about it at all.

LOURDES.

QUESTIONER

When did it start?

LOURDES

It was summer session, so the school was at half capacity, or even less. Our grade wasn't big to begin with so, during summer session there were around...mmm, thirty people? Five or so to a class.

QUESTIONER

Do you have any recollection about who...had the idea?

LOURDES

I don't really remember.

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QUESTIONER

And what about Willem?

LOURDES

(Beat.) What about him?

QUESTIONER

When was he...selected?

LOURDES

Probably the second week.

MS. MURPHY.

MS. MURPHY

There were lots of incidents in the area at that time. I think people don't actually know... the toll that it takes on kids their age. It takes quite a toll, and, you know, I promote problem-solving in my class. We're problem-solvers at LaDana.

QUESTIONER

And Willem?

MS. MURPHY

(Beat.) Willem Davies is a very promising, kind, good young man.

PRINCE/GABRIEL.

PRINCE/GABRIEL

He looks the part.

WILLEM.

WILLEM

There was a...gosh, what would you call it? A staff, maybe. A short hiking staff in Mr. McKinley's room that was splintered and all duct-taped and about the correct weight, I believe. So I used that.

LOURDES.

LOURDES

It was every Friday.

QUESTIONER

Every week?

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LOURDES

Yes. After school for a couple hours.

MS. MURPHY.

QUESTIONER

So, Ms. Murphy...um. I just wanted to... know— You said earlier that Willem had a different set of instructions from the rest of the group?

MS. MURPHY

Yes. He did.

QUESTIONER

Can you tell me...what exactly everyone was doing?

MS. MURPHY

Sure.

GABRIEL.

GABRIEL

My parents work in security. Their business is all about staging break-ins and would a criminal do this or do that, so it's not completely foreign to me.

MS. MURPHY.

MS. MURPHY

OK, well, I don't know how familiar you are with the layout of LaDana, but it's a very small school and we're in one of the smallest structures on campus atop this kind of wooded slope, right. It has two classrooms in this one bungalow, a small corridor between them. So, Willem approaches from the East, and fires a few shots into the air when he's outside the Eastern entrance. Then he enters the first classroom, shoots Prince. Crosses the corridor, shoots Gabriel, who's standing guard outside the second classroom, kind of a martyr figure, if you will. It's during this time that Lourdes—have you met Lourdes? It's during this time that Lourdes hides in the supply closet in the second classroom. So he peeks in there, doesn't see anyone, and he leaves.

QUESTIONER

What happens then?

WILLEM/MS. MURPHY.

WILLEM MS. MURPHY

Then I turn the gun on myself. Then he turns the gun on himself. #ENOUGH -

MS. MURPHY.

QUESTIONER

(Long beat.) Did you come up with that?

MS. MURPHY

It wasn't hard to. You'll find...you'll find that there's...there's almost an archetype for this...now. *LOURDES.*

QUESTIONER

What do your parents think about this, Lourdes?

LOURDES

Excuse me?

QUESTIONER

Your mom and dad. What do they think about Rehearsal?

MS. MURPHY.

MS. MURPHY

Of everyone at LaDana, everyone in my class, I think Lourdes probably needs rehearsal the most.

QUESTIONER

Why?

MS. MURPHY

She's...she's different from everyone else.

PRINCE.

PRINCE

Then there's SWAT team recovery.

QUESTIONER

Who's the SWAT team?

PRINCE

Ms. Murphy is the SWAT team.

QUESTIONER

She participates?

PRINCE

Yeah. That part developed later on.

MS. MURPHY.

MS. MURPHY.

We can do it a few times a Friday, usually, and I help them out with logistics sometimes.

QUESTIONER.

You did it more than once a day?

MS. MURPHY.

Well, it doesn't take very long, does it? A space that small, a weapon like that? It doesn't take more than a few minutes. We rehearse it maybe 20 times a Friday.

QUESTIONER.

Did you say you give notes?

MS. MURPHY.

(Beat.) I'm sure the superintendent knows the anxiety these kids are going through. The constant anxiety. Even if it's...below the surface, even if it's...subtle, implied. They need to get it out. They need to get it out.

LOURDES/GABRIEL.

LOURDES/GABRIEL

I always think about it, yeah.

LOURDES.

QUESTIONER

Like how?

LOURDES

Like, you enter a room and you just think...is that cabinet big enough to fit

me? *PRINCE.*

PRINCE

My parents are new money, right? My dad's an entrepreneur, he and my mom came up together. They have a lot of money. Like, a lot of money. So they send me here. Moved out of a bad neighborhood, sent me to this school, private school private school private school all my

life. And then, Marta Vista in Brentwood got shot up.

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QUESTIONER

You went there?

PRINCE

No. But...I could've gone there. I mean, my parents picked LaDana because it's a half mile closer to our house. That's the only reason. So, yeah, I didn't, but I could've. You have to wonder, when something like that happens...what's all our money for?

GABRIEL.

QUESTIONER

Do you have some kind of opinion on the role you play in the rehearsal?

GABRIEL

I like it.

QUESTIONER

You do?

GABRIEL

Yes. I like it a lot. *(Beat.)* I feel like Ms. Murphy is kind of a person who's...what do you call it? She's...that one word. *(Beat.)* Intuitive! She's intuitive.

QUESTIONER

Why do you say that?

GABRIEL

I feel like my part makes sense for me. I like to think if something really were to happen, I would be brave like that. I feel like...I don't know. The way our times are, I don't feel like there are opportunities to be brave like that, you know? This is like the only way.

PRINCE.

PRINCE

Sometimes my mom would stop by on Fridays and park outside the school. She knew what we were doing. And she'd just sit there and cry, just cry for me.

MS. MURPHY.

MS. MURPHY

There are these big heavy doors at the back of the hall, they take a full three seconds to open, and

they make a really loud sound. You wouldn't want to use them during a shooting. And there's chicken wire on the windows.

MS. MURPHY/LOURDES.

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MS. MURPHY/LOURDES

That's why it makes sense that no one can make it out.

LOURDES.

QUESTIONER

Do you.... What do you think about your part in the whole sequence?

LOURDES

That I survive?

QUESTIONER

Do you.... How does that make you feel, that you're the only survivor? Do you think it upsets you?

LOURDES

No, it makes sense. Someone has to survive or it's just not the same.

QUESTIONER

Did you ever feel scared, Lourdes?

LOURDES

No. We did it so many times and the same thing happened every time.

QUESTIONER

Ms. Murphy says that sometimes she carried you out, as the SWAT team?

LOURDES

Yes. She did sometimes. She'd enter through the West entrance and walk over to me, and hoist me off the ground and drag me out by my armpits, and lay me down on her table.

MS. MURPHY.

MS. MURPHY

They're all so committed to it. They want to be doing it just as much as I do. And I know...I know some people at the district may ask about it, but it really doesn't distract them from schoolwork. I think it helps, actually.

QUESTIONER

What do you teach?

MS. MURPHY

History, mostly.

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WILLEM.

QUESTIONER

Do you feel that the process of this... rehearsal—has affected you outside of school in any way?

WILLEM

Nah, not really. Oh. Weird dreams. But I've always been a weird dreamer.

QUESTIONER

Weird dreams? (*WILLEM nods.*) Anything concerning?

WILLEM

I wouldn't say concerning, exactly. Everyone has nightmares. Apparently, most of the dreams we have are nightmares; apparently dreams themselves are mostly just expressions of anxiety. (*Beat.*) I did have one, that shook me up a little bit.

Long pause.

I was on an iceberg somewhere. I think I was a penguin. (*He laughs, and realizes he won't get a response. He sobers and continues.*) Anyway, the other penguins around me were clustering, and I knew, I just knew—the way you know things in dreams—that we had to dive into the water. We were just supposed to. And the water was green—I remember that. We sort of jostled each other to get one of us to be the first to jump, and finally, we got this one penguin, a smaller one, probably a runt—we got him to jump in. We pushed him off, basically. And immediately the water went red. But then the thing is, we can smell the blood, it's acrid, really disgusting, we smell it and we know what it means, but we keep pushing each other into the water anyway. One after the other—we don't walk away. We don't see the shark, or even movement under the water, just explosions of blood, and it was really the smell of it... (*He trails off.*) I felt weird when I woke up. Then I remembered that at the end of the week, I would come to school and do this. And I felt better.

QUESTIONER

Better?

ALL BUT MS. MURPHY.

ALL BUT MS. MURPHY

Relieved.

GABRIEL.

GABRIEL

It feels like a dance. I get up, I stand in front of the door, I get shot, I fall forward. The way me and Willem move around each other is like a dance. Does that make any sense?

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MS. MURPHY.

QUESTIONER

Why is Lourdes the one who survives?

MS. MURPHY

Someone had to. That much was clear, I think. When it came down to deciding who, well, to be honest everyone fell pretty naturally into their roles. You look at the components of something like this...anyway. Lourdes wasn't any exception.

Beat.

She's a shy girl. Very sweet, very smart. She's on a scholarship, you know. Her family could never afford to send her here in a million years.

Beat.

Don't you get the feeling, when you look at her, like she needs...I don't know...that she needs...a promise of something?

Beat.

I have a daughter now, actually. Edith. She'll be one in two months. Do you have kids?

QUESTIONER

This isn't—

MS. MURPHY

I remember being really scared when she was born. And I remember thinking that that would pass. But it doesn't, really.

QUESTIONER

So this is all...to create something...helpful?

MS. MURPHY

Yes.

QUESTIONER

But why...why this way?

MS. MURPHY

What?

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QUESTIONER

Why *dying*? (*Beat.*) Why did you create something where they had to die?

MS. MURPHY

I'm not sure if I...follow....

QUESTIONER

Wouldn't it have been better if they survived? If he *didn't* shoot them?

MS. MURPHY

But he does.

Beat.

He does.

End of play.

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Following “Rehearsal”

ALL. Welcome to America. Land of routine.

TIME. Where every fifteen minutes, a person is killed with a gun.

TIME. One minute.

QUESTIONER. Wouldn't it be better if they survived? If he didn't shoot them? TIME. Two minutes.

MS MURPHY. Why?

TIME. Three minutes.

PRINCE. Wouldn't it be better if we didn't have to do this in the first place? TIME. Four minutes.

WILLEM. Who is to blame for a country where we have to rehearse for school shootings? TIME. Five minutes.

LOURDES. Should we blame the politicians? Or should we blame ourselves for sitting idly

and watching?

TIME. Six minutes.

GABRIEL. Who is to blame for the clock that just keeps mercilessly marching on? TIME. Seven minutes.

MS MURPHY. Are we to blame? Is it our fault?

TIME. Eight minutes.

PRINCE. When are things going to change?

TIME. Nine minutes.

WILLEM. Who is going to do something to change them?

TIME. Ten minutes.

LOURDES. What is it going to take to feel safe?

TIME. Eleven minutes.

GABRIEL. Next time, what if it's not a rehearsal? What if next time, it's real? TIME. Twelve minutes.

MS MURPHY. Wouldn't you agree that the gun is the sun and we are the solar system? TIME. Thirteen minutes.

QUESTIONER. But wouldn't it be better if they survived? If he didn't shoot them? TIME. Fourteen minutes.

PRINCE and WILLEM and LOURDES and GABRIEL. When will it be enough? TIME. Fifteen minutes. *(Beat.)* "Allegiance" by Arianna Brumfield.

#ENOUGH - Nationwide Reading - 3.7.2022 - Rehearsal Draft



Allegiance

By Arianna Brumfield

Characters

OLDER NEHEMIAH: Around 30.

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH: Around 16-17.

LEONTAVIOUS: Nehemiah's brother (around 18).

TOMEKA: Nehemiah and Leontavious's mother (around 30-40).

GOON: Around 18.

ANDRE: Leontavious's best friend (around 18).

NEWS BROADCASTER VOICE: Could be doubled with

POLICEMAN. POLICEMAN

Setting

A large American flag is seen waving in the background. Brooklyn, NY-like apartment complexes and alleyways are seen behind Older Nehemiah. There is graffiti and trash plastered on the apartment buildings. Police lights are flashing in the distance.

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Lights up on OLDER NEHEMIAH. He is wearing all-black clothing. He holds his hand over his eyebrow and is saluting the American flag. The national anthem plays faintly in the background among distant police sirens.

OLDER NEHEMIAH

“I pledge allegiance to the flag.” *(Chuckles.)* Everyday in school, I would be obligated to salute that flag. The flag that was built from the blood, sweat, and overflowing rivers of tears of my ancestors. The same hands that built this land were the same hands that were used to blow kisses to my mother when she was a child. The same hands that worked sun up to sun down, fighting for our opportunity, MY opportunity to be a human in America. And what did they get in return? Many were only given a one way trip to heaven by bullets, knives, or the fists of the oppressors and persecutors. Most were given nothing.

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH enters.

(Re: YOUNGER NEHEMIAH) In school I was just taught to smile, keep my right hand over my chest, and left hand up. Stretched towards the sky.

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH stretches his left hand up towards the sky and places his right hand over his chest.

“One nation under God.” ONE nation. “With liberty and justice for ALL.” Justice for all? Or your people? Justice and liberty for the people who are the color of the house your president sits in. Can y’all tell I’m frustrated? Frustrated for our people. For our men, women, and kids. *(Beat.)* Many of my people share this frustration, but there’s one person who influences my frustration further.

LEONTAVIOUS enters.

LEONTAVIOUS

(To YOUNGER) Aye lil man, I’ll be back in a few, got a few pounds to sell. Tell Momma I love ‘er.

OLDER NEHEMIAH

My big brother Leontavious, also known as Tay6 in the streets. At home, we call him Tay. As for “lil man,” that’s his name for me, but my birth name is Nehemiah. Momma always said that Nehemiah means “God has comforted.” Nehemiah also helped to rebuild Jerusalem. She always told me my birth is what she hoped would do the same for our family. Rebuild it. Especially after she was aware of Tay’s interesting hobbies, and Dad left us. Tay’s dealin’ and bangin’ scared Momma just like a nappy head to a comb. He always told me to tell her he loved her. He said that’s what he wanted Momma to remember him saying, just in case he wouldn’t come home that night.

TOMEKA rushes in and grabs her keys.

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TOMEKA

Where is that dern brother of yours? And get that jacket out that floor. Tuck that shirt in, and please, son, brush that nappy hedda yours. Don’t no human alive needa see them beeda-bees on the back of ya neck. Lock the door when I leave, and wash them dishes.

TOMEKA slams the door, exiting.

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH

(To TOMEKA) Love you too.

OLDER NEHEMIAH

(To audience) That’s mama. She works two full time jobs, and just doesn’t know when to stop working.

Glass breaking and yelling heard offstage. GOON enters. He grabs YOUNGER NEHEMIAH by the collar.

GOON

Where is that snitch brother of yours?

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH

Uh, I'm not—

GOON

ANSWER ME!

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH

He went to sell somewhere, I don't know!

GOON

Sell, huh? That's what he been doing? *(Starts laughing.)* It's funny how that money all of a sudden just went missin'. Now tell me where the money at.

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH

Uh, I don't know nun bout no money.

GOON

So I guess you don't know how Big Smokey got locked up?

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH

(Clueless.) Wha—

GOON

Your brother's messed up real bad, Lil Tay, snitchin', messin' around with my money, and he's good as dead if you don't tell me where that money is, ight?

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YOUNGER NEHEMIAH

I-I-I—

GOON

(Chuckles.) Just like your brother, huh? CLUELESS. *(Drops NEHEMIAH.)* Pray for your brother, dawg. He gone need it.

GOON runs off, leaving YOUNGER NEHEMIAH on the ground, shaken.

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH OLDER NEHEMIAH Lil Tay? Lil Tay—

OLDER NEHEMIAH

—first time I realized that in the streets I was just Leontavious’ little brother that was ‘posed to keep up with where he is, what he’s doing, or what money he got. At home, I’m the “glue to this family,” but when I’m on the other side of the door, I’m suddenly the heir to the throne, expected to carry my brother’s legacy.

The GOONS appear with LEONTAVIOUS in a headlock. Close by is ANDRE his friend, held at gunpoint. YOUNG NEHEMIAH gets to his feet.

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH

Tay! TAY!

LEONTAVIOUS

(Struggling to talk.) Aye lil man, back up. I got this. *(To ANDRE)* ‘Dre, tell ‘em.

ANDRE

Hey lil man, gone back home to—

GOON

Shut up fore I put a bullet in you, SNITCH. *(Points to ANDRE.)* And yo little homie too.

LEONTAVIOUS

(Panicking.) Aye man, leave my people outta this, ight?

GOON

(Holds gun to LEONTAVIOUS.) WHERE THAT MONEY AT. COUGH IT UP OR WE GONE HAFTA MAKE YOU.

LEONTAVIOUS

(Frantic.) I swear on my life ian got no money. Check—check—with the plug, I gave it to him.

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GOON

(Pushes LEONTAVIOUS to the ground with the gun aimed at him.) You got three seconds to either tell me where that money is or we gone take it out your pocket.

LEONTAVIOUS

I—ian got enough—

GOON

3—

LEONTAVIOUS

Ight. Ight. Chill. I told you the money ain't with me.

GOON

2—

LEONTAVIOUS

(Frantic.) Aye man, I AINT GOT THE MONEY.

GOON

1—

LEONTAVIOUS

LOOK MAN I—

A gunshot rings out. LEONTAVIOUS stretches his left hand up towards the sky and places his right hand over his chest, where he's been shot. He and ANDRE freeze in place.

OLDER NEHEMIAH

It killed Momma the day she found out. Five days straight she cried. Felt like five years.

LEONTAVIOUS exits. ANDRE stands at a distance.

With Tay gone, Momma lost her firstborn, her protector, her heartbeat. With Tay gone, I lost my protection, my best friend, my influence. With Tay gone, the world lost—

The flickering light of a TV washes over them.

NEWS BROADCASTER (VOICE)

An African-American male and possible gang member was shot and killed by a group of thugs yesterday afternoon at 6175 NewsBark Ave. *(Beat.)* In other news—

OLDER NEHEMIAH

Thug. Gang member. He was my brother. *(Re: TOMEKA as she enters.)* Her son. #ENOUGH -

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Allegiance © Arianna Brumfield **5 of 10**

TOMEKA sings "Precious Lord."

OLDER NEHEMIAH

My mother used to tell me that there were going to be people like the boys who killed my brother wherever we went, but to always keep a smile on our face. She would tell us that we were going to be alright and to never let anything destroy the brightness that our future was to become. Every night we would hear this. I remember this moment so vividly, like she was still cradling me and my sister while she sang a sweet song and every now and again I hear her sing the song the same way she would sing it to us in that moment.

TOMEKA finishes "Precious Lord."

TOMEKA

Two black sons. One black daughter. What does that mean to you? To me it means: 3 college tuitions, 3 plates to fix, 3 mouths to feed, 3 coats to buy, then wash, then dry, then hang up. 3 heads to comb, 3 bodies to bathe, 3 of "the talks" to have. Whew. That's fun. To them it means: 3 more criminals labeled guilty from the day they was born, 3 more gangsters, 3 more ghetto pants saggin, weave-pattin, no daddy-havin, loud mouthed black kids. And I can't put up with that. Why? Cause I raised my children right. Taught them to respect their elders, to keep their pants above their waistline. And they might've not had a father, but they dang sure had a black mother who didn't need ANY man to tell her how to raise her kids. I am a black woman. Standing on the shoulders of my ancestors who built this land we live in now. Don't forget where you came from. Just because in these times we are not accepted, remember where you started. Where we started. Where AMERICA started. But most importantly, don't EVER underestimate the power of a black woman.

OLDER NEHEMIAH

My momma always told me that love is the center of the Earth, but sometimes like a donut, we lose our center.

ANDRE approaches YOUNGER NEHEMIAH.

ANDRE

(Whispering.) Hey. My man. I saw those clowns who popped Tay behind the school, right by those apartments. Looks like they weren't strapped. You wanna come with me to gain your respect?

OLDER NEHEMIAH

Listening to Andre, I was conflicted with myself. Would I continue to live up to Momma's intentions and be the "rebuilder of the family?" Or would I do as expected, and live up to the title of Lil Tay?

ANDRE

Did you hear me, man? You wanna get back at 'em?

OLDER NEHEMIAH

I knew exactly what he meant.
The feelings of constant anticipation came and then went
I'm usually slow to anger and hesitant to quit
But when I thought of—

OLDER NEHEMIAH YOUNGER NEHEMIAH My brother. My brother.

OLDER NEHEMIAH

I knew that this was it.
Not thinking of the pain I would inflict on—

TOMEKA appears.

OLDER NEHEMIAH YOUNGER NEHEMIAH TOMEKA My mother My
mother Your mother

OLDER NEHEMIAH

Or the way I could eventually end up just like—

LEONTAVIOUS appears.

OLDER NEHEMIAH YOUNGER NEHEMIAH LEONTAVIOUS My brother. My
brother. Your brother.

OLDER NEHEMIAH

All those thoughts were irrelevant as I had the sudden thought

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH

To avenge my brother's death despite the things my mother taught

TOMEKA

Be careful with your anger for it will eventually reveal
The things you want to do before you've had your time to heal

OLDER NEHEMIAH

Looking back at these feelings never fails to make me cringe.
I followed the voice of Andre, the voice of

ALL

Revenge.

ANDRE

(Whispering.) After school. Ten o'clock.

OLDER NEHEMIAH

We walked onto the property of Head Heights Apartment Complex.

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH

I see them, I see Andre, I see the pistol.

Nothing else is on my mind but giving those suckers what they deserve. Exactly what they gave my brother.

OLDER NEHEMIAH

Then I thought. What would I gain? What emotions would overcome me other than regret and remorse?

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH

What would my mother think if I destroyed someone else's life just how my family was destroyed?

OLDER NEHEMIAH

I could choose revenge—

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH

But I choose love, growth—

OLDER NEHEMIAH

...and a future for people that look like me. People marked as dead from the day they were born. People who could change the world for the better. I choose my community.

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH

I choose victory. I choose progress. I choose—

POLICEMAN

(Offstage.) HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN THERE?

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH

Excuse me?

POLICEMAN enters.

POLICEMAN

What are you doing on this private property?

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH

Uhh.

POLICEMAN

Get down on the ground. Get ON the GROUND!

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH

Sir, I think you have the wrong person. I haven't done anything against the law.

POLICEMAN

PUT YOUR HANDS BEHIND YOUR HEAD AND GET ON YOUR KNEES NOW!

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH

Can I turn around—

POLICEMAN

SHUT UP AND DO IT!

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH gets on his knees.

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH

Please don't shoot me. Please.

POLICEMAN

Shut. Your. MOUTH!

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH

Why are you detaining me? I've done nothing wrong. You've got the wrong guy! I promised my mother I would come home and—

POLICEMAN

Stop RESISTING!

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH

I'm not—

POLICEMAN pulls his gun out and points it at YOUNGER NEHEMIAH.

POLICEMAN

DIDN'T YOU JUST HEAR ME!!

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH

Please. Please. I have a family. My mother, my little baby sister, I have school, a future, a life of value. I—I—I— I don't wanna die, please.

POLICEMAN

READ MY LIPS, SON: WATCH. YOUR. TONGUE. I've had enough of you people torturing this town and causing chaos.

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH

What? You people? You know what? I know my rights.

He pulls out his cell phone and starts recording.

POLICEMAN

Put that phone DOWN.

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH

I have rights TOO, sir. I can't die. PLEASE.

POLICEMAN

SHUT IT, BOY!

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH

Why can't y'all see that we are not all criminals! We are not defined by the color of our skin. Why am I always guilty because of the God-given color of my skin?

POLICEMAN

Be quiet.

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH

PLEASE. I HAVE TO BE THERE FOR MY FAMILY.

POLICEMAN

HUSH!

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH

MOMMA! MOMMA! Please sir— *(Getting up, hand outstretched to the officer.)* I don't wanna—

A gunshot rings out. YOUNGER NEHEMIAH stretches his left hand up towards the sky. He freezes, and the POLICEMAN disappears.

OLDER NEHEMIAH

Unlike Tay, I survived. I was lucky. *(Chuckles.)* It's bullshit what passes for luck these days. It's bullshit that since the beginning I failed to realize that this country wasn't founded to include me in its "liberty and justice for all." It's bullshit that Tay never got the justice and liberty he was promised in the constitution. Momma neither. *(Beat.)* The question I ask myself everyday I ask you—

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH

(Left hand still in the air, to the audience) What does my past tell you about me? When you glance at my outward appearance what do you see? Someone who has been hurt by the loud crack of a gun

Or the straight A student who would eventually become someone?
Someone to linger in the enclosed walls of gang violence,

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Allegiance © Arianna Brumfield **10 of 10**

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH cont.

Or the boy who would eventually comply with the silence
Of the hallways when I walk through to my next class.
Do I deserve to be judged because of my irreversible past?
I know who I am, and who I will become
But you can only see the newspaper article, positioned with the image of the
gun. Looking past the baseball awards and honor roll certificates,
But to the peers around me it shows no significance,
But when you look at my life, you really don't see.
Because my past does not tell you what you need to know about me.

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH put his right hand over his heart.

OLDER NEHEMIAH

“With liberty and justice for—for...?”

A long beat. Blackout.

End of play.

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Every Fifteen Minutes © Maggie Munday Odom - **4 of 11**

Following “Allegiance”

ALL. Welcome to America. Land of the free, home of the brave.

TIME. Where every fifteen minutes, a person is killed with a gun.

TIME. One minute.

OLDER NEHEMIAH. Welcome to America.

TIME. Two minutes.

LEONTAVIOUS. Where Black boys like us are caught in a never-ending cycle. TIME. Three minutes.

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH. Violence, trauma, violence, repeat.

TIME. Four minutes.

TOMEKA. Policeman, “Don’t shoot,” they shoot, repeat.

TIME. Five minutes.

OLDER NEHEMIAH. And repeat.

TIME. Six minutes.

LEONTAVIOUS. And repeat.

TIME. Seven minutes.

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH and OLDER NEHEMIAH. And repeat.

TIME. Eight minutes.

TOMEKA. He was my son.

TIME. Nine minutes.

OLDER NEHEMIAH. I was innocent.

TIME. Ten minutes.

LEONTAVIOUS. He was too young.

TIME. Eleven minutes.

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH and LEONTAVIOUS. Don't shoot!

TIME. Twelve minutes.

TOMEKA. I wish I could protect him.

TIME. Thirteen minutes.

OLDER NEHEMIAH. Why am I always guilty because of the God given color of my skin? TIME. Fourteen minutes.

YOUNGER NEHEMIAH. Don't shoot!

TIME. Fifteen minutes. *(Beat.)* "In My Sights" by Tain Leonard-Peck.

#ENOUGH - Nationwide Reading - 3.7.2022 - Rehearsal Draft



In My Sights

By Tain Leonard-Peck

Characters

THE GUN: A person of any gender or age, dressed in black.

BILL: An adult man with a family, aged mid-forties to mid-fifties. A gunmaker.

LANA: An adult woman, aged mid-twenties to mid-thirties. A gun owner.

MICHELLE: An adult woman, aged mid-twenties to mid-thirties. Lana's partner. ALEX: A person of any gender, aged late teens to early twenties.

CHARLIE: A person of any gender, aged late teens to early twenties.

Setting

Assorted settings in America. Present day.

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In My Sights © Tain Leonard-Peck **1 of 7**

Interior of a rural home. THE GUN enters and stands center stage.

THE GUN

(In a pleasant tone, maybe a little nervous.) So...I think you're all curious. About MY point of view. Might as well start at the beginning. Like everyone else, I was born. Went from darkness to light. Ironic, given how things turned out...but that's for later. I was made in a little workshop in Missouri. The South is known for its gun manufacturing but this shop produced unique made-to-order weapons—revolvers, shotguns, and semi-automatics. Like me.

THE GUN thumps its chest.

I felt like there was more heart put into my creation than into a thousand cookie-cutter guns churned out on some assembly line. Ick.

THE GUN sticks his tongue out.

I thought I was special. As for who made me, well, he's one of the most amazing men on

this green Earth. Has to be, he's my dad.

THE GUN stretches out its arms. BILL enters.

Bill, his name tag said. Day after day, he put together handguns. Had a real passion for it,

too. BILL pats THE GUN on the shoulder.

BILL

(Lovingly.) Switch this spring out for an alloy model and I'll be able to put on a few more pounds of trigger pressure. Make it harder for the gun to accidentally discharge. There we go.

THE GUN

That's Bill. Funny thing was he didn't even really like shooting guns. He just liked the puzzle of it—putting together something mechanical. He had other motivations too...

BILL

(Proudly.) All these new commissions are a lifesaver. Gotta pay for Christmas. A bike for my daughter, and a new phone for my son. My wife deserves something nice too. Anything for my family.

THE GUN

Bill brought me home as a side project before I was shipped out, so I got to know all about him.

BILL

(Speaking to his wife, unseen.) Honey, I know you don't like me bringing work home. Don't worry, it's perfectly safe. Look, there's not even a firing pin in it yet. I'll keep it out of reach when I'm not working on it, I promise. I'd never let anything happen to our kids.

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In My Sights © Tain Leonard-Peck 2 of 7

THE GUN

Amazing man, right!? Never even heard him swear. But that isn't to say his life was perfect. He had his issues.

BILL

(Raising his voice in frustration.) I said it's safe! Now please let me work in peace!
(To audience) She just doesn't understand how guns work. I know what I'm doing.

THE GUN

Most of the time, Bill was happy with his job. But every once in a while, he had moments of doubt. He saw things on the news, in the papers, and they hurt him.

BILL

(Sighs, shaking his head.) All those poor kids...their families.

THE GUN

So...he gave himself a lot of...pep talks.

BILL

(Anxiously runs his hands through his hair.) I make handguns and shotguns, not rifles. The paper said the shooter used an AR-style rifle. *(He points at THE GUN.)* Our shop doesn't produce those. This isn't my fault. Not my fault at all.

THE GUN

He always pulled himself out of his funk. Told himself that no matter how many times a gun was used to hurt someone, there were other times that firearms had been used to defend lives. He thought he'd added me to that list. Of guns that protect people.

BILL

(Speaking on a phone.) I have a .45 that fits the order. Just finished it. *(To THE GUN)* Off you go, to your happy new home!

BILL exits, laughing.

THE GUN

And that was the last I saw of Bill. Son of a gun...maker, I was all grown up! He packed me, wished me good luck, and shipped me off to my new home. I felt, I don't know, excited and scared, all at the same time. I didn't know where I was going, or who I was going to. It turns out, I got lucky with Lana and Michelle.

LANA and MICHELLE enter, standing near a high counter. LANA walks over to THE GUN and puts her arm around it.

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In My Sights © Tain Leonard-Peck 3 of 7

MICHELLE

(To THE GUN) Well, here you are. *(To LANA)* After all that talk about protecting ourselves, I can't believe we finally have this...thing.

LANA

You don't need to say "this thing" like it's a wild animal, 'Chelly. It's just a gun. It's a tool.

MICHELLE

What, you mean like a freaking screwdriver?

LANA

Exactly. Take some shooting classes with me one of these days—it's not going to be much help to have a pistol for self-defense if I'm the only one that can use it.

MICHELLE

I know. It just feels weird owning a weapon. I grew up in the suburbs, we didn't have crime when I was a kid—

LANA

Yeah and last week your mom and dad had an attempted break-in.

MICHELLE

I know, but having a gun feels wrong. I don't like what it represents.

LANA

What does it represent?

MICHELLE

That things have changed so much. That we're...scared.

LANA

If you're not scared nowadays, you're not paying attention. *(Short pause.)* Look, if someone tries breaking down our door, I don't want to be stuck hoping the police can reach us fast enough. If the police even bother showing up.

MICHELLE

Now you're just being cynical.

LANA

Maybe. The news doesn't paint a pretty picture of the boys in blue lately, does it?

LANA and MICHELLE move upstage. MICHELLE turns a letter over in her hands.

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THE GUN

Lana was wonderful. A really responsible gun owner. Took great care of me, never went for any of that cheap ammo. 'Chelly never really warmed up to me, though. She did get some target practice in, eventually. Grew to enjoy range shooting over time, even started to take home her shot-up targets. But there was always some hesitancy. She never seemed truly happy to have me in the house. Her fear made sense, in the end.

Lights up on LANA and MICHELLE sitting at the kitchen table. MICHELLE slaps a letter down on the table between them.

MICHELLE

That's it. We're moving.

LANA

We can't. We don't have the money for it right now. And besides, we'll be fine.

MICHELLE

We won't be fine. We got another letter. Last time, it was just insults. This time, they said they'd set our apartment on fire.

LANA

It's an empty threat, 'Chelly. Relax.

MICHELLE

Remember what happened to Marco, from the other floor? He got beaten to a pulp in a parking lot after some guys saw him kiss his boyfriend. We aren't okay here.

LANA

I'm armed.

MICHELLE

So?

LANA

He wasn't. If anyone tries to attack you, or attack me, or burn our place down, they'll get what's coming to them.

MICHELLE

And what happens if you do shoot someone? I know they talk about self defense in your gun safety courses, but the law is messy. Do you want to risk a murder conviction because you shot someone instead of running away? Do you want to risk losing me while you do life in prison?

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In My Sights © Tain Leonard-Peck 5 of 7

LANA

I just want us to be safe. I want to take care of you, of us. *(Sighing.)* Look, we can't move right now, but we can look into it. I could work overtime. Maybe take a loan. Something. Anything. Whatever you really need.

LANA and MICHELLE exit.

THE GUN

I really wanted to help them, to keep them safe. But ‘Chelly was right, using me was a risk. Maybe they’d successfully defend themselves. Maybe they’d go to jail. At worst, I meant death. Lana and ‘Chelly weren’t happy about it, but they scraped together the money to move to another neighborhood, one that had less risk of them being harassed or attacked. *(Pauses.)* But moving day had its own risks. It was all too easy for someone to sneak in and make off with something important. Or....

THE GUN looks down at itself for a moment.

Or something dangerous. Someone saw the moving truck and broke into the house when Lana and ‘Chelly ran out for coffee. I was still in my drawer next to Lana’s side of the bed. From there on out, things went bad. Very bad.

THE GUN looks up at someone unseen.

(Negotiating with the thief.) Hey, just turn around. Please. Bring me back home to Lana and ‘Chelly. After all, no reasonable person wants to risk being caught with a stolen handgun.

ALEX and CHARLIE enter, we hear them before we see them.

CHARLIE

Ugh, the car is such a mess. We gotta make sure we throw out our wrappers and stuff before we go home.

ALEX

(Laughing.) Whose fault is that? Who wanted to get two burgers and a large fries at the drive-through?

CHARLIE groans and holds his stomach.

CHARLIE

Yeah. I’m feeling how bad a mistake that was.

ALEX

You made your bed. I’m getting a Slushie. You just HAD to go to the burger place that doesn’t serve ‘em.

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In My Sights © Tain Leonard-Peck 6 of 7

CHARLIE

Sorry, sorry! I hope they have antacids or something. Can you get me some?

ALEX laughs and then abruptly goes quiet when he spots THE

GUN. CHARLIE notices too. They both raise their hands. THE GUN approaches them with slow, jerky movements, as if not in control.

CHARLIE

Hey...take it easy.

THE GUN

I'm sorry. I can't stop.

ALEX

Please don't hurt us. We'll give you everything.

ALEX and CHARLIE empty their pockets onto the ground at THE GUN's feet. THE GUN keeps coming.

CHARLIE

Oh, God, please don't kill us.

THE GUN

It's not me. I don't have a choice.

THE GUN continues to approach them, now raising its arms in front of itself, palms facing ALEX and CHARLIE.

CHARLIE

We gave you everything we have. Please, just take it all and go! *(He tosses his keys.)* Take the car too!

THE GUN is almost close enough to touch CHARLIE and ALEX.

THE GUN

I wish I could help you. I wish I could protect you too. I'm so sorry.

THE GUN pokes ALEX and CHARLIE in the chest with a single finger each. They slump to the ground.

ALEX

We've been shot! Someone—help, call the cops!

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CHARLIE

Stay calm, babe...just hold on.

ALEX

It hurts. Charlie, please...hold my hand.

CHARLIE

(Taking ALEX's hand.) I got you, Alex...just need to...reach my phone...

ALEX and CHARLIE moan and then collapse flat on the ground. They are silent now. THE GUN takes a few steps downstage.

THE GUN

(Angry.) Senseless. Pointless. They did everything he asked. He tossed me after he shot those poor people. The police found me in a drain. Someone checked my serial number and had Lana and 'Chelly brought in. Now all that fear 'Chelly had was justified. Look what I did.

LANA and MICHELLE enter holding hands.

They'd reported me stolen. *(Hopeful.)* Once the investigation's done, I should be able to go home. If anyone still even wants me. Home...

BILL enters.

Lots of people don't get to go home. I don't know what happened to Charlie and Alex, but I hope they survived. I can't bear the thought of causing innocent people to suffer or...

(Shrugs off the thought, rallying.) Guns are lots of things. We're tools. We're weapons. We're symbols. I can make someone feel like an artist, from how they design and assemble guns, to how they can shoot with absolute precision. I can make people feel safe, like they have nothing to be afraid of at night.

THE GUN looks upward.

Or...I can make people feel scared. I can make them feel helpless and powerless. I can make them feel pain. *(Pauses.)* I can make them bleed, and I can make them die.

THE GUN kneels on the edge of the stage.

It makes me want to destroy myself. *(Small pause.)* Maybe I should. *(Long pause.)* Maybe I should.

Curtain.

End of play.

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Every Fifteen Minutes © Maggie Munday Odom - 5 of 11

Following "In My Sights"

ALL TIME

Welcome to America. One. Two.

BILL TIME

Land of creation Three. Four.

LANA TIME

And opportunity. Five. Six.

MICHELLE TIME

Where every fifteen minutes Seven. Eight.

ALEX TIME

A person Nine. Ten.

CHARLIE TIME

Is killed Eleven. Twelve.

THE GUN TIME

With a gun. Thirteen. Fourteen. Fifteen.

Beat.

TIME

“Salted Lemonade” by Taylor Lafayette.



Salted Lemonade

By Taylor Lafayette

Characters

JAMAL JENNINGS: Freshly 18-year-old African-American boy, sometimes referred to as “JJ.” He is greatly loved by his community and family and is an only child.

JACKIE HERR: African-American woman around her early to mid-40’s. She is the aunt of Jamal and sister of Lisa; she is often the comic relief of the family.

LISA JENNINGS: Widowed 39-year-old African-American woman. She is the mother of Jamal and younger sister of Jackie; she is a hospitable Southern woman with a determined mindset.

GUNMAN

Setting

Lisa’s house in a small southern Georgia town on the night of Thanksgiving. #*ENOUGH* -

Salted Lemonade © Taylor Lafayette **1 of 10**

JAMAL, JACKIE, and LISA sit around a small square table where Thanksgiving food is placed. The table is decorated in an orange tablecloth with blue plates and napkins. A single pitcher of lemonade rests in the middle of the table next to the Thanksgiving food. JAMAL gets a text message alert and rises to get up before LISA stops him.

JAMAL

Ma

LISA

Don't "Ma" me, boy. Now where you think you going?

JAMAL

The boys just texted me. They want me to go riding with them.

LISA

Boy, it's Thanksgiving. Since you turned 18, you just don't ask your mama permission to leave, huh?

JACKIE

That's right. Get him, Lisa.

JACKIE pours some lemonade.

LISA

Everybody want to be grown until it's time to pay some bills.

JACKIE

Ain't that the truth?

JACKIE raises her glass for LISA to touch.

LISA

How long y'all gone be out? And are you driving your car or riding with somebody?

JAMAL

Mama, I don't know. It's just me and the boys and I'm driving.

JACKIE

Anybody riding with you? These roads unusually slick for this time of year. Drive careful...if she let you go. *(Laughs.)*

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Salted Lemonade © Taylor Lafayette **2 of 10**

JAMAL

Come on, Aunty. You too old to be this childish.

LISA

Girl, I know he didn't just call you old.

JACKIE

I think he did. Bet he won't repeat it.

LISA

He ain't ready for ya, Jackie. Let my baby live, he just turned 18, he don't know how we used to get down.

JACKIE

You ain't lying. He just don't know.

A text alert dings. JACKIE and LISA continue to laugh.

JAMAL

Mama, can I go or not?

LISA

(Sighs.) You know I usually would let you go but...It was a shooting down where I know y'all be hanging. I just don't want nothing to happen to you, JJ.

JAMAL

Mama, you know me and my friends not even like that. Besides, shootings are happening everywhere.

JACKIE

JJ, if you trying to get out in them streets tonight, you might want to leave out the shootings.

LISA

Jackie, hush...I'm not worried about y'all, Jamal. I know y'all good boys. The boy who got shot last week was a good boy, too. Bullets don't discriminate.

JAMAL

It's Thanksgiving, Ma. I don't think anybody should even be on that tonight.

JACKIE

I think he should be safe, Lisa. He's a smart boy.

JAMAL

See? Auntie think it's okay.

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Salted Lemonade © Taylor Lafayette **3 of 10**

LISA

Whose side are you on, Jackie? (*BOTH look at LISA.*) Alright. Fine. You can go... but you be back in this house no later than 12:30, Jamal Jennings. Do you hear me?

JAMAL

I hear you loud and clear, Ma. 12:30.

LISA

You need some money?

JACKIE

Girl, the boy's birthday was yesterday. He got enough money to last him the next two weeks.

LISA

You right. You right. Hey, Jamal, don't take all that money with you either. Leave some here.

JAMAL

I know, Mama.

LISA

Just making sure. It's bums out here taking lives for a nickel.

JACKIE

That's true. It was a robbery on Emerson Street last week. A man got held at gunpoint for fifty dollars. Fifty dollars, chile.

LISA

The world is getting crazier by the day. Nothing like when we was kids.

JACKIE

Sad, sad truth. *(Pause.)* You listen here, JJ. Be careful, watch for your surroundings and your friends. And yes, you're a man now but please keep your mother updated, have fun, and be safe. I love you, nephew.

JACKIE rises and kisses JAMAL'S forehead.

LISA

And where are you going, Jackie? Y'all both gone leave me lonely on Thanksgiving?

JACKIE

Girl, I'm going to the bathroom. Drinking all that lemonade catching up to me. When I come back you better be ready to watch them Hallmark Christmas movies.

#ENOUGH - Nationwide Reading - 3.7.2022 - Rehearsal Draft
Salted Lemonade © Taylor Lafayette **4 of 10**

LISA

You know it! Know that's gone get me in the Christmas spirit!

JACKIE exits; LISA rises and goes to JAMAL.

You sure you don't need another jacket? It's pretty cold out, and don't forget your hat.

JAMAL

Mama, stop treating me like a baby. I am an adult as of yesterday. Even Aunty said it. I can handle myself.

LISA

As of yesterday is correct, JJ; you are still my baby. My only baby at that...you're all I got left. I just want you to be safe.

JAMAL hugs LISA.

JAMAL

I know, Ma. You don't need to worry so much, though. I can handle myself and I hear what you saying, just know I ain't going nowhere...but out with my boys. I'll see you later, and I love

you. And tell Aunty to make some more of that lemonade before she leaves.

LISA

What is it with you and that lemonade?

JAMAL

Remember when I was little and how me and my cousins would play football all day? Dad was the referee, and we'd play until we would get them scratches on our knees? ... Every time we would come in, Aunt Jackie would have some waiting for us. It reminded me that even when things went sour, something sweet would be waiting in the end.

LISA

Seems just like yesterday...where has the time gone?

JAMAL

Time ain't gone nowhere, Ma.... Can you promise me something?

LISA

Yes, baby?

JAMAL

Don't worry...ok? I'll be back at 12:30 and please don't let Aunty forget about the

lemonade. *JAMAL exits after kissing LISA's cheek, just as*

JACKIE enters.

#ENOUGH - Nationwide Reading - 3.7.2022 - Rehearsal Draft
Salted Lemonade © Taylor Lafayette **5 of 10**

JACKIE

He left yet?

LISA

Yeah, he just left.... My baby ain't a baby no more.

JACKIE

You did a good job, Lisa.

LISA

A good job with what?

JACKIE

Raising that boy...especially after...well, you know.... I know why you worry about him so much.

LISA

I just don't want him to leave me. He's grown and he's going to want to live his life on his own terms. He's gone think he don't need "Mama's protection" because that's for little boys. Honestly, Jackie...I've been scared since midnight struck yesterday. I've been keeping this big bright smile on my face, cooking his favorite meals, buying that gaming system he wouldn't stop talking about, all of this, Jackie, and I'm scared. I'm not scared of the man he's becoming, but I scared of the world he's going to become it in.

JACKIE

Lisa...sis, you have every right to feel this way, especially after Myles died. I can't promise you that the world is going to change overnight, but you have to have faith, you hear me?

LISA

I know, but ever since that night.... *(Pause.)* I got that call saying that Myles had been shot and the only thing I could think about was if this would happen to JJ. Every time he takes a step out that door, my mind just goes there. I know I can keep him safe here. It ain't no guarantee he gone be safe out there, Jackie. I know I shouldn't feel this way, but I do. He's not a boy anymore, Jackie; he's a man and he's going to want to do things that men do, and even something as simple as a store run could have him in the wrong place at the wrong time.

JACKIE

Enough. You're overthinking this, Lisa. You've raised a brilliant young man with a bright future who reached 18 without being in these streets. As a Black mother, you should feel proud.

LISA

(Looks lovingly at JACKIE, then skeptical.) Thank you.... Why you being so nice to me? What you want?

#ENOUGH - Nationwide Reading - 3.7.2022 - Rehearsal Draft
Salted Lemonade © Taylor Lafayette 6 of 10

JACKIE

I've been fiending to get my hands on that apple pie you guarding.

Pause. BOTH laugh.

LISA

You? I've been waiting since Jamal walked out the door. You know if he was here, it would've been gone before it hit the plate.

JACKIE

He loves those pies just like his lemonade.

LISA

Speaking of...my baby asked for some for when he gets back, so don't forget.

JACKIE

Stop calling that boy a baby, please. *(Laughs.)* I think I'm gone make some before I join you.

LISA

(Cutting into pie and plating it.) If there's any left....

JACKIE

All I know is, when I come back, it better be some leftover for me. I don't mind calling Mama.

LISA

Girl, you are too old to be telling Mama on me. Already know I'm getting my way anyways. I'm the baby.

JACKIE

Girl, I'm not stunting you, I'm bout to go make this lemonade and it better be some left when I get back.

LISA

Well, we'll see when you get back.

JACKIE scowls at LISA as she exits. LISA laughs.

JACKIE

(Offstage.) Lisa, where the lemons at?

LISA

Should be on the second shelf in the fridge. *(Tastes pie.)* Jackie put her foot in this. Yes,

Lord. *LISA's cell phone rings.*

#ENOUGH - Nationwide Reading - 3.7.2022 - Rehearsal Draft

Salted Lemonade © Taylor Lafayette **7 of 10**

Now, who is this?

LISA checks her phone; she doesn't recognize the number. LISA silences her phone and puts it face down. JACKIE enters and notices the big slice of pie LISA has.

JACKIE

So...you just gone take all the pie like that?

LISA

You thought I was playing? *(Laughs.)* Ain't no way you done with that lemonade, Jackie.

JACKIE

No, but I been craving that pie so I'm back...got plenty of time to make it. *(She cuts into pie then pauses and looks up at LISA.)* Lisa, when's the last time you went out?

LISA

Uhhh...whenever we last we went out for drinks, why?

JACKIE

Girl, when's the last time you went out with someone besides me? You know, for like a girl's night...a date, maybe?

LISA

Stop being nosey, that's none of your business.

JACKIE

It is my business if your only social time is spent with your sister and son.

LISA

See, what we not finna d

JACKIE's cell phone rings.

JACKIE

Lord, I'm trying to fix my sister's dating life.

JACKIE checks her phone. LISA sees the number on JACKIE's phone and becomes curious.

I don't know this number anyway.

LISA

Wait, let me see your phone. That look like the same number that called me. #ENOUGH -

Nationwide Reading - 3.7.2022 - Rehearsal Draft

Salted Lemonade © Taylor Lafayette **8 of 10**

JACKIE

It can't be. But here. *(Handing LISA her phone.)* Knock yourself out.

LISA checks her phone and JACKIE'S to see that it is the same number.

LISA

It is the same number, Jackie. I'm calling back.

JACKIE

I wonder who it is. That's weird.

LISA calls the number on her phone and it just rings.

LISA

They not answering, Jackie. I don't like this...you try to call.

JACKIE

I'm not calling that number. If you want it called, you do it.... You just overreacting again, girl.

LISA

I will.... I got a bad feeling bout this.

LISA calls the number back on JACKIE's phone. It goes to voicemail. LISA begins to panic.

Jackie, they not answering...what if somebody calling for Jamal? What if something happened to my baby? Oh Lord, please let my baby be okay.... I got to go. Jackie, we got to go, come on, grab your coat...let's go!

JACKIE looks at LISA, concerned, as LISA rushes off stage to get her coat. She rushes back on stage with her keys and coat.

JACKIE

Lisa, calm down!

LISA

Jackie, why you sitting there? I said let's go.

JACKIE doesn't move.

...Fine, if you don't want to go, I'll go by myself.

JACKIE receives a text and checks it immediately.

#ENOUGH - Nationwide Reading - 3.7.2022 - Rehearsal Draft
Salted Lemonade © Taylor Lafayette 9 of 10

JACKIE

(Sighs.) Lisa, check this phone, please.

LISA grabs the phone and reads text aloud.

LISA

“This Jamal, I tried to call, couldn’t get through. On my way! home to get a charger my phone died...” Thank God, my baby’s safe.

Pause. LISA puts down her coat and keys.

JACKIE

Now don’t you feel silly? Running around acting all crazy. *(Laughs.)* Telling me to grab my coat.

BOTH laugh as LISA responds to the text and gives JACKIE her phone.

LISA

I had to make sure my baby was okay. I texted him that we’ll be waiting, almost made me grab the keys to Aunty’s Nissan. *(Laughs then sighs.)* At least he’s on his way home. I know he’s good when he’s here.

JACKIE

Ain’t that the truth? Had me scared over here.

LISA

I’m sorry about that. *(Laughs.)* Let’s forget that even happened and get back to this

pie. Half a beat, then a series of three knocks is heard.

JACKIE

I just know that ain’t JJ. His ass better not been speeding.

JACKIE rises to open the door.

LISA

You getting the door?

JACKIE

Yes, hopefully you been made a dent in your pie by the time I get back.

JACKIE laughs and exits. LISA eats pie. A beat. LISA looks offstage for JACKIE and JAMAL.

#ENOUGH - Nationwide Reading - 3.7.2022 - Rehearsal Draft
Salted Lemonade © Taylor Lafayette 10 of 10

LISA

JACKIE! JJ! Don’t y’all be out there talking bout me. *(Laughs, then pauses.)* What y’all doing?

I know I heard that door close.

LISA rises and walks to exit the stage after not getting a response. She gets nearly offstage before she yelps and starts visibly shaking with fear.

GUNMAN

PUT YOUR HANDS UP! I AIN'T TRYNNNA HURT NOBODY!

LISA walks backwards with her hands up as the GUNMAN points his gun at her, his hand clasped over JACKIE's mouth in a headlock position. LISA halts after reaching center stage.

LISA

(Crying.) Sir, please, walk by faith...I promised my son we would be here when he came. I promised him he's safe here. Please, don't hurt us.

GUNMAN

SHUT IT LADY, GET ON YOUR KNEES, BOTH Y'ALL!

GUNMAN throws JACKIE to the ground as LISA drops to her knees and helps her. He waves his gun at them to move.

NOW!

JACKIE and LISA both cry, sitting on their knees in front of the GUNMAN with their hands raised.

LISA

Please, walk by faith. Please!

GUNMAN points the gun at her as the lights dim and the curtain closes.

End of play.

Following “Salted Lemonade”

ALL
Welcome to America.

LISA
Land of sweet

JACKIE
And sour.

TIME
Where every fifteen minutes—

JAMAL
Hey yo, Time? Again?

LISA
Can we catch a break?

JACKIE TIME
When can anybody get a break around here? One. Two. Three.

JAMAL TIME
Can you stop your ticking for just one second? Four. Five. Six.

JACKIE TIME
Stop the clock— Seven. Eight.

LISA TIME
Turn back time— Nine. Ten.

JAMAL TIME
I’d bring everybody back— Eleven.

JACKIE TIME
But we can’t. Twelve.

LISA TIME
Time don’t care. Thirteen.

ALL TIME
Time ain’t gonna stop until somebody says enough. Fourteen.
Fifteen.

Silence.

TIME
“It’s Okay” by Anya Jiménez.



It's Okay

By Anya Jiménez

Characters

MOTHER: A middle-aged woman of any race.

VOICE: Young-spirited, omnipresent voice.

VOICES OF REPORTERS

Setting

A barren landscape in an unknown time.

Note

A slash (/) indicates where the next actor's line begins, so that it is overlapping with the previous person as they finish their line.

The four REPORTER voices can be done live or be pre-recorded.

#ENOUGH - Nationwide Reading - 3.7.2022 - Rehearsal Draft

It's Okay © Anya Jiménez **1 of 13**

In darkness, we hear noise. Lots of it. The insides of a grieving brain are dumped out onto a stage in the form of a wall of sound, replaying memories and soundbites simultaneously, endlessly—until it ends. A single spotlight breaks the darkness, illuminating MOTHER, a middle-aged woman, whose shaky breath is the only thing breaking the silence. The chair she sits in looks very worn, like a hard plastic chair you'd find in an elementary or middle school. Then, a youthful sounding voice:

VOICE

It's okay. It'll be okay.

MOTHER

(Masking her fear with false bravery.) Hello?

VOICE

Hi.

MOTHER

Who are you?

VOICE

Secret.

What? MOTHER

It's a secret. VOICE

I can't see you. MOTHER

That's okay. VOICE

No, it's not. Where are you? MOTHER

Here. VOICE

That's not what I mean. MOTHER

#ENOUGH - Nationwide Reading - 3.7.2022 - Rehearsal Draft
It's Okay © Anya Jiménez **2 of 13**

I'm here. VOICE

I'm serious. MOTHER

So am I. VOICE

Jesus Christ, can you just tell me where you are? MOTHER

No— VOICE

Then stay away from me because— MOTHER

I'm not here to hurt you. VOICE

A beat.

MOTHER
Can I see you? Please?

VOICE
What do I look like?

MOTHER
What?

VOICE
What do you want me to look like?

MOTHER
Well, I don't want you to look like anything but—

VOICE
Then I don't.

MOTHER
Don't what?

#ENOUGH - Nationwide Reading - 3.7.2022 - Rehearsal Draft
It's Okay © Anya Jiménez **3 of 13**

VOICE
Look like anything. *(Pause.)* You're safe. Pinky promise.

MOTHER pauses and softens. She gives up on the conversation, partially because she knows it'll just keep going in circles, and partially because she feels some slight, inexplicable feeling of comfort. She wipes her eyes and readjusts in her chair. The light shifts. A school bell sounds. It's been slightly distorted, but it's still recognizable.

MOTHER
Parent teacher conferences are this Thursday.

VOICE
Okay.

MOTHER
I feel like I'm supposed to tell you that.

VOICE

Okay.

MOTHER

She just reached reading level J. So...

She trails off. The school bell plays again.

Hello?

VOICE

I'm here.

A box of Annie's Mac and Cheese descends from the sky, floating down to MOTHER, tied to a string

And so is that.

MOTHER

I'm sorry, where am I?

VOICE

In a chair.

MOTHER

No, I got that, I mean where—

#ENOUGH - Nationwide Reading - 3.7.2022 - Rehearsal Draft
It's Okay © Anya Jiménez **4 of 13**

A spoon descends from the sky, also messily tied to a string, on the other side of MOTHER. MOTHER pauses.

Is this for the Mac and cheese?

VOICE

Yeah.

MOTHER

You can't just eat it straight out of the box, you have to cook it.

VOICE

You want me to cook it?

MOTHER

No, I'm just saying.

VOICE

Oh okay.

MOTHER

(Looking around, not particularly interested in the pasta.) Yeah, you have to cook the macaroni.

VOICE

With what?

MOTHER

A pot. Boiling water.

VOICE

Do you want those?

MOTHER

No, I'm—no, I'm good, I just— *(Examining the macaroni.)* You tie this string yourself?

VOICE

Yeah.

MOTHER

(Looking up at the seemingly endless ceiling.) Where does it come from?

VOICE

Michael's.

#ENOUGH - Nationwide Reading - 3.7.2022 - Rehearsal Draft
It's Okay © Anya Jiménez 5 of 13

MOTHER

You bought the string at Michael's?

VOICE

Yeah.

MOTHER

Like the craft store?

VOICE

Yeah.

MOTHER

You guys have a Michael's down here?

VOICE

No, not down here.

MOTHER

(Examining the string.) But what's it connected to?

VOICE

Oh. It just comes from Up.

MOTHER

Got it. *(Pause. She thinks.)* What else is up there?

VOICE

Whatever you want.

(Pause.)

MOTHER

I feel like I'm missing something.

VOICE

That's normal.

MOTHER

It is?

VOICE

It is.

#ENOUGH - Nationwide Reading - 3.7.2022 - Rehearsal Draft

It's Okay © Anya Jiménez **6 of 13**

MOTHER

Did something bad happen?

VOICE

You're safe.

MOTHER

That's not what I asked.

VOICE

I'm sorry.

It's okay, I'm not mad at you, I—
MOTHER

Thank you.
VOICE

What time is it?
MOTHER

(Slight pause.)

I don't know how to read clocks yet.
VOICE

What do you mean?
MOTHER

The big hand and the little hand. They fall apart when I look.
VOICE

What?
MOTHER

I look at the 12 and it hurts.
VOICE

I feel like...
MOTHER

Tell me, tell me.
VOICE

#ENOUGH - Nationwide Reading - 3.7.2022 - Rehearsal Draft
It's Okay © Anya Jiménez **7 of 13**

I feel like something is wrong.
MOTHER

I can put on some music if that would help you feel better.
VOICE

I don't know what I feel, I—
MOTHER

VOICE
You want to hear me sing?

MOTHER
I've heard that before.

VOICE
You've heard me sing?

MOTHER
No, the way you said it, I've heard—

VOICE
Lots of people like singing.

MOTHER gets up from her chair. She looks around the “room” again. MOTHER becomes more serious. VOICE does too. A cross between an apology and a warning:

There's not much out there.

MOTHER
(*A realization.*) When did I fall asleep last night?

VOICE
Ten and a half.

MOTHER
10:30?

VOICE
No, ten and a half, and eleven in sixth months.

MOTHER
How much more time before I wake up?

#ENOUGH - Nationwide Reading - 3.7.2022 - Rehearsal Draft
It's Okay © Anya Jiménez **8 of 13**

VOICE
You can stay as long as you want.

MOTHER
I don't want to stay.

Do you want to go? VOICE

I don't know. MOTHER

Okay. VOICE

Parent teacher conferences— MOTHER

(*With sympathy.*) Are canceled. VOICE

Because the school— MOTHER

You should sit back down. VOICE

Because the school— MOTHER

Please sit back down. VOICE

Because the school shut down. MOTHER

It's okay. VOICE

The school shut down because— MOTHER

The sound of news clips. It starts off with individual reporters, and eventually melds into a cacophony of layered news reports. as if someone is gradually raising the volume on an old TV.

#ENOUGH - Nationwide Reading - 3.7.2022 - Rehearsal Draft

It's Okay © Anya Jiménez **9 of 13**

REPORTER 1

Good afternoon, everyone. We are arriving live at the scene of the Dogwood Elementary

mass shooting—

REPORTER 3

It is now 2:19pm—

REPORTER 2

We are coming on the air at 2:36pm—

REPORTER 1

—where the shooter is still at large.

REPORTER 3

—and ten children appear to be in critical condition.

MOTHER

Can you turn that off / please?

REPORTER 2

Breaking news regarding the fatal shooting of seven young children / as well as three teachers.

REPORTER 4

The shooter's motives / are currently unknown.

MOTHER

Turn it off. (*Shouting, to VOICE.*) / Hello? Hello?

The reporters all speak over each other, the volume louder than before, the speech hardly intelligible.

REPORTER 1

More details to come on the fatal /

REPORTER 3

Dead at 10:26pm

MOTHER

(*Speaking over the noise.*) And three nights ago I made her mac and cheese

REPORTER 1

on the deadly /

#ENOUGH - Nationwide Reading - 3.7.2022 - Rehearsal Draft

It's Okay © Anya Jiménez 10 of 13

REPORTER 3

dead at 1:03am

MOTHER

and she went to bed

REPORTER 1

on the tragic /

REPORTER 3

dead at 4:32am

MOTHER

(*Emotional, crying.*) and woke up

REPORTER 1

on the gruesome /

REPORTER 3

dead at 8:07am

MOTHER

and breathed

REPORTER 3

dead at 11:12am

MOTHER

and went to school and died and how am I supposed to live with that?

The mac and cheese and spoon slowly start ascending.

REPORTER 1

We've counted three individuals taken out on stretchers—

REPORTER 3

Another shooting,

MOTHER

It shouldn't have happened

REPORTER 1

Four individuals.

We're running the numbers.	REPORTER 3
Five individuals.	REPORTER 1
Five children.	REPORTER 3
Six children shot and dead, shot and dead, shot and dead	REPORTER 2
It shouldn't have happened	MOTHER
Another gun,	REPORTER 2
Another shooting	REPORTER 3
It shouldn't have happened	MOTHER
thoughts	REPORTER 1
prayers	REPORTER 2
thoughts	REPORTER 1
and prayers	REPORTER 2
shot and dead	REPORTER 3
thoughts and prayers	REPORTER 2
shot and dead shot and dead shot and dead	REPORTER 3

REPORTER 4

and again and again and again and again and again

MOTHER

(Speaking over the reporters.) It shouldn't have happened.

The news suddenly stops. The silence is loud. MOTHER continues speaking, shouting the words out of her system as if they'll kill her if they stay inside of her.

And you think about what a body is, when it's in your hands and it used to be "her" but now it's "it" and it's heavy and it doesn't wake up and it shouldn't have happened but it did. And I'm still here. And she doesn't get to be.

And it just keeps coming.

She falls to the floor, buried by the weight of everything. She can't stand. She sobs. Then, to God, or to VOICE, or to anything that will listen:

How long until I wake up?

VOICE

You can take all the time you need.

She stays like this for a long time. VOICE starts humming to her, something comforting, adjacent to a nursery rhyme but not exactly. VOICE may pause occasionally in between notes to remember what comes next. Soft and distant, but warm. After a while, MOTHER can breathe again.

MOTHER

How many more?

VOICE

Too many.

MOTHER

Do you think it ever stops?

VOICE

Is it okay if I don't know?

MOTHER nods. A moment.

#ENOUGH - Nationwide Reading - 3.7.2022 - Rehearsal Draft

It's Okay © Anya Jiménez **13 of 13**

I miss her.

MOTHER

She knows.

VOICE

(*After a slight pause.*) Do you have a name?

MOTHER

Tiger.

VOICE

Tiger?

MOTHER

A well-loved stuffed tiger rolls to MOTHER's feet in a well-loved stroller or tricycle. If there are tassels, one should be ripped off. Maybe parts of it are discolored or scratched. Anything to indicate that a young child lived with it.

She wanted me to say hi.

VOICE

MOTHER grabs the stuffed animal and hugs it tight. She holds it close to her chest and kisses its forehead.

It's okay. It's okay.

MOTHER

Knowing that her daughter is with her, the lights go down on MOTHER. Blackout.

End of play.

#ENOUGH - Nationwide Reading - 3.7.2022 - Rehearsal Draft
Every Fifteen Minutes © Maggie Munday Odom - 7 of 11

Following “It’s Okay”

TIME

Welcome to America. Land of dreams and home of nightmares. Where every fifteen—

MOTHER

Stop. Please.

TIME pauses, taken aback.

TIME

Fourteen—

MOTHER TIME

Please. Not a reminder of all the time she’ll never— Thirteen. Twelve.

MOTHER

The ten and a half that won’t become

MOTHER TIME

Eleven. Eleven.

MOTHER

Just...stop the clock. I can’t stand the ticking.

*TIME pauses again, then holds up ten fingers. TIME counts down
silently on its fingers—*

Nine.

Eight.

Seven.

Six.

Five.

Four.

Three.

Two.

One.

TIME

“Southside Summer” by McKennzie Boyd.

#ENOUGH - Nationwide Reading - 3.7.2022 - Rehearsal Draft



Southside Summer

By McKennzie Boyd

Characters

EVA: Sister of Emmanuel and daughter of Joy. She has a somber and quiet nature, oftentimes speaking lyrically through her poetry and descriptions of her experiences.

JOY: Mother to Eva and Emmanuel. In addition to being a hard worker, she’s the constant rock of the family.

Setting

A cemetery.

Southside Summer © McKennzie Boyd **1 of 7**

At rise: A cemetery with flowers next to the headstones. Lights up on JOY and EVA dressed for a funeral.

EVA

I remember my first summer here on the Southside of the city. Between the music blaring from car windows and the police sirens, I was lucky if I could fall asleep and luckier if I could stay asleep. We grew up in Chicago. Never stayed in one place for too long before we landed on the South Side. We traveled from the Loop to the Back of the Yards. I loved seeing the different neighborhoods. I enjoyed seeing the city. I remember going downtown on winter break to get lost in the lights shining from the building on Michigan Ave... Each light felt like a spirit threaded and weaved into a blanket over its people. But the one sense of familiarity was how we always found that the only thing higher than the skyscrapers was the rent. *(Chuckles.)* My brother always thought I was funny when I said that.

EVA/JOY

His name was Emmanuel.

JOY

(Stomps.) Born August 18, 2009. Black boy, skin as dark as coffee beans and burnt tobacco root His hair a jungle gym of knots and coconut oil
His knees; scarred and bruised because some time ago, he convinced himself his feet would turn into wings that would take him anywhere if he jumped high enough.

EVA and JOY stomp.

A year ago, Emmanuel, Eva, and I settled in a white house with missing shingles and a door that never seemed to lock no matter how hard or how many times we tried. It was cheap and dingy, but Manny's eyes lit up each time we drove past it. Emmanuel loved running around the new house, staring out at the world before him. Everyday during the summer, he'd watch the other kids play. Occasionally asking me if he could go outside, though he knew I would say, "No, it's not safe, maybe tomorrow." He probably wanted to test his "wings." Running through the house and jumping down the stairs in hopes of reaching the end without grazing the creaky boards, forever attached to the same painful fate of realizing he, unlike most birds, couldn't fly. Well, at least not high enough to grab the clouds or dunk a basketball.

EVA

He'd wait outside, stalling his daily chore of taking out the trash, wondering when or how the other boys got their wings. How they learned how to fly. I didn't know the kids in my neighborhood too well. I watched them play horse in the street till their hands were dirty with sand and gravel. When the cars came, they'd always sprint to the sidewalk and pretend the ground was lava. *(Laughs.)* But one day...they sat on their porch in silence like they really believed it was.

#ENOUGH - Nationwide Reading - 3.7.2022 - Rehearsal Draft
Southside Summer © McKennzie Boyd 2 of 7

JOY

(Stomps.) The boys were holding back tears for a kid they even didn't know. One of them gave me their sneakers. As strange as it may sound, I held those tattering shoes to my chest, craving the heavenly embrace of their budding wings.

EVA

(Stomps.) I sat and watched the other kids on the block from my window run up and down the street, playing basketball, lighting fireworks long past any deemable holiday, or walking to the corner store for slushies and candy and nachos long past when the street lights debuted. I wondered...did their minds ever race—hands sweat—stomachs churn and knot themselves? Did they go inside their houses and lock the door and unlock it and relock it again...just to make sure it was locked the first time?

JOY

I've messed with the locks till my hands and lips finally stopped quivering. Till I knew whether to run as far away from the door as I could or to push up against it in hopes of keeping the madness out. I mean, a shooting happens on the block over, yet they still smile and laugh as if the night will never end, enjoying the music blasting from cars down the street, not afraid that they will be caught in the crossfire? Which makes me ask: Do I need to be afraid? Does— *(Half a beat.)* Did Emmanuel need to be afraid?

JOY stomps.

The first gunshot.

EVA

I can't forget that day.... Bullets dropping like rain leaving clouds of smoke to cover us.... So we started our game.

JOY

(Stomps.) The second gunshot.

EVA

We ducked down behind the cars, camouflaging, praying that the lives they claim won't be ours. And the streets become no man's land

Where there is nothing but blood sand that covers our prayer hands.

The young kids stayed quiet, believing they were playing hide and seek and tag at the same time. When they heard to run, they dashed, laughing softly to themselves.

Some of them would cry, being frightened by the noise but we knew there was no choice but to wait till we be able to rejoice. Till they were told the game was over.

When minutes unexplainably feel like seconds and days all at the same time.... Telling a story so purely corrupt that could be told without a spoken word. Manny hid under Mr. Wilson's truck. No one could find him. It was as if his body had become one with the asphalt pressed up against

#ENOUGH - Nationwide Reading - 3.7.2022 - Rehearsal Draft
Southside Summer © McKennzie Boyd 3 of 7

him.

JOY

(Stomps.) The third.

I couldn't find him... when the shots seemed like they'd stopped I called out his name amid

the putrid fog that tainted the wisps of air still trapped in my lungs. (*Calling.*) Emmanuel?
Emmanuel?

EVA

And before my eyes, a shadow rose from the street, dragged by its host to the foreseeable doom. It was Emmanuel.

He ran.

Just like I taught him.

I don't quite know if he ever did understand the games we played.

JOY

Then, I saw him, hoping his wings would emerge and carry him to that white house. My breath was no longer rhythmic. It came out in stammers filled with the same panic that pulled Emmanuel into the crossfire. Maybe he thought it was time to test his wings. I never got to ask him that.

JOY stomps.

He was scared... he had to be.

Yelling and screaming that could be heard from a mile away, until another bullet ripped through the blue to challenge the beaming sun and steal the breath from all under it. I plugged my ears when I heard them scream....

EVA

I could hear footsteps coming near the car as if to mock our fear, as if to frighten us even more. And then he...HE was there.

Stalking the block like the Grim Reaper, with faint static through his radio. He was a bounty hunter in search of black souls to petrify while he laughs in our faces, tears in our eyes.

JOY

I yelled to him: Get down! Manny, get down!

EVA stomps four times. Half beat.

Here lies a story from our black youth... for Emmanuel...

and every other brown-skinned baby put to death.

With a gun to his head rather than books in his hands

Fingertips against the dashboard rather than a blackboard

Being treated like the main attraction when he should be adding fractions, #ENOUGH - Nationwide

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dividing, and subtraction.

This country leave black boys going to more funerals than birthdays. They said he was resisting.

EVA

When he was just insisting that he's just a black man in America, "the land of the free."

JOY

When instead he's been shackled from his neck to his feet
Seeing if he can deplete the number of black babies meeting their bittersweet
relief. Spend more time praying on their knees, making their final pleas,
when they should be out there, getting their degrees.

EVA

His death was unjustified, blood dried where they collide on our porch side, where his momma
cried and screamed -

JOY

God. Why!?

EVA

When her baby boy's fate was sealed.
And my mom, I can hear her curse herself.
Every day she opens that door, a tear would fall from her eyes.
Feeling as though she had euthanized, paralyzed, petrified, terrified them. Because now our
hearts race, keeping pace to face the unforgiving, unloving, deceptive world... that would make
her kids cry the same way she did. Or worse... fight back the way she wanted to.

EVA stomps.

They deny and deny his death worldwide, without a sliver of repentance,
his melanin convicted, a premature death sentence!
Cuz until they stop, things will never change
Mistake a playground for a gun range
Unleashing a rampage
Till the courtroom becomes their center stage
Where their crocodile tears will keep them from the cage

JOY

A historical pattern in this day and age
Read the same old book
But reading the same damn page
They need field trips and play dates
Not uzis and AKs

EVA and JOY stomp.

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EVA

My brother didn't deserve it! He...none of them did...and I raise my voice because you need to understand and listen to my demands!

JOY/EVA

Please listen to me!

EVA

He just kept running towards that stupid white house. And I don't know why or maybe I do and can't accept that this was my fault. It was my fault - I told him to run I did, oh god, I did! I made him believe that he had wings. That they would take him anywhere he need to go. That they would protect him!

JOY runs over and holds EVA as she collapses, consumed with sadness and anger.

And he just threw him to the ground like he was—

EVA/JOY

Just another black boy.

EVA

Slug life

EVA stomps.

Like a cancer
The bigger the barrel, the more terminal
The everyday feeling of your mortality walks beside you
as you try to
hide
from the danger cries
and lies of life
itself.

Not knowing if the world's slimy and calloused hand will pull you in its embrace and steal you from the world that didn't love you anyway.
I remember when he

JOY

He said

JOY/EVA

Put your hands up!

He said

EVA

Don't move or I'll—

EVA/JOY

EVA and JOY stomp on the ground 3 times in sync.

(scream) No, no, no!

Silence.

He wasn't resisting.

JOY

(Imitates officer.) Stop resisting!

EVA

He would never take a stand, 6 feet deep in the land.

JOY

They didn't even—

EVA

Say his name!

EVA/JOY

They called him a casualty....
They said our case was time-consuming

EVA

Too expensive

JOY

Probably wouldn't win anyway.

EVA

Worthless.
Manny! My boy, my angel.

JOY

(Quiet.) Come home. I know he can't, or maybe he can. Maybe he finally grew his wings.

EVA

Draft

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(Beat.) Mom cries every day now. Staring at that spot in the street where her baby's body lay.

JOY

I'm jealous that the pavement got to cradle my baby in his dying breath instead of me. My baby...died a casualty. A nameless corpse forever damned to stalk heaven, not knowing the name we bless and call out or wave to us on every birthday this world stole from him.

Not

knowing that his name will be trapped within our lungs, aching and constricting when we dare utter

EVA/JOY

Emmanuel.

EVA

He can't tell us he loves us too.

JOY

Black boy, skin as dark as gunpowder, blood as thick as thin can leave the body, painfully slow. Black hair mixed with coconut oil and gravel, shirt stained with a red mess that may never be removed, eyes forever closed. Our black boy...why?

EVA

And now, I see Emmanuel downtown amongst the lights. In his beaming glory...adding a new thread to the quilt of spirits...maybe...maybe to shield the others and give them the chance to understand what he wasn't allowed to in his last Southside summer.

*JOY and EVA place the shoes by the headstone next to the flowers.
Blackout.*

End of play.

Following “Southside Summer”

ALL

Welcome to America. Land of sunrises and suns—

TIME

(interrupting) Where every fifteen minutes, a person is killed with a gun. One.

EVA

No happy end—

TIME

Two. Three.

JOY

Two words: “Black bo—”

TIME

Four. Five.

EVA

Three words: “I love y—”

TIME

SIX. SEVEN. EIGHT.

JOY

His name was—

TIME

NINE. TEN. ELEVEN.

EVA

His name was Emm—

TIME

TWELVE! THIRTEEN! FOURTEEN!

JOY / EVA

HIS NAME WAS EMMANUEL.

TIME

FIFTEEN!!

Breathless silence. Time recomposes itself.

TIME

“Undo, Redo” by Cameron Thiesing.

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Undo, Redo

By Cameron Thiesing

Characters

PRESENT CAROLINE: A junior in high school, 17.

PAST CAROLINE: A junior in high school, 17.

RACHEL: A junior in high school, 16.

GUNMAN: A senior in high school, 18.

Setting

A locker-lined school hallway.

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A school hallway. Lockers line the wall. Harsh fluorescent lights. It's the end of the week. Sound of a bustling hallway. Anticipation fills the air; there is a football game tonight. PAST CAROLINE and RACHEL enter. They have their backpacks. PAST CAROLINE is holding a folder.

PAST CAROLINE

Listen, it's a cute outfit! Believe me, would I steer you wrong?

RACHEL

Well you let me wear those leggings with Justin Bieber's face all over them in fifth grade.

PAST CAROLINE

Omg I remember that! Those were hilarious!

PAST CAROLINE opens her locker and puts a folder in it.

RACHEL

That was my all time low. I wore better outfits in kindergarten.

PAST CAROLINE

Ok well to be fair everyone was obsessed with him in fifth grade, so I wasn't really steering you wrong. But I'm telling you that outfit will be perfect for tonight.

RACHEL

Oh about that, my dad just told me today that he has to work tonight. So we don't have a ride to the tailgate.

PAST CAROLINE

What!? But that's like a once in a lifetime opportunity! It's not everyday an underclassman gets invited to a senior tailgate.

RACHEL

I know! It sucks, I was looking forward to it.

PAST CAROLINE

Well, could your mom take us?

RACHEL

She's got tennis, she can't.

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PAST CAROLINE

Ugh, but that tailgate sounds so fun.

RACHEL

Could one of your parents take us?

PAST CAROLINE

Maybe. They'll probably just complain about my grades if I try to ask them.

PAST CAROLINE searches for a pencil in her locker and RACHEL hears a shout. She looks stage left.

RACHEL

Dude, who is that kid?

PAST CAROLINE

Hm?

GUNMAN enters stage left. We can't quite make out his face, but he doesn't fit the trenchcoat-wearing trope. He looks like any normal kid.

RACHEL

That kid. Why's he... Oh God.

GUNMAN raises his arm as if he is holding a gun that we don't see, aiming at an unseen student.

PAST CAROLINE

What, is he cute?

RACHEL

No Caroline, there's- he's

PAST CAROLINE

Rach?

PAST CAROLINE closes the locker door as she goes to look.

The GUNMAN suddenly changes direction and focuses his attention on RACHEL. He points his arm towards RACHEL.

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RACHEL turns back towards PAST CAROLINE and they are almost face to face.

A low rumble, the lights flicker and then -

PRESENT CAROLINE (*offstage*)

Stop!

The lights stop flickering, but are different.

PAST CAROLINE, RACHEL, and the GUNMAN assume neutral poses.

PRESENT CAROLINE enters. She's wearing the same clothes as PAST CAROLINE, but her clothes are rumpled and there are blood stains on them. She stands at a distance, surveying the scene.

Right there, stop. Alright let's see. We're going to change this up. Undo.

The GUNMAN exits. PAST CAROLINE and RACHEL reset to just before the GUNMAN enters: PAST CAROLINE at her open locker, RACHEL standing stage left of her, with her back to the GUNMAN.

Maybe... Let's try this. This time Caroline you step away from the locker. Stand in front of Rachel instead. (To PAST CAROLINE) Start from "well could your mom take us."

PAST CAROLINE steps away from the locker and in front of RACHEL, now blocking RACHEL's view of stage left.

Ready? And...Redo.

Lights shift to as they were at the top.

PAST CAROLINE

Well, could your mom take us?

RACHEL

She's got tennis, she can't.

PAST CAROLINE

Ugh, but that tailgate sounds so fun.

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RACHEL

Could one of your parents take us?

PAST CAROLINE

Maybe. They'll probably just complain about my grades if I try to ask them.

PAST CAROLINE moves away from RACHEL and to her locker and searches for a pencil. RACHEL hears a shout. She looks stage left.

RACHEL

Dude, who is that kid?

PAST CAROLINE

Hm?

GUNMAN enters stage left.

RACHEL

That kid. Why's he... Oh God.

GUNMAN raises his arm, aiming at an unseen student.

PAST CAROLINE

What, is he cute?

RACHEL

No Caroline, there's- he's

PAST CAROLINE

Rach?

PAST CAROLINE closes the locker door as she goes to look.

Again, the GUNMAN suddenly changes direction and focuses his attention on RACHEL. He points his arm towards RACHEL. RACHEL turns back towards PAST CAROLINE and they are almost face to face.

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A low rumble, the lights flicker and then -

PRESENT CAROLINE

Stop!

Lights shift. The three revert to neutral (and will continue to do so for this command).

No! You did it wrong! (To PAST CAROLINE) You weren't supposed to move. You've got to listen.

Pause.

Undo

The GUNMAN exits. RACHEL and PAST CAROLINE go back to their starting positions.

-we'll try it again. We've got to change it. Caroline, you start in front of her again. No more in front, You've got to block her. To the left - no, no! Listen TO ME!

PRESENT CAROLINE enters the scene. She guides PAST CAROLINE to the place where she wants her.

Here. In front of her

She makes another adjustment to PAST CAROLINE's position.

There. *(Sternly to PAST CAROLINE)* Don't. Move. Start again, from "dude, who is that kid."*(Then)* And one more thing: this time...this time I don't go to my locker at all. Redo.

Lights go back to normal.

RACHEL

Dude, who is that kid?

PAST CAROLINE

Hm?

Gunman enters stage left.

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