



MONOLOGUES

This monologue is from a Stage Partners play, free to read in full at yourstagepartners.com.

8 Minutes Left by e.b. lee

(The world is coming to an end at exactly 4:44PM today, and no one has had any time to prepare. 8 Minutes Left follows the residents of Charlesville, NJ as they navigate their final moments on this Earth.)

(VIOLA stands near a bench center stage, looking out. There may be a faint sound of no more than two children at play at an unseen playground.)

VIOLA

So this is what it's like to finally get on the swing, no wait, no stress, huh. The jockeying for position, "Go go go! Hurry and run, there's an open swing!" and then the pretend graciousness, "No, no, you go ahead, we just got here." And then from the time your butt hits that seat, boy, the clock's already ticking. I'm basically just calling out, "Five minutes, okay? There's a lot of kids waiting their turn," every thirty seconds.

Those other moms, shooting daggers into the back of my head, counting down the time until theirs has a meltdown.

I'm a weekend mom. Maybe the weekday moms have the swings to themselves all day, every day, I don't know. But weekends are a rogue battlefield.

And we run like fire's chasing us because we all know, once you get on, you're on kid time—no beginning no end. It's never just five minutes.

(To her kids, who think she's talking to them:)

No, honey. There's nobody else but us. Swing all you want.

(Back to herself:)

This is what it takes to be alone out here, the whole park to ourselves. I whipped over so fast, I could have taken out those damn squirrels. They barely blinked and looked at me like, "This crazy lady. You better at least have some veggie straws and fruit snacks, ma'am." Attacking my bag when I set it down.

Well, have at it, you suburban rats!

Aggressive to the end.

(VIOLA sits down on the bench, tilts her head up slightly, shields her eyes from the sun.)

I want to feel everything, just as it is now. This warmth.

Look at the way their little legs kick up to the sky.

I remember thinking that if I swung hard enough, I could touch the sun. But then gravity would pull you back, the chain links would pinch your skin. That smell of rusted metal, dirt and gravel on your knees when you had to jump off at the sound of a whistle. For a moment, it felt like flying.



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Third grade was when I learned that the sun was dying, that one day it would explode. That even now, we are hurtling through space, around the dying sun, at 60, what is it—67,000 miles an hour. So fast, always moving...it seems precarious. Incomprehensible. It seems... impossible. I raised my hand so fast and asked Mrs. Cherry, "And what will happen to us?" And she gave a thoughtful little pause, and said, "There won't be an 'us', there won't be a 'you', there won't be a 'me'."

She said much quieter, "But there's now. None of us live forever."

What kind of kid would hear that, though?

There's no forever?

One day, this will all be...gone? Me? Gone?

I couldn't sleep for weeks. I kept waking up in a panic, a cold sweat. I think about that a lot. After that, I was always moving forward in time—what's next, what's next? At breakfast, what's for lunch? At lunch, what's for dinner? Then, it grew larger and larger. What about next week, next month, next year, five years from now, ten years from now.

Then, the insomnia.

If I fall asleep, will I wake up? What if I do everything exactly right, always staying ahead, only to find out that it was all wrong?

The worry, always the worry. That's what fills my days. The next thing, and the next.

And now.

It's now.

(To the kids:)

Don't climb that! That's not for climbing! You'll break your arms and then what, we have to go to the hospital? The swings are all yours and this is what you want to do? And you followed because your sister did it?

Okay, yeah. Go back to the swings. Good idea.

(Back to herself:)

These kids.

Fearless. They don't know what it means to fall from high. Not really.

(Pause.)

What am I doing? I can't even let them just...*be*. Even now.

(Pause.)

67,000 miles per hour.

This life...if I just, stay still. Like this.

If I just stop.

I can see everything.

The whole world.

(She watches them for a long moment.)



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When the nurse placed you both in my arms, I knew. I knew the two of you would always look out for one another, my Yuri, my Yumi. You breathed in unison, you cried in unison. And when you laughed—I was not prepared for the joy it brought me, the way it would lift me up. No matter how hard my day had been, everything bad didn't take up any space in my mind anymore. All there was, was us three.

You two taught me so much. You two made me the person I am. More than just a mother. You opened my world up to the smallest delights. Like this. Having the swings to yourself on a beautiful spring day.

Giving me a heart attack when you scale the fence like these damn squirrels.

I think about all the "you" you could be.

Brave and bold and kind.

You change my world, just by existing.

You make it a little less cruel.

You would have made it a little less cruel for all of us.

(Beat.)

Guess I won't get to see the "me" I could be, too.

Maybe I'd be more patient, more relaxed, more fun. Become a better version of me.

Maybe I would have learned to stop rushing you both so much—to get to the next karate lesson, to the next soccer practice, to get through homework, to dinner, to bath, to bed, to keep moving on to the next thing.

I was always pushing you ahead, in time, to grow up. Why?

I couldn't fill the blank spaces on the planner fast enough. Every moment of every day.

Keep going.

Fill your life with purpose.

Why couldn't I just have...done this? Felt the sun on my face, pulled you both to me, breathed you in, pressed your cheeks to mine...

(To her kids, but they don't hear her:)

I'm sorry, my loves. I wish I could have given you more. You deserved so much more.

More time to grow into your lives.

(Determined, stands up.)

No. I'm not going to do that.

I'll just move a little closer now. I'll stand here, I'll watch.

I want this, right now.

Just so.

Just exactly so.



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Without any cruelty, without any lines of pushy parents behind us, without any whining kids in front of us. You'll swing, higher and higher, I'll push you, I'll let the chains twist while you both squeal. Maybe you'll think, "Our mother, she's fun today!"

(She moves closer to them.)

And I'll have to lie to you once more my loves, I'm very sorry for that.

I'll say, "Let's go get some bubble tea and a bagel, let's stay up all night and watch a movie tonight, let's read under the covers until our eyes hurt."

And then I'll run my finger down the bridges of your noses, kiss the tops of your heads, wait and listen to the sweet sound of your sleep. I'll feel the warmth of being snuggled between the two of you, my loves. My heart.

All your favorite things. All my favorite things.

There isn't enough time to do all that, of course.

There never is enough time, is there.

(She looks at her watch.)

Eight more minutes. *(A sigh.)*

(She composes herself, puts on a bright smile. To her kids:)

Okay, hold on. I'm coming. Close your eyes, hold on tight.

Ready? Pump those legs. Lean back.

Get ready to fly.

(The lights dim.)

8 MINUTES LEFT by e.b. lee

Length: 90-100 minutes

Cast Size: 7-22 actors (suggested casting: 5F, 5M, 5 any)

Genre: Dramedy

Synopsis: The world is coming to an end at exactly 4:44PM today, and no one has had any time to prepare. *8 Minutes Left* follows the residents of Charlesville, NJ as they navigate their final moments on this Earth – from a couple with a bunker in their backyard who can't quite figure out how to get in, to two elderly frenemies who fight over their favorite park bench, to a mother observing her children on a playground as she wonders what their lives would have become, this thoughtful and keenly observed play manages to find the intimate humor of humans in crisis.