

Five Minutes Fast

Act One

Scene 1

Philippa is standing by the door, looking out, and glancing at her watch. She is obviously waiting for someone.

The phone rings. Philippa looks at it and ignores it. It stops.

A train announcement is heard.

TRAIN. The next train to arrive at Platform 4 is the 9.15 to Huddersfield, calling at Ashton under Lyne, Stalybridge, Mossley, Greenfield, Marsden, Slaithwaite and Huddersfield. Due to arrive in Huddersfield at 10.05.

Philippa tuts at her watch, keeps looking out.

She spots someone, and immediately makes herself busy, tidying a shelf, and sorting out boxes. She picks up the phone...

PHILIPPA. Well, as I say. I'll have a good look for you, but no promises...

Keeley comes in, pushing a bike, safety helmet and coat on, carrying carrier bag and phone.

It's important to sense that Keeley and Philippa really don't get on well, and seemingly have very little in common.

...and if I do...

KEELEY. Chuffin' traffic, soddin' roadworks, flamin' drivers...

PHILIPPA. I'm on the phone, Keeley.

KEELEY. Bloody hell.

PHILIPPA. OK, will do. And thank you for calling.

She hangs up.

You're late.

KEELEY. They ought to retake their tests every year.

PHILIPPA. Who?

KEELEY. Car drivers. Taxi drivers. Bus drivers. All drivers. Every year.

PHILIPPA. Do you know what time it is?

KEELEY. About five past nine. No, every 6 months, until they learn to indicate.

PHILIPPA. You do realise you're late, do you?

KEELEY. Only 5 minutes, Philippa. Don't start.

PHILIPPA. I've been up to my eyes in it already.

KEELEY. Oh, please!

PHILIPPA. You don't realise how much there is to do when you're on your own. That phone's never stopped. And you know very well Sheila's due in, and there's no way I'm covering for you again.

KEELEY. Stop stressing. She's not here yet, is she? Anyway...

PHILIPPA. That's not the point.

KEELEY. Anyway, I'm late cos of this creep on the roundabout. Mobile in one hand. Cigarette in the other. Didn't indicate. Swapped lanes. Almost caused 3 accidents that I saw. Dickhead. I took a photo.

Shows Philippa her phone.

You can't make out the registration, but you can see the car clear enough. It's a silver one.

PHILIPPA. That's plenty to go on then.

KEELEY. It's about time more was done to stop shit drivers. Especially those who don't indicate.

PHILIPPA. You writing it all down in your 'manifesto'?

KEELEY. Too right. Along with a full account of the gesture he made when I blew my horn at him.

PHILIPPA. You shouldn't carry that horn around.

Keeley produces large horn

KEELEY. Sometimes it's the only way people know I'm there.

She honks it loudly.

PHILIPPA. Keeley!

KEELEY. Everyone should be made to ride a bike for a day. See what it's like. Would cut down on the amount of cars on the road for a start. I've a good mind to get me traffic warden costume out again.

PHILIPPA. You can't go round pretending to be a traffic warden. You'll get into trouble.

KEELEY. Nah.

PHILIPPA. And you can't leave your bike there.

KEELEY. Are you going to state the bleeding obvious all day? I know I can't leave it there. I'm going to move it to just in front of the door. Will that be OK? Might stop anyone coming in.

PHILIPPA. If Sheila sees it...

KEELEY. What time's the bossy cow coming?

PHILIPPA. You really shouldn't...

KEELEY. Don't pretend you don't call her that.

PHILIPPA. I most certainly do not. And she didn't say an exact time, just told us to expect a visit first thing this morning.

KEELEY. That's the 5th visit this month. We are honoured. Summat's definitely up. Must be. Bet they're closing us down.

PHILIPPA. If they do, it'll be because of your tardiness.

KEELEY. Tardiness?

PHILIPPA. You know what I mean. You don't take this job seriously at all.

KEELEY. Can you blame me? So, has it been busy then?

PHILIPPA. Nobody yet. Lots to sort out though.

KEELEY. I'll just get rid of these and we'll make a start.

Keeley goes to outer room, to take her bike in, hang up her coat, etc.

PHILIPPA. There's still these boxes you left from last week.

KEELEY. *(off)* I left? I like that.

PHILIPPA. Well, I did keep asking you last time you were in.

KEELEY. *(off)* Yes, I know. I was hoping they'd have magically vanished by now.

PHILIPPA. No such luck.

A train announcement is heard. Keeley re-enters during this.

TRAIN. This is a platform alteration, a platform alteration. The 9.19 to Wigan will now depart from Platform 3b. The 9.19 to Wigan will now depart from Platform 3b.

KEELEY. There goes the mad dash from Platform 1a to Platform 3b. They're so funny. Why do they rush? Do they think it's going to go without them?

PHILIPPA. There's been some major cock-up with the trains to Bolton. Everything delayed. And there's a load of platform alterations because of it. Are you going to stare out the window all day, or are you going to help me with these boxes?

KEELEY. Stare, I think. Oh go on then, pass us a box.

They both start sorting out boxes.

A train announcement is heard.

TRAIN. This is a customer announcement, a customer announcement. The 8.55 to Bolton is running approximately 15, that's 1-5 minutes late. Please listen out for further announcements.

PHILIPPA. That means it won't be coming at all.

KEELEY. Why don't they just say that? I hate it when people are misinformed. That's going in my book. Much better to have the truth and deal with it.

Keeley writes in her book.

PHILIPPA. What, always?

KEELEY. Yes, I think so. In the long run. Anyway, do we have to have that thing on all day?

PHILIPPA. You know we do.

KEELEY. Turn it off for a bit. I'll turn it back on when Sheila comes. Let's have some music while we work. Where's that radio?

PHILIPPA. Wherever you put it last.

KEELEY. Anybody been to claim it?

PHILIPPA. When does anybody ever come and claim anything? Oh, I wish something would HAPPEN today. Something good.

There is the sound of a clock ticking or striking, not too loud, but noticeable.

KEELEY. Be careful what you wish for, my nan used to say. Before she went completely doolally.

Philippa brings out a watch from the box.

PHILIPPA. Oh look at this.

KEELEY. What is it?

PHILIPPA. A watch. Decent one, for a change.

KEELEY. Hey, that is nice.

PHILIPPA. Someone's going to be really missing this.

KEELEY. Would suit you that.

PHILIPPA. Isn't it a bit big?

KEELEY. Not with your arms. Try it on.

PHILIPPA. Really nice clear face, I like that. None of this arty nonsense guessing where the numbers are.

KEELEY. You're so old-fashioned.

PHILIPPA. I'm not - just know what I like.

She puts on the watch.

What do you think?

KEELEY. Told you it would suit you. If no-one comes for it., I'd keep it.

PHILIPPA. Oh, couldn't. It's not allowed. Bet it's worth a bob or two.

KEELEY. They shouldn't have left it on the train then. What train was it?

PHILIPPA. 3.30 Liverpool. So probably knock-off.

KEELEY. Pip!

PHILIPPA. I only said probably.

A train announcement is heard.

TRAIN. The train at the departure end of Platform 1 is the...

Keeley switches off the tannoy.

KEELEY. Best thing I ever did, finding out how to turn that thing off. Where's the radio?

PHILIPPA. We're not having the radio on. You know the rules. If Sheila came in now...

Keeley produces radio. She switches it on, loud.

Running Up That Hill by Kate Bush is played.

Philippa turns the volume down.

KEELEY Oooh, we like a bit of Bush in the morning.

PHILIPPA. I'm surprised you know who she is.

KEELEY. My old man loves her. Think it was a crush he never grew out of.

PHILIPPA. One of her classics. 1985.

KEELEY. God, that's years ago.

PHILIPPA. Our Steven was doing his 'O' Levels.

KEELEY. Like I said, years ago! My dad played it to Sean once. He thought she sounded mad, which she probably is.

PHILIPPA. Who's Sean?

KEELEY. Sean, my new boyfriend, Sean. I told you about him. The one who's always going on at me to apply for University.

PHILIPPA. Perhaps he's got a point.

KEELEY. Yeh, like I want to do more studying and get into debt.

PHILIPPA. It's not all about that. Wouldn't do you harm to get a bit more education.

KEELEY. What's that supposed to mean?

PHILIPPA. You might enjoy it. Might even buck you up.

KEELEY. I'm bucked up, thank you, now buck off!

She turns volume back up and sings along for a short time.

Music stops and DJ announces record.

I'm going to put the kettle on.

PHILIPPA. You haven't done any work yet!

KEELEY. I'm sure there'll be plenty for me when I get back.

Keeley goes. Philippa turns off the radio.

PHILIPPA. Sheila'll kill us.

KEELEY. *(off)* Whatever we do will be wrong, so we might as well not do anything.

PHILIPPA. I know, it's just... I want to do well. I like working. I like working here. It suits me. As does this watch.

KEELEY. *(off)* It's nice.

PHILIPPA. Bit fast mind.

She winds the watch back. There is a 'lurch' – in other words, something happens, a noise, a light change, a shudder in the universe.

Oooh. Did you feel that? My tummy just turned. Keeley? Keeley?

Keeley enters.

KEELEY. What?

PHILIPPA. My tummy just did a summersault. Did you feel it?

KEELEY. Why would I feel your tummy?

PHILIPPA. No, it was a sort of lurch. Like the whole place did a jolt...

A train announcement is heard.

TRAIN. This is a platform alteration, a platform alteration. The 9.19 to Wigan will now depart from Platform 3b. The 9.19 to Wigan will now depart from Platform 3b.

PHILIPPA. When did you turn that back on?

KEELEY. I never turned it off.

PHILIPPA. You did, just before you went to put the kettle on.

KEELEY. I haven't put the kettle on. But it's a good idea.

PHILIPPA. Keeley – you just went out to put the kettle on.

KEELEY. Er, no. I just went out to hang my hat and coat up, and put my bike away before you had an eppy.

A train announcement is heard.

TRAIN. This is a customer announcement, a customer announcement. The 8.55 to Bolton is running approximately 15, that's 1-5 minutes late. Please listen out for further announcements.

PHILIPPA. He's just made that announcement.

KEELEY. Who has?

PHILIPPA. Stan. He's just said that.

KEELEY. When?

PHILIPPA. Just now. He's repeating himself.

KEELEY. What are you talking about?

PHILIPPA. You just heard it. It's the same announcement he made 5 minutes ago.

KEELEY. While I was making the tea?

PHILIPPA. You weren't making the tea then. You were in here listening to it with me.

KEELEY. Has Danny Boy been slipping something in your Horlicks?

PHILIPPA. Don't be silly. I know what I heard. These were all said before you went to put the kettle on.

Philippa looks at her watch

KEELEY. Is this just a hint for me to brew up? Hey, new watch?

PHILIPPA. What?

KEELEY. Is that a new watch?

PHILIPPA. You know it is.

KEELEY. How do I know it is?

PHILIPPA. You saw me find it.

KEELEY. Where did you find it?

PHILIPPA. In one of those boxes.

KEELEY. When?

PHILIPPA. This morning.

KEELEY. I've never seen it before in my life.

PHILIPPA. You have, you told me it suited me.

KEELEY. It does suit you, especially with your big arms, but I've never seen it before.

PHILIPPA. You have, I put it on, and said how clear the numbers are...

KEELEY. Was this before or after Stan made the same announcement twice and I put the kettle on?

PHILIPPA. Before.

KEELEY. Pip, love, you've lost it...

TRAIN. The train at the departure end of Platform 1 is the...

Keeley switches off the tannoy.

KEELEY. That's enough of that for one day.

PHILIPPA. You did it again.

KEELEY. You know I hate that thing in my ear all day. Let's put the radio on.

PHILIPPA. We had it on.

KEELEY. Of course we did. When you found the watch, and I put the kettle on, and Stan repeated the same...

PHILIPPA. Kate Bush.

KEELEY. What about her?

PHILIPPA. That's who was playing. Running Up That Hill. One of your dad's favourites.

KEELEY. She was. Still is. How did you know that?

PHILIPPA. You mentioned it before.

KEELEY. Well, one of us is going crackers, that's for sure.

Philippa puts the radio on. Running Up That Hill by Kate Bush is played.

PHILIPPA. He's playing the same record.

KEELEY. What are the odds?

PHILIPPA. He's playing the same record.

KEELEY. I know. Hope Dad's listening. He loves this.

PHILIPPA. He's playing the same record.

KEELEY. I think you are an' all. Pull yourself together, Philippa. We've lots to do. Think I WILL put that kettle on.

Keeley goes.

Philippa listens to radio. Music stops. DJ announces record.

Philippa switches off the radio. Stares. Thinks. Looks at her watch.

She winds it back. There is a lurch.

Keeley enters.

A train announcement is heard.

TRAIN. This is a platform alteration, a platform alteration. The 9.19 to Wigan will now depart from Platform 3b. The 9.19 to Wigan will now depart from Platform 3b.

PHILIPPA. There, there it is again. You must have heard it this time!

KEELEY. Heard what?

PHILIPPA. Stan. He's saying the same announcement. That's the 3rd time. Must be a recording.

KEELEY. Why would they have a recording of Stan doing all today's announcements? They don't know which trains are going to be delayed, or what the platform changes are. Mind you, as it's usually most of them, they can take a pretty good guess.

PHILIPPA. Do you like this watch?

KEELEY. Hey, it's right glam, is that? Very you. And the numbers are dead easy to read.

PHILIPPA. You promise you're not taking the wotsit?

KEELEY. Course not. It's great.

A train announcement is heard.

TRAIN. This is a customer announcement, a customer announcement. The 8.55 to Bolton is running approximately 15, that's 1-5 minutes late. Please listen out for further announcements.

PHILIPPA. What time do you make it?

KEELEY. You're the one with the fancy new watch.

PHILIPPA. Want to make sure it's the right time.

KEELEY. Ten past 9. See, only 5 minutes late.

PHILIPPA. And how long have you been here?

KEELEY. I've just got here.

PHILIPPA. Have we had the radio on this morning?

KEELEY. Here, you mean?

PHILIPPA. Yes.

KEELEY. Not that I know of. Not yet anyway.

PHILIPPA. Not heard any Kate Bush lately?

KEELEY. No. Funny. My dad used to love Kate Bush. Still goes a bit goopy-eyed when they show her old stuff on telly.

PHILIPPA. Switch the radio on.

KEELEY. Now you're talking. Anything to drown out Stan's whine...

A train announcement is heard

TRAIN. The train at the departure end of Platform 1 is the...

Keeley unplugs tannoy. Puts radio on.

It is Running Up That Hill by Kate Bush.

KEELEY. Bloody hell, Philippa! Have you sent in a request?

PHILIPPA. Psychic aren't I?

KEELEY. Must be.