

TICKING

By Jonathan Dorf

www.youthplays.com
info@youthplays.com

Cast of Characters

JOHN DOE, a middle-aged gun salesman

JAY DOE, mid-teens, John's son

JOHNNY DOE, ten, John's son

Author's Note

Ticking may play alone, or with *You're Next* and *Play's End* as the opening play of the *Gunplay* trilogy.

(The Doe family kitchen. Morning. JOHN DOE, just approaching middle age and in business attire, sits at the kitchen table and reads *Soldier of Fortune*. Upstage, a stove, with a pot on, at minimum, the right rear burner. Enter JAY DOE, fifteen, John's son, carrying a bookbag.)

JOHN

There's an egg in the pot on the right rear burner.

JAY

I'll get something at school.

JOHN

We never make eggs on the right rear burner.

JAY

Where's Mom?

JOHN

Mommy had to go to work early. Tell me about the right rear burner.

JAY

What about it?

JOHN

Tell me why we don't cook on it.

JAY

I didn't touch it.

JOHN

I didn't ask if you touched it.

JAY

I didn't.

JOHN

I asked why we don't cook in the pot on the right rear burner.

JAY

Mom—

Mommy. **JOHN**

Why can't I call her Mom? **JAY**

She prefers Mommy. I prefer Mommy. **JOHN**
 (beat)
 Johnny calls her Mommy.

Mommy cooks. We don't cook. **JAY**

Mommy is the family cook. She represents our family. The question remains. **JOHN**

What? **JAY**

Why don't we cook in the pot on the right rear burner, the pot that is to remain at all times, lid on tight, on the right rear burner? **JOHN**

Because we're screwed up? **JAY**
 (under his breath)

Sit down. **JOHN**
 (beat)

I gotta' get the bus. **JAY**

Sit at the breakfast table with Daddy. **JOHN**

I didn't touch the pot. It's right there. **JAY**

We're having a discussion. **JOHN**

I'll miss the bus. **JAY**

JOHN

Sit!

(Jay sits.)

What do you think of when you see that pot?

JAY

I didn't do it.

JOHN

No one is asking you that question.

JAY

I'm not even ready for school.

JOHN

Get up earlier. I've never felt that getting up at seven was early enough. I've always felt that you miscalculated by twelve minutes.

(beat)

Tell me about the pot.

JAY

What about it?

JOHN

Tell me about that pot, young man.

JAY

I didn't take your stupid gun!

JOHN

I didn't ask you about our gun.

JAY

It's not *our* gun.

JOHN

It's a family weapon. How do you know our family weapon isn't there?

JAY

Is it?

JOHN

You know it isn't.

JAY
 You said there was an egg in the pot.

JOHN
 I didn't say there wasn't a gun.

JAY
 Fine. You're right. I'm wrong. Can I go?

JOHN
 The gun and the egg could be side by side. Or the egg could be broken and on top. The gun would be sticky, but it might still fire.
 (beat)
 You knew.

JAY
 Knew what?

JOHN
 You knew about the gun.

JAY
 I did not.

JOHN
 Don't lie to Daddy.

JAY
 I'm not a liar.

JOHN
 I didn't say you were a liar. I told you not to lie. Love the sinner, hate the sin. That's from the Bible. I didn't mean to call you a liar.

JAY
 I didn't take it.

JOHN
 Let's not discuss that right now.

JAY
 But I didn't.

JOHN
 We're not discussing that.

But you think I took it. **JAY**

I'm saving that thought for later. **JOHN**

When? **JAY**

Later. **JOHN**

(beat)
Did you wake up your brother?

I told him to get up. **JAY**

Did he? **JOHN**

He said he would. **JAY**

When was this? **JOHN**

When I got out of the shower. **JAY**

And when was that? **JOHN**

I don't know. Maybe fifteen minutes ago. **JAY**

Maybe? **JOHN**

About fifteen minutes ago. **JAY**

About is the broad side of a barn. **JOHN**

What? **JAY**

JOHN

It's as bad as maybe. Is *about* ten minutes? Or twelve. Or thirteen. Or six. Some people have very strange ideas of "about." You're supposed to look out for your brother.

JAY

I woke him up. I'm pretty sure it was—

JOHN

What if it was ten minutes ago? Are you willing to bet your life on it?

JAY

What are you talking about?

JOHN

You're shaping your brother's life. Or would you only risk his?

JAY

You oughta' take it easy on the coffee. Daddy.

JOHN

That's not funny. But then your sense of humor was always . . . different.

(beat)

How can I expect your brother to be punctual if the fifteen minutes I allot him isn't really fifteen minutes?

JAY

It's not a big deal.

JOHN

Oh?

JAY

Fine—it's *my* fault. Kill me.

JOHN

Describe your post-shower ritual.

JAY

What?

JOHN

We are going to reconstruct the "about" fifteen minutes to see whether it was really fifteen minutes. Describe your post-shower ritual.

What? **JAY**

Do I need to define post-shower? Begin. **JOHN**

No. (beat) **JAY**

I'm not asking you. **JOHN**

This is bull. **JAY**

You really don't want to get your driver's license next year, do you. **JOHN**

This is such bull. (beat) **JAY**

Start from in the bathroom? **JOHN**

That's usually where the shower ends. **JAY**

I got out of the shower. **JOHN**

One second. (John pulls out a pad from his shirt or jacket pocket and takes notes.)

Continue. **JAY**

I— **JOHN**

Grabbed your towel? **JAY**

Yeah. I dried myself off.

JOHN

Could you describe the drying?
(beat)

We're all men here.

JAY

But I didn't even tell Johnny to get up until after I got out of the shower.

JOHN

Why didn't you say that?
(John scribbles out his notes, then rips the sheet off.)

Start from when you woke him up.

JAY

I was in the hall. I knocked on his door.

JOHN

He answered?

JAY

(shakes his head)

That's why I opened the door.

JOHN

And he woke up.

JAY

He picked his head up.

JOHN

How high?

JAY

(measures perhaps three inches with his hands)

Maybe like this. Are you gonna' take me to school if I miss the bus?

JOHN

We'll see. What happened next?

JAY

I went back to my room.

JOHN

He was awake when you left him.

I said he picked his head up. **JAY**

And then put it down. **JOHN**

He kinda' balled up and rolled out of bed. **JAY**
(shakes his head)

Good boy. When Johnny wakes up, he's up. And now the mystery begins. You went back to your room. **JOHN**

I had to get dressed. **JAY**

You were wearing . . . ? **JOHN**

A towel. **JAY**

Clothing laid out already? **JOHN**

No. **JAY**

Slow walk? **JOHN**

What? **JAY**

In the hallway. Did you walk slowly?
(beat)
Or maybe you ran. Maybe you ran to the kitchen and visited the refrigerator, where you found an egg. **JOHN**

I went back to my room. **JAY**

JOHN

I wasn't in the kitchen until five minutes ago. You could have done it. Mommy was gone. Your brother was upstairs, and I was not in the kitchen.

JAY

I went back to my room, took my towel off, put on deodorant, my boxers, socks, pants, shirt and brushed my hair.

JOHN

But you could have run to the kitchen.

JAY

In a towel?

JOHN

We're all men here—aren't we?

JAY

I didn't run to the kitchen.

JOHN

What did you do next?

JAY

I brushed my hair.

JOHN

Was there anything else in your room?

JAY

I got my books.

JOHN

Were they in your room?

JAY

Yeah. On my floor.

JOHN

Did you crouch to get them or just reach?

JAY

Come on. This is such total bull.

JOHN

Is that your future driving privileges I hear driving away? Crouch or reach.

Reach. **JAY**

And you put them in your bag? **JOHN**

They were already in. **JAY**

So you reached for your bag. **JOHN**

I can still make the bus if I leave now. **JAY**

Wait for your brother. **JOHN**

He's not on my bus. **JAY**

Don't you care whether he makes it? **JOHN**

He's not late. I am. **JAY**

It's later. **JOHN**

His school starts a half-hour later. **JAY**

It's later now. **JOHN**

What? **JAY**

It's later. It's time to talk about the pot. **JOHN**

(Jay stands.)

JAY

I can't talk about the pot now. I'll see you later.

JOHN

Don't make Daddy get out of his chair, Jay.

(Beat. Jay sits.)

JAY

Search my room if you don't believe me.

JOHN

I believe the gun isn't in your room. Where do you think it is?

JAY

How would I know? Can I please get up?

JOHN

Do you feel safe here?

JAY

Safe?

JOHN

In our house. Do you feel safe in our house?

JAY

No.

JOHN

Neither do I. And as the head of this household, it's my job not to leave until we find the gun and make it safe again for Mommy, Johnny and you.

JAY

Ever?

JOHN

Let's hope it doesn't come to that.

JAY

So why do *I* have to stay?

JOHN

You're my firstborn. You have my flank.

It's not a war. **JAY**

It is. But somehow you're . . . different. **JOHN**

Why do you hide a gun in a pot? **JAY**

War is no holds barred, Jay. **JOHN**

We're having a war in a pot. **JAY**

Don't use that tone of voice with Daddy. **JOHN**

I'm just asking a question. **JAY**

Why do I pay for your food? **JOHN**

'Cause you're my Dad. **JAY**

You don't thank me very often. **JOHN**

Thank you. **JAY**

Not letting you starve. That's an important thing. **JOHN**

You have to. It's the law. **JAY**

Want to read the entire script? Order a free electronic perusal copy today!