

PLAY'S END  
Jonathan Dorf

First produced by The Brick Playhouse, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

### Cast of Characters

JOHN DOE, a middle-aged gun salesman

JOHNNY DOE, ten, John's son (may be played by an older actor, particularly in a stand-alone production of the play)

### Author's Note

*Play's End* was originally titled *Foreplay*. It may stand alone or play together with *Ticking* and *You're Next* as the third part of *Gunplay*.

(Late afternoon. The Doe family kitchen. The sound of a car pulling into a driveway. JOHNNY, ten, sits at the table and plays with a pair of toy soldiers. The soldiers battle, with Johnny making occasional sound effects. One soldier shoots the other. The wounded soldier falls. Beat.)

**JOHN**

Johnny, Jay—I'm home!

(Enter JOHN, carrying a small suitcase and wearing an overcoat, from the kitchen.)

Hey sport. Shooting the enemy?

(John points at the toy soldier. Beat. John waves his suitcase at Johnny.)

See how light my suitcase is? Feel it. Go ahead.

(Johnny picks up the suitcase.)

See how light it is?

(Johnny tentatively waggles it.)

Go ahead. You can shake it.

(Johnny gives it a good shake.)

Empty. Absolutely empty. Sold the whole stock. You know why, Johnny? You know why? People are feeling unprotected. That is very good news for me and my suitcase.

(John takes a newspaper from inside his coat, takes off the coat and sits in a chair. He reads the newspaper.)

What did you learn in school today?

**JOHNNY**

(reciting)

Oedipal rhymes with edible. George Washington is the father of our country. She sells sawed-offs by the seashore. Dinosaurs are extinct. Look both ways before crossing. Two plus two equals four. The meek shall inherit the earth. April showers bring May flowers. Mayflowers bring pilgrims. The Yankees are even money against the Twins in Vegas. The times, they are a changin'. These are the ten things I learned in school today. By Johnny Doe.

**JOHN**

Did you say the meek shall inherit the earth?

**JOHNNY**

Uh-huh.

**JOHN**

Is that any way to answer Daddy?

**JOHNNY**

*Yes, Daddy. We learned the meek shall inherit the earth.*

**JOHN**

I'm glad they're teaching values in school again.

**JOHNNY**

(beat)

Was Billy Fireman meek?

**JOHN**

Who?

**JOHNNY**

That's what Mr. Wright said.

**JOHN**

Your teacher.

**JOHNNY**

Uh-huh.

**JOHN**

Johnny!

**JOHNNY**

*Yes, Daddy.*

**JOHN**

Why did Mr. Wright say Billy Fireman was meek?

**JOHNNY**

'Cause he inherited the earth. Mr. Wright says that when you die, you inherit the earth. That's what inheriting the earth means.

**JOHN**

Billy Fireman died?

(beat)

Oh, that was the boy who had the accident.

**JOHNNY**

(shakes his head)

He didn't *have* the accident. Rachel Parker *had* the accident. Billy Fireman *was* the accident.

**JOHN**

I see. Yes, that was very sad.

(beat—face still buried in the newspaper)

Does thinking about Billy Fireman make you sad, Johnny? You look sad.

**JOHNNY**

Something happened today.

**JOHN**

Something sad?

**JOHNNY**

I think so.

**JOHN**

Well, what was it?

**JOHNNY**

I don't remember.

**JOHN**

You should have written it down.

(beat)

Maybe what's bothering you is what happened to Billy Fireman.

(lowers his newspaper)

I'm lowering my newspaper.

(puts it on the floor)

See. You have my undivided attention.

**JOHNNY**

Why?

**JOHN**

So we can have a talk. I want you to tell me what happened to Billy Fireman.

**JOHNNY**

Why?

**JOHN**

You'll feel better.

**JOHNNY**

But that was last week. The thing I can't remember was today.

**JOHN**

And it bothers you that you can't remember.

(beat)

Sometimes it's better not to remember, if a thing's bad enough.

**JOHNNY**

I want to remember.

**JOHN**

I see.

(beat)

Sometimes, if you get your mind off it, the thing you're trying to remember will come back when you least expect it.

**JOHNNY**

Really?

**JOHN**

(nods)

So let's talk about Billy instead.

**JOHNNY**

(beat)

It was on the playground. Billy wanted to copy Rachel Parker's homework.

**JOHN**

And you were with him?

**JOHNNY**

(shakes his head)

I didn't even like him. I was playing on the merry-go-round.

**JOHN**

Aren't you getting a little old for that?

**JOHNNY**

I like to get it going real fast and make the other kids puke.

**JOHN**

Oh.

(beat)

So you push?

(Johnny nods.)

So you were pushing the merry-go-round, which is close by?

**JOHNNY**

Yes. Is "yeah" OK?

**JOHN**

You'd like to say "yeah" instead of "yes"?

**JOHNNY**

If that's OK.

**JOHN**

Sometimes or all the time?

**JOHNNY**

Just sometimes. I could say "yes" the other times.

**JOHN**

(tries to be chummy)

Yeah. I think you could do that.

(beat)

So you were pushing the merry-go-round . . . you didn't ride on the merry-go-round . . .

**JOHNNY**

(tries it out)

Nah?

**JOHN**

Like "yeah." The opposite of "yeah." Good for you. So you didn't ride?

**JOHNNY**

Nah.

**JOHN**

And then . . .

**JOHNNY**

I heard a shot.

**JOHN**

She shot him.

(Johnny nods.)

And that's it?

(Johnny nods again.)

**JOHNNY**

Not counting the ambulances and stuff.

**JOHN**

Do you remember the thing you forgot yet?

(Johnny shakes his head.)

Doesn't surprise me at all. It takes more than talking about something else for ten seconds to get your mind off what you're trying to remember. How could you get your mind off it? You barely told me what happened to Billy. One second, he's alive. The next, he's dead.

**JOHNNY**

That's what happened.

**JOHN**

Do they teach you in school about telling an anecdote?

**JOHNNY**

What's an anecdote?

**JOHN**

A story.

**JOHNNY**

They tell us stories.

**JOHN**

What stories do they tell?

**JOHNNY**

There was one about loaves and fishes.

**JOHN**

Bible stories. Good. Glad to hear it. Do you like those stories?

**JOHNNY**

Yeah. I guess.

**JOHN**

And do you know why you like them?

(Johnny shrugs.)

Because they're good stories. With a beginning, a middle, and an end.

Like what you see? Hit the back button and follow the instructions to order a perusal copy of the full script!