

JON. (*Referring to the ticking sound.*) The sound you are hearing is not a technical problem. It is not a musical cue. It is not a joke. It is the sound of one man's mounting anxiety. I ... am that man. Hi, I'm Jon, and lately I keep hearing that sound, that ticking. It's not a big deal, it's actually kind of pleasant, like a watch. In one week, I'll be thirty. Three-zero. Older than my Dad was when I was born. Older than Napoleon was when he ... did something that was probably extremely impressive at the time—I'm not a historian. I'm a composer. Sorry, a "promising young composer." I should have kids of my own by now, a career, but instead, I've been "promising" for so long I'm afraid I'm starting to break the fucking promise.

JON. I can't do this, Mike—the theatre, the music. I gave it my shot. I think I've given it an honest try, with all the talent and effort I've got. And it hasn't worked. I'm not sorry I tried. I'm proud of it, but now it's time to take a hard look at my situation and not be egotistical, not delude myself, just admit it's time to move on. I've been stuck. Everyone else, you and Susan, have kept moving. I'm the only one still here banging my head against the wall. My head hurts. I'm going to stop for awhile. The thing is, I can always come back to it, if I want, when I'm older, when I'm smart, when I've figured out a little more clearly what it is I want to do. I feel better. Just hearing myself say it, I already feel better.

THEATRE THREE presents *Tick, Tick ... BOOM!* Please Note: These sides do not have to be memorized.

JON and SUSAN #1. In bed.

JON. 6 AM. The sky glows. Somewhere a bird chirps. I want to shoot it.

SUSAN. Go back to sleep.

JON. I can't. I'm too wired. Sorry I woke you. I'll just—

SUSAN. No, stay, it's okay. *(Beat.)* Jon, you know what?

JON. What?

SUSAN. We could just get out of here.

JON. What do you mean?

SUSAN. Live somewhere else. Somewhere beautiful, near a beach ... Cape Cod ...

JON. Leave New York?

SUSAN. Why not? I think the city just wears you down. Every time I cross the Triboro, I feel five years older.

JON. If I want to write shows, I have to be here. If you want to be a dancer—

SUSAN. I am a dancer. I'd still be a dancer if I lived in New England, but I'd have a dishwasher. *(Beat.)* At least think it over? For me?

JON. Ah. More to think over.

JON and SUSAN #2

SUSAN. I saw you from the window.

JON. She's in *Superbia*. We were discussing the show.

SUSAN. You kissed her.

JON. On the cheek. She's in the show! It's a cast thing.

SUSAN. Look, I don't care about that. I ...

JON. *(Aside.)* Susan's holding a Medium Brown Bag. She's packing. *(To SUSAN.)* What's going on?

SUSAN. I got a job.

JON. That's great!

SUSAN. Teaching. Real dancers this time. With a company in Northampton. I'll be gone a couple a weeks.

JON. Well, if it's just a couple of weeks ...

SUSAN. Or a month. And ... it might lead to something else up there.

JON. Something else ... permanently?

SUSAN. Maybe. Jon, don't look so surprised. It's not like we're getting anywhere.

JON. What do you mean?

SUSAN. I can feel us slipping apart.

JON. Look, I know you'd like to leave New York. I know you want to make a change. So do I. And after my birthday, after the workshop—

SUSAN. I wish everything didn't depend on what happens at the workshop. What if it doesn't go exactly the way you want? What if you turn 30 and nothing's changed? I'm worried you're setting yourself up for a big disappointment.

JON. Maybe you're right. I don't know—

SUSAN. I don't want to be disappointed either.

JON and his agent, ROSA (played by SUSAN)

JON. *(Aside.)* My God, it's Rosa Stevens, my agent! That bitch. She hasn't returned my calls for months. Why is she calling now, on a Sunday night? Is she cutting me loose?

ROSA. Are you excited?

JON. What?

ROSA. Are you excited about your workshop next week?

JON. *(Aside.)* She remembered the workshop!

ROSA. I made a few calls, we ought to have some interesting people there for you to meet.

JON. *(Aside.)* She made a few calls!

ROSA. I just wanted to say, "Good luck," honey. See you soon. *(Hangs up.)*

JON. Good luck! Interesting People! Rosa, what an angel, she's a sweetheart, I love that woman.

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JON and MICHAEL then JOHN and DAD. (Note: MICHAEL becomes DAD in the middle of the scene.)

MICHAEL. How's Susan?

JON. OK.

MICHAEL. Just OK?

JON. She wants us to move to Cape Cod.

MICHAEL. I am so sorry.

JON. No, maybe I should really think about it.

MICHAEL. You're not a Cape Cod guy. Listen, I've got a better idea. I want you to come to the office tomorrow.

JON. Oh, no.

MICHAEL. They're doing a brainstorming session for a new product. Real creative stuff. You'd be perfect for it. I told them all about you. Please? Just come in, no commitment, I promise. Just get your feet wet?

JON. Oh, what the hell. Sure, I'll do it.

MICHAEL. Excellent. You won't be sorry. I'm gonna go pack.

JON. You going away again?

MICHAEL. Tomorrow night. Departing Newark 6 PM. Drive me?

JON. Sure. Is David busy?

MICHAEL. I can't ask David right now.

JON. Why not?

MICHAEL. It's ... complicated. We ... [JON's call waiting beeps.]

JON. Whoops. Sorry, Mike. Hello?

DAD. Heeello!

JON. Hi, Dad. *(Aside.)* My weekly call from White Plains.

DAD. How's it feel to be an old man?

JON. I'm not thirty yet, Dad.

DAD. Make good dough at brunch?

JON. Not bad.

DAD. Your sister just got a \$40,000 bonus from the law firm. And, of course, you heard the news about Chuck.

JON. *(Aside.)* My brother-in-law.

DAD. Sold another screenplay! The one he's been working on for a month.

JON. Arrrggh.

DAD. Isn't that marvelous?

JON. Hold on, Dad. I'm getting another call.

JON and MICHAEL. JON driving.

JON. So much for my Market Research career.

MICHAEL. Damn, Jon, this wasn't a joke, you know. I really had to push for you.

JON. I didn't belong there, Mike.

MICHAEL. Maybe not. But ... Jon, for me this is it. It's not some show I can't rewrite or throw it away if it's not working. It's real life.

JON. Do you ever miss acting?

MICHAEL. I don't miss starving.

JON. But you were really good.

MICHAEL. But not good enough.

JON. Mike, you all right?

MICHAEL. Yeah.

JON. You sure? You haven't had more than a couple of days at home for weeks.

MICHAEL. They get me the best hotels. I'm not complaining.

JON. I know. But you've really been going all-out lately.

MICHAEL. I like it. Keeps me distracted.

JON. From what? *(Beat.)*

MICHAEL. Nothing. *(Beat.)* I just—sometimes I wonder. The life you said Susan wants. It doesn't sound so bad. Some peace, you know? Love. A family ... If the chance for those things is there maybe you should grab it. *(Beat.)* Sometimes I wish I could.