

The Sticking Point

A ten minute play

By

Paul Donnelly

1131 McConnell Drive
Decatur, GA 30033
paul@pauldonnellyplays.com
404-519-9148

For rights and permissions contact
paul@pauldonnellyplays.com

Cast of Characters

Mike Keenan – Mid 30's. Widowed. Raising a nine year old daughter on his own. A pretty uncomplicated guy trying to do his best with a pretty complicated life.

Lara Dyson-Cummings – Mid 30's. Mother of four. Knows what's best for her kids. Has the ingrained sense of entitlement of the chronic Whole Foods shopper.

Setting

Mike's living room.

Time

The present.

For rights and permissions contact
paul@pauldonnellyplays.com

The Sticking Point

Setting: The living room of the two-bedroom apartment shared by MIKE KEENAN, 33, and his daughter KAYLIE, 9. A realistic set should appear well-kept and lower middle class. A more suggestive setting will require only a seating unit and two entrances.

At rise: It is late on a Saturday morning. Mike, unshowered and still in the t-shirt and sweats in which he slept, as well as an NRA baseball cap, is speaking into a cell phone.

MIKE

You have to be hungry. You have to be. ... Come on out and I'll make waffles. In the waffle iron, not the toaster kind. ... You can hate me and still eat my waffles. ... Or we could get dressed and go to IHOP! I won't even notice how many kinds of syrup you mix together. ... You're right, I'll notice. But I won't say anything. ... (a little sharper) Okay, Kaylie. I understand you're disappointed and you're angry but I'd like you to stop saying you hate me. ... Because it's mean and because I don't believe you really want to hurt me like that. And because it's not a good way to get me to change my mind. ... No, you're right again. Nothing will ever make me change my mind on this ... No, you might not get measles just from going into Jeremy's house. You might get whooping cough. ... Kaylie, you are not going to Jeremy's birthday party. Period. I'm sorry that my reasons "make no sense." To you. They make really good sense to me and I would not be a good dad if I let you go. ... Well, I hope you decide to come out of your room later so we can go have pizza with Aunt Diane. ... No, I will not be mad when you come out. I will be happy to see you and we can get on with day. Or night. (teasing) Well then she'll bring the pizza here and we'll sit on the floor in front of your door and blow pizza smells under it ... You almost laughed! Yes you did ...

There is a knock at the front door.

MIKE

Hang on. There's someone at the front door. ... Really. ... No, that was not me knocking on a table. ... Hang on.

HE lowers the phone and calls out toward the door.

MIKE

Yes?

The knock is repeated.

MIKE (crossing to the door)

I said, "Yes?"

For rights and permissions contact
paul@pauldonnellyplays.com

Mr. Keenan? WOMAN's VOICE

Yeah. MIKE

I'd like to speak with you. WOMAN's VOICE

Go ahead. MIKE

Might I come in? WOMAN's VOICE

I can hear you fine. MIKE

Mr. Keenan, this is Lara Dyson-Cummings. ... Jeremy's mother. WOMAN's VOICE

MIKE (to door)

Hang on. (to phone) It's Jeremy's mother at the door. Did you call her? ... No, I'm not. Did. You. Call. Her? ... Okay. I believe you. ... I'm going to come knock on your door when she's gone and I expect you to come out.

MIKE puts down the phone and opens the door for Lara Dyson-Cummings, mid-30's. Her look is very deliberately, kind of expensively, casual.

Thank you. LARA

What can I do for you? MIKE (still standing in the doorway, not admitting her)

Jeremy is really upset. LARA

Kaylie's none too happy. MIKE

LARA

She's a sweet little girl. Jeremy's crazy about her. Of all the children who aren't coming she's the one he talks about and talks about ... you know how they get ... and talks about.

Like his mother?

MIKE (letting her pass)

LARA is unsure how to respond.

Relentless.

MIKE.

I don't want Jeremy's birthday spoiled.

LARA

Like you said in 5 emails and 11 texts.

MIKE

At least now I know you got them.

LARA

Well. Since we've got that cleared up, I'm sure you have lots to do to get ready for the party in (looks at his phone) less than five hours.

MIKE

I came by to see if you might relent ...

LARA

Not a chance.

MIKE

Do you really need to punish the children because we have a disagreement?

LARA

I am not punishing the children.

MIKE

Is Kaylie happy? Jeremy is miserable.

LARA

And they'll both live to fight another day.

MIKE

Is there anything I could say ...

LARA

For rights and permissions contact

paul@pauldonnellyplays.com

MIKE

You could tell me that I have been misinformed, that all four of your kids have been fully vaccinated.

LARA

So you have organized this mean-spirited boycott of a nine year-old's birthday party because you don't approve of my parenting choices?

MIKE

I have not organized anything. I told Kaylie she couldn't go to the party because your children weren't vaccinated. My "parenting choice" is not to expose my child to a clear health menace.

LARA begins to speak, but MIKE cuts her off.

MIKE

And I have not spoken with any other parents about this.

LARA

And yet eight of the 22 children in their class aren't coming because I won't buy into pharmaceutical company propaganda and pump poisonous chemicals into my children.

MIKE

I don't know anything about the others.

LARA

But you were the first. If you hadn't said Kaylie couldn't come I doubt any of the others would have declined.

MIKE

I resent the fact that Kaylie has to be exposed to your little plague rats in school. I'm not about to send her into the nest. It's not happening.

LARA

How much thought did you and your wife give to vaccinating Kaylie? Did you consider the risks? And it's not just autism! Although that possibility ought to be enough.

MIKE

There's no risk at all. None. How can you say there's a risk based on one discredited Bozo study?

LARA

Of course the government and the pharmaceutical giants weren't going to let that research stand. Destroy and discredit all dissidents! Shoot the messenger!

For rights and permissions contact

paul@pauldonnellyplays.com

MIKE
I don't want to argue.

LARA
Your hat ...

MIKE
Come on, don't ...

LARA
Give me a chance, here. ... I assume you wouldn't belong to the NRA if you didn't have a gun. Or guns.

MIKE does not respond.

LARA
Which you keep here in your home?

MIKE
Which I keep in a locked cabinet on a shelf in the closet of my bedroom.

LARA
I don't believe it's possible to keep a gun safely. But it is your legal right. And I wouldn't tell Jeremy he couldn't come here for a play date or a party just because I don't approve of your having guns in the house.

MIKE
Guns which I handle responsibly. Guns which are never loaded in the house.

LARA
Or even my belief that your choice puts him at risk.

MIKE
Kaylie knows better than to go near my guns.

LARA
You underestimate their capacity for mischief.

MIKE
I trust her to obey the rules she's taught.

LARA
That doesn't always hold with four boys. But that's not my point. My point is that you don't want government agents coming and taking away your guns.

MIKE (dryly)

I'd prefer they didn't.

LARA

But you're okay with the government telling me that I have to pump poison into my children? That I should have no choice but to allow useless chemical assaults on their immune systems? Do you really do think that gun owners have rights, but parents don't?

MIKE

No. I am exercising my right as parent by telling my child she isn't going to a birthday party.

LARA (desperately)

She could wear a surgical mask!

MIKE

What?

LARA

If you're so worried about contagion ...

MIKE

Look lady ...

LARA

If Kaylie comes all the others will come, too!

MIKE

You know, I bet Jeremy could enjoy his party ... and the kids who are coming ... just fine, IF YOU WOULD LET HIM!

MIKE's cell phone rings.

MIKE

Excuse me. (into the phone) Yes? ... No I'm not watching a game. Yes, she's still here. ... Yes, I guess I was. I guess I was yelling at Jeremy's mother. ... If I promise not to do it again will you come join us? ... No, I have not changed my mind. ... We have been over and over and over the reasons. ... I expect you to come out when Mrs. Dixon-Cummings ... Sorry, Dyson-Cummings leaves. ... You can go straight back to your bedroom if you want once you've had some breakfast. ... Goodbye. (back to LARA) Sorry about that.

LARA

Was that ...

Yeah. MIKE (nodding)

She heard you? LARA

Clearly. MIKE

She's here? LARA

Where else would she be? MIKE

I thought maybe with her mother ... LARA

So you did your research on me about as well as you did your research on vaccine safety. MIKE

Excuse me. LARA

If Kaylie was with her mother I'd be in much worse shape than this. MIKE

LARA is unsure how to respond.

Karen died when Kaylie was three and a half. MIKE

Oh. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. That was very inconsiderate of me. LARA

I'd be lying if I said it was easy. MIKE

Well that explains why you're so ... protective. LARA

It's actually nice to be sure about something. Usually I'm just praying and flying by the seat of my pants and praying some more. And second guessing. I gave her the master MIKE

MIKE (cont)

bedroom when we moved here so she'd have space and privacy. I thought it was better for her to have the attached bathroom.

LARA

That's very thoughtful.

MIKE

But now she doesn't have to come out to use the john.

LARA is again unsure how to respond.

MIKE

She locked herself in her bedroom last night.

LARA

Over the party?

MIKE

Yeah. Life would be so much easier if she was a boy.

LARA

Hard in different ways.

MIKE

If she was a boy, I would've kicked in the door after about four minutes and that would have been that. I wouldn't take this stuff from a son. But I get it, y'know, if I want her to believe no means no later, I have to let it mean no now. No matter how crazy she makes me.

LARA

And yet you won't respect her wanting to come to Jeremy's party.

MIKE

I don't want her to learn she always gets her way. Or that she's always going to be happy. But I also don't want her to learn that it's okay for a man to make her do things by force. And I know that the one she's going to learn it from or not learn it from is me.

LARA

Wow.

MIKE

What?

LARA

You're very thoughtful...

For rights and permissions contact

paul@pauldonnellyplays.com

MIKE

For a plumber in an NRA cap?

LARA

I didn't mean ...

MIKE

Would it have surprised you as much if I was the guy in the Ralph Lauren polo in the next Prius over in the Whole Foods parking lot?

LARA

How did this become about ... where I buy my groceries?

MIKE

Class. You can say class. Or privilege. See being poor is kinda like being black. You don't have to think about unless you are.

LARA

You are hardly poor! My family is hardly rich!

MIKE

It's like this. You have to be really privileged to think your "mommy instincts" are better than science. That some crap you read on the internet gives you the right to put my child and hundreds, thousands of others at risk.

LARA

My responsibility is to my children.

MIKE

Ten years ago measles was stamped out. But now, thanks to you and Jenny McCarthy and that irresponsible cow Oprah, it's back. Like whooping cough. When polio is on the rise will you still be clinging to your crack-pot theories? How would those gluten-free birthday cupcakes taste to a child in an iron lung?

LARA

I'm sure raising a child on your own is difficult. And I am truly sorry for your loss, but that doesn't give you the right to that kind of abusiveness. And your anger doesn't make your arguments seem particularly reasonable or compelling.

MIKE

Whether you understand or accept my arguments... or like my tone ...what you have to get is that you are wasting both our time. I will not let Kaylie set foot in your home.

LARA

I hope you are proud to have ruined my son's birthday with your resentment-fueled political agenda.

For rights and permissions contact

paul@pauldonnellyplays.com

MIKE

If you really believe the head count at his party is the most important thing about Jeremy's birthday, then measles may be the least of his problems.

MIKE and LARA glare at one another for a beat, then MIKE crosses to the door.

MIKE

Let me get the door for you.

LARA (after crossing to the door)

We shouldn't do this to the children.

MIKE

It's done.

LARA

I promised Jeremy I would get you to let Kaylie come ...

MIKE

Sounds like you need to learn to hear "no" even more than the kids.

LARA considers several responses and then storms out in silent rage.

MIKE closes the door and leans back against it, closing his eyes. HE takes several deep breaths then opens his eyes. HE starts toward the hall to the bedrooms then stops uncertainly and sits. A few more deep breaths. Then HE sits up straight and dials his phone.

MIKE

Okay. This is it. If you don't come out right now, I'm going to come stand in front of your door and sing "Let It Go" over and over and louder and louder until you come out. ... We'll just see if I won't.

MIKE crosses off toward the bedroom.

MIKE (from off, loud and off-key)

"The snow glows white on the mountain tonight. Not a footprint to be seen ..."

End of play.