

A DREADED SILENCE

By Paul Warshauer

A Play for Study in Two Acts, one set

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Dramatis Personae:

Mary Murdock.....A maternal motherly Mom  
John Murdock.....A typical teenager (1940's)  
Susan Murdock.....An intelligent daughter  
Delivery Man.....Hello, sign here-variety

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ACT ONE

Scene: A typical 1940's livingroom

Time: The early 1940's

At rise: Mary pacing the floor nervously wringing out her hands

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Mary: Oh, dear...I wonder what time Henry will be home? He has not called me all day. I wonder what could be keeping him? He has never done this before. (Sits on sofa R.)

John: (Entering rapidly) Hiya, Mom, what's for supper? I'm starved!

Mary: John, your Father has not called me all day. I'm a bit worried about him.

John: Aw, don't worry Mom. He's probably working late at the office and didn't get a chance to call. He'll be home sooner than you think.

Mary: Well, I hope you're right. Your Father has always let me know what his plans are for dinner. Alright, Joh, why don't you come into the dining room and I'll start your dinner.

Mary: I've got brisket of beef, sweet potatoes, and your Father's favorite dessert, blueberry pie.

John: Oh boy, sounds terrific. ( They exit into the dining room, L.)

(Sue enters R., sits on couch and begins reading newspaper)

Mary: (Offstage) Is that you, Mary?

Sue: (Absorbed in reading) Yeah, Mom.

Mary: Did you have a good practice, dear?

Sue: Yeah. We practiced all the cheers for Saturday's game.

Mary: That's nice, dear. Do you want some dinner?

Sue: Is Dad home yet?

Mary: (Pause) No, I haven't heard from him yet.

Sue: Didn't he call?

Mary: (Crossing to Sue) No, and I'm getting very worried.

Sue: Did you call the office?

Mary: Yes, about an hour ago. They said that he had left early in the afternoon; in a great hurry.

Sue: You don't think he stopped off at the Club, do you?

Mary: No, Today is Thursday. He never goes to the Club on Thursday.

Sue: Maybe its worth a try to call and see if he's there.

Mary: Alright dear, you call the Club and I'll get your dinner started too. John is already eating. (She exits)

Sue: (Goes to telephone, dials, then pauses) Hello? Is this the Beechmore Country Club? Yes, is Mr. Henry Murdock there? Thank you, I'll wait. (Pause)(She picks up the comix and begins reading) Mes? You're sure? Well, it's very important. Alright...I'll hold on. (She again begins reading, then stops out of concern) Yes? (She sighs) Alright, thank you. Goodbye. (She hangs up, and continues looking at it)

Mary: (Coming on stage-) Is he there, dear?

Sue: No, Mother...he's not there. They don't know where he is.

CURTAIN-----ACT ONE

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ACT TWO

Scene: The same living room

Time: Later that evening.

At rise: Mary, John and Sue are sitting around quietly.

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Mary: (Mumbling to herself) It's never happened before...it's not like him...he always callls ...

John: Stop worrying yourself. I'll bet he's probably caught in traffic somewhere and he just didn't have time to call.

Mary: For five hours? In traffic? No, it's not like him. I'm calling the police, I can't wait anymore.

John: (And Sue in alternates) You can't do that. Oh, wait a few minutes longer. Don't rush, he'll come back.

Mary: But I can't wait anymore. The suspense is too much. I have to know what happened to him. Maybe he is in an accident and isn't able to call. (Mary moves to phone and tho Sue and John try to stop him, they sit down in vain.)

(Into phone) Hello? I'd like to report a missing person. That's right. (Pause) Yes sir? Today at 5 o'clock. He didn't show up for dinner. Tomorrow at noon? No I can't wait that long. (Frant What if he needs me...(She crys, John grabs the phone)

John: (Into phone trying to console Mary) Yes, this is her son.  
My father left for work at 7:15 this morning and we haven't heard from him since then. This is most unusual for him. No, he hasn't done this kind of thing before...That's why we are concerned...Yes, I understand. Alright you will try to locate him. Thank you. (He hangs up) (To Mary) They said we would have to wait until 12:00 tomorrow. Then we can file an official report.

Mary: Oh God, can we ever wait that long?

(The doorbell rings...)

(All eyes go to door)

Mary: (Is the first one up) Henry...HENRY...HENRY!!! (Rushes to door and opens it-is the Delivery maam.)

Deliv: Mrs. H, Murdock?

Mary: Yes, what is it?

Deliv: I have a telegram for you. Sign here, please?

Mary: Yes, of course. (She looks at it then gives it to John to read.)

John: (He opens it and mumbles while he reads)

Mrs. H. Murdock and family...Main Street...Dear Mary and children  
I have been called to London on emergency business. I could not call you because of the expediency of my mission. I'm rushed and tired, but I'm alright. I'll be home soon. All my love  
Henry. P.S, Love to the kids.

Sue: Thank God he's alright.

John: (Showing great relief) Well, I told ya, Mom,

Mary: Yes, I suppose you did.

CURTAIN\*\*\*\*ACT TWO