

WAIT UNTIL DARK

BY

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DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.

WAIT UNTIL DARK
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WAIT UNTIL DARK was produced at Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles, California, opening on October 8, 2013. It was directed by Matt Shakman; the set design was by Craig Siebels; the lighting design was by Elizabeth Harper; and the original music and sound design were by Jonathan Snipes. The cast was as follows:

SUSAN Alison Pill
ROAT Adam Stein
MIKE Mather Zickel
CARLINO Rod McLachlan
SAM Matt McTighe
GLORIA Brighid Fleming

CHARACTERS

SUSAN: 20s/30s

MIKE: 30s/40s

SAM: 30s

CARLINO: 30s/40s

ROAT: 30s/40s

GLORIA: 12–14

PLACE

A basement apartment of an old brownstone
in Greenwich Village.

TIME

October 1944

ACT ONE

Scene 1: Friday evening.

Scene 2: Saturday afternoon.

ACT TWO

About an hour later.

THE SET

Stage right are two big windows high up in the wall, with bars on the outside. Inside are Venetian blinds. A complete blackout can be effected by covering both windows with black drapes.

Up center is the kitchen area — stove, sink, cabinets, and ice box. On the kitchen wall is a clock without glass on its face.

Stage left is the door to the bedroom. On the stage left wall is a workbench with photographic equipment. There are developing pans, bottles of chemicals, etc. On the bench is a lamp (goose-neck type). It can be operated from both the light switch by the bedroom door and at the base of the lamp itself. In the wall, above the bench, are two fuse-boxes.

On the stage left wall next to the bedroom door is a large walk-in closet. Its door swings out. Propped up next to it is a tall photographer's studio lamp.

Stage right is a short flight of stairs leading up to the hall door — the only entrance to this apartment. This door opens onto a short hall that leads to the unseen street level door off right. Downstage right is a steel safe, but it is covered by an Italian flag, so as to make us think that underneath it is a chest or foot locker. Above it, on the stage right wall, is a mirror.

In the kitchen area, there is a table with wooden chairs. A vase of flowers and a telephone are set on the table.

Down stage center is a sofa with one side table and a coffee table in front of it.

The furniture is mostly inexpensive secondhand stuff. The general appearance of the room is masculine/practical but there are the occasional dollops of New York bohemia: “interesting” wall colors, drawings (nudes, abstracts), framed photographs, lots of books, a *Time* magazine cover photo of Henry Luce used as a dart board (hence lots of holes and tears in Luce's face). A military raincoat and cap. A cane.

WAIT UNTIL DARK

ACT ONE

Scene 1

At rise: The stage is dark except for a few slivers of light coming through the Venetian blinds and a yellowish shaft from under the hall door. The bedroom door is open. The closet door is closed. The old icebox is humming loudly. There is complete silence for several seconds, and then we hear the offstage street door open, then close quietly. We hear a soft footstep. Beat. The sliver of light from under the door goes out. A moment passes and the hall door opens. In the gloom we can just see —

Carlino, a bearish man in a heavy overcoat. He looks down into the living space. He slowly comes down the steps and places something on the coffee table, making a “clink” sound.

He goes to the open bedroom door and peers in.

He goes to the closet door, tries it. Locked.

He stands in the middle of the room. He takes a stick of gum out of his pocket, unwraps it, and pops the gum in his mouth, the wrapper still in his hand.

He goes to the kitchen area and opens the icebox’s upper freezer section. He sticks his hand in and feels around. After a moment he pulls out a \$20 bill. He looks at it, then pockets the bill and shuts the upper door.

He opens the lower refrigerator section next. The light from inside gives us our first good look at him. He’s chewing away on his gum, staring into the icebox. After a long moment, he

takes out a plate of meatloaf. He sniffs the meatloaf. He takes the gum out of his mouth and puts the wad of gum and its wrapper into an ashtray on the kitchen counter. Then he pulls off a chunk of meatloaf and stuffs it into his mouth.

Sound: The offstage street door opens and closes.

Carlino reacts, puts back the meatloaf, closes the icebox, and hurries to the bedroom, leaving the door open.

The hall door opens and we see —

Roat, standing there. He looks into the apartment before he steps over the threshold. He wears a black leather jacket and gloves. He comes down the steps to the living area. He sees something on the table. He picks it up and goes back up the steps and exits into the hall, leaving the door open.

Sound: Lightbulb screwing in.

Carlino enters from the bedroom, stealthily.

The offstage front hall light comes back on, allowing in enough light for Carlino to glimpse —

A butcher's knife on the kitchen table.

Roat reenters, carrying a rolled-up carpet. He closes the hall door, throwing the apartment back into its gloom. He comes down the steps and leans the carpet up against a table. He turns on the lamp on top of the table.

The light reveals Carlino behind him reaching for the knife. He is just picking it up when —

ROAT. I wouldn't touch that. *(Carlino puts down the knife, takes a badge out of his pocket, and flashes it at Roat.)*

CARLINO. Wanna tell me what you're doin' here? Passin' by, I saw that hall light out, thought I better check.

ROAT. Thank you for explaining yourself, officer. Why didn't you use your gun?

CARLINO. What's that?

ROAT. You went for the knife, why not just pull out your gun? Guns

are what policemen carry to go along with their badges, aren't they? If I were a policeman, I'd carry my gun all the time, especially when I break into people's apartments because the lights are out and some criminal type might still be inside. That bulb was hot, burned my fingers almost. Come on. Show me that badge again. You're dying to.

CARLINO. How about you tell me who *you* are.

ROAT. Me? I'm Harry Roat, Junior. From Scarsdale.

CARLINO. (*Eyes narrow.*) ... What *is* this?

ROAT. You got a phone message one hour ago at the Hotel Belleclaire, "Come to Forty-eight Bank Street. Nine p.m. Two hundred bucks. Lisa."

CARLINO. I don't see any Lisa here.

ROAT. She was standing right where you are now, used that phone to make the call. (*Takes out a wad of cash.*) Two hundred. (*Carlino moves to take the money. Roat moves it just out of reach.*) First, may we have weapons on the table?

CARLINO. I'm clean.

ROAT. I know you don't have a gun, but your brass knuckles are making a bulge in your right pocket, and I cannot negotiate in an atmosphere of mistrust.

CARLINO. (*Hesitates, then takes out a pair of brass knuckles and drops them onto the coffee table.*) What do you have to protect yourself?

ROAT. Geraldine. (*Roat takes out a thin ivory statue of a girl, about five inches long.*) Isn't she beautiful? (*He flicks his wrist and out of Geraldine flashes a switchblade.*)

CARLINO. May we have Geraldine on the table too?

ROAT. We may not.

CARLINO. How come?

ROAT. Because Geraldine gets itchy when she can't feel my fingers. (*Roat closes the blade and returns the knife to his pocket, along with the brass knuckles.*)

CARLINO. All right, so give me the money.

ROAT. Don't you want to know what it's for?

CARLINO. What it's for is it's what she owes me.

ROAT. She owes you more than two hundred.

CARLINO. Lisa tell you that?

ROAT. Among other things. (*As Roat talks, he lights a cigarette from a gold case and lets the ash grow long, and [later] takes from his coat an empty baby food jar with a screw top which he carefully uses as an ashtray.*) I admire people who can work with other people.

Especially in a business where success is dependent on knowing your partners so well that you can anticipate their moves without exchanging a word. To take an example: a girl, the kind you'd have to be dead not to go for, she specializes in "emotional types," "femme fatales." The guy, he's good at house dicks, detectives, police sergeants. Others of their kind get brought in to play the roles of the lover or the jealous husband, but the girl's the brains, and it gets irritating all the time having to share, so one day after a big score, she sets a time and place to divvy up the proceeds, makes an anonymous call to the nearest precinct, and so long, sarge. She took the money, you took the fall.

CARLINO. (*Darkly.*) I wasn't the only one.

ROAT. You were the only one who got to bunk three years at the state's expense. Least it kept you out of the draft. (*Roat tosses the cash to Carlino. After a beat, Carlino counts the money.*) If you're wondering, there *is* more. For services yet to be rendered.

CARLINO. Such as what?

ROAT. Recovery of an object of value. Your part is worth that two hundred, the two thousand Lisa stole from you, plus another five, payment upon retrieval of said object tomorrow night.

CARLINO. What is it?

ROAT. A doll. Child's doll. Plays a little tune.

CARLINO. What's so special about it?

ROAT. The doll, nothing, it's what's inside.

CARLINO. You gonna tell me what that is?

ROAT. I don't think so.

CARLINO. ... Where's it supposed to be?

ROAT. Here. Somewhere in this apartment.

CARLINO. This doll belong to Lisa?

ROAT. I'll answer that question another way; it was *in Lisa's possession* prior to it being not. This morning she took the train down to Philadelphia to pick up the doll, returned around noon, sat next to a nice-guy type in case he'd come in handy. As the train pulls into Penn Station, there on the platform she sees police. Reasoning, not unreasonably, that they might want to speak to her about her trip, she slips the doll out of her purse and into Nice Guy's satchel. The satchel has his name and address on it, so Lisa knows she'll be able to track it down once she's given the slip to the police, which she does, and when she comes downtown to this address, she explains to Nice Guy that she'd bought a little doll at a drug store to give to her

niece out in Rockaway, but she must have slipped it into his bag by mistake, and did Nice Guy happen to find it? Nice Guy says, “As a matter of fact, I did,” and he gets the satchel and he opens it and much to his surprise, the doll’s not there. Nice Guy looks around, Lisa watches him, he searches the whole apartment. Finally, pretending it really wasn’t so important, she leaves. An hour later the phone here rings. An actress, calling to make an appointment with Nice Guy — he’s a photographer, you may have gleaned — to take some portraits of her this evening at his studio. Nice Guy and wife — evidence: the apron — left here just before seven. Wife went to the pictures, husband went to his studio where —

CARLINO. Where he is still waiting. I know the actress con. Italian, right? What’d she call herself?

ROAT. Liciana.

CARLINO. (*Laughs, shakes his head.*) “Liciana.” So Lisa gets ’em outta here so she can tear the place apart. How long’s the husband gonna wait?

ROAT. (*Picks up phone, as he dials.*) Hand me those plates, please.

CARLINO. What?

ROAT. (*Dialing.*) Those two plates behind you there. (*Into phone.*) ... ’Allo? Mr. Hendrix? (*Carlino gives the plates to Roat. Into phone:*) ... This is Giano from Giano’s Restaurant. I have a message from Miss Liciana. She says she is so sorry she is late ... (*Makes noise with plates.*) Wait, please ... She is so sorry she is late, but to tell you I put her in a taxi two minutes ago so she is on her way now ... (*Makes noises with plates.*) *Il taxi per la signorina Liciana subito* ... So you will be kind and wait for her? ... *Grazzi, signore, grazzi*, goodbye. (*Roat hangs up the phone and tosses the two plates back to Carlino. Carlino returns them to the sink.*)

CARLINO. (*Puzzled.*) Hasn’t Lisa been here already tonight?

ROAT. (*Nods.*) She searched and searched and still she did not find it.

CARLINO. She search the closet? ’Cause it’s locked.

ROAT. It’s not in the closet.

CARLINO. How do you know?

ROAT. Lisa went into the closet. (*Carlino looks around the room. His eyes find the safe.*)

CARLINO. Lisa check the safe?

ROAT. No combination. Also, it’s bolted into the floor.

CARLINO. So we make the husband open it when he gets back.

ROAT. What if it’s not there?

WAIT UNTIL DARK

by Frederick Knott
adapted by Jeffrey Hatcher

4M, 2W

Forty-seven years after *Wait Until Dark* premiered on Broadway, Jeffrey Hatcher has adapted Frederick Knott's 1966 original, giving it a new setting. In 1944 Greenwich Village, Susan Hendrix, a blind yet capable woman, is imperiled by a trio of men in her own apartment. As the climax builds, Susan discovers that her blindness just might be the key to her escape, but she and her tormentors must wait until dark to play out this classic thriller's chilling conclusion.

"... a vulnerable woman discovering unexpected resources that allow her to turn the tables on her assailants is still the main draw ... goosepimply climax ... a gripping finish."
—**The Los Angeles Times**

"[Hatcher is] unafraid to recognize that the plot machinations can be baldly apparent, so [his] take is not unlike those repurposed urban spaces that retain the visible industrial pipes and paraphernalia as a design statement. While the audience may well see some of the twists coming, that anticipation becomes a part of the thriller mechanism, adding a meta-tinge that lends some ersatz contemporary fizz ... satisfyingly tense, evergreen clever, with gratifying thematic undercurrents."
—**The Hollywood Reporter**

"... reminds CGI-infected audiences that a few shadows, a shiny knife, and compelling characters can still go a long way to create suspense ... WAIT UNTIL DARK earns its climax through enthralling, layered characters."
—**Entertainment Weekly**

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