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# Warning on the Door, 1971

A Short Drama

by

**Steve Koppman**

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# Warning on the Door, 1971

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## **CHARACTERS**

3 Male College Students, 1971

MIKE: 20-22, *clean-shaven with short hair.*

PETE: 20-22 *has long hair, shaggy beard, and clothes emblematic of the period.*

DAN: 20-22; *his appearance somewhere in-between.*

## **SETTING**

*The living room of a student co-op house at a major public U.S. university, 1971  
...Yet strangely indicative of current affairs...*

## **PRODUCTION NOTE**

*Some strong language*

## Warning on the Door, 1971

AT RISE: *The living room of a student co-op house at a major public U.S. university, 1971. Early afternoon. MIKE is sitting, reading, in a comfortable chair. PETE is in a virtual trance, playing (preferably) piano in a corner of the room, not loudly, concentrating deeply, 'grooving' to the music. [If piano is impractical, he can play/practice any smaller instrument.]*

*After a moment, DAN enters, alarmed but composed, and wordlessly hands MIKE a small, rumpled piece of paper.*

MIKE

*(Reading it)*  
Holy *shit!* What's this?

DAN

*(Mechanically)*  
It was taped to my door just now.

MIKE

What the *fuck?* *(Beat)* Who'd send you a thing like this? *Taped to your door?*

DAN

*(Trying to answer methodically)*  
A crazy person? SDS? An angry Palestinian? All the above?

MIKE

*(Reading aloud)*  
'To reassure readers you're not another arrogant phony writing for *The Daily*, that you recognize oppression *wherever* it occurs, you should really write an open letter to Mrs. Meir. Soon - Danny boy - *soon!* Or you'll be 'hearing' from us, in several ways!' *(Beat. Scanning it again)* *Shit!* Your column didn't even have anything to *do* with Israel!

DAN

Maybe - they've - read things I wrote before. It's incredible to think people might actually be *reading* 'em. Even if it makes 'em want to kill me.

MIKE

They're blaming *you* for Israel and the Palestinians? *(Still staring at page)* Scary little writing. All caps in pencil. Hard to even read. *(Beat)* They sound like they really want to come get you.

DAN

*(Blankly)*

Thanks for the reassurance. You really think so?

MIKE

Well – uh – You think you should call the cops?

DAN

I just did. No use.

MIKE

What do they say?

DAN

I shouldn't worry till something *happens*. Till then, they're not interested.

MIKE

That's their job! Till something *happens*?

DAN

I thought so too. Others, however, disagree.

MIKE

What the *fuck*?

DAN

They say there's no explicit threat and no idea who left it. 'What are they gonna do?' Students say shit constantly. We call out the army every time some idiot says, 'Off the pigs!' *That's* a death threat. 'You're editorial page editor of *The Daily*?, right, you just said? They want you to get what they're saying. Or you'll 'hear from them.' He's legalistic. 'What are we supposed to do?' he keeps asking.

MIKE

Those guys are a bunch of fags! *(Beat)* We'll protect you. All the guys in the house.

DAN *(Sincerely)*

Thanks so much. That really means a lot to me, Mike. But now - these – people – evidently - know *exactly* where I live, right? Down to the door of my room.

MIKE

Everyone's in the student directory.

DAN

You know: I never actually realized before anyone really *cared* what I wrote, you know? *(Looking around)* Outside *The Daily*. *(Beat)* To think: They had to walk right into this house *(Pointing)* right here to tape this right to the door. In the middle of the day. Last two hours. It wasn't here when I left for my eleven o'clock.

MIKE

And the front door's (*Pointing out to hallway*) open all day and all night. Shit! (*Shouting to PETE*) Hey, Pete! Take a look at this.

PETE

(*Stops playing*)

What's happenin', man?

MIKE

(*Going over to PETE, handing him paper*)

Can you believe it? Some jerk-off taped this to Dan's door.

*PETE reads it, still nodding rhythmically.*

What do you think?

PETE

Well— (*Nodding, still looking at paper*) there's a *lot* of struggle in the world.

MIKE

Yeah? So?

PETE

I know it's a tough time to think about this, but don't they kinda have a *point*?

MIKE

What do you *mean*?

PETE

(*To DAN*)

Maybe you oughta at least let 'em know you get where they're comin' from.

MIKE

(*Angrily*)

What the *hell*? They're threatening him – He can't do what they *want* – Give into anonymous *threats*—

DAN

(*Interrupting*)

*I'm* all for negotiating – Jordan, the Palestinians. I'd even go back to the '47 line. But I won't just ditch Israel. I can't ever just—

MIKE

(*Interrupting*)

You can't let people push you around! Threaten you! That's total *bullshit*!

PETE

(To MIKE)

But isn't that how *they* feel too? They feel the Jews, Westerners, pushed them outa their homes in Palestine. With terrorism. Look at Deir Yassin. [Arabic, pron. *day-eer yah-seen*] You heard of *that*? A hundred Arabs killed, maybe more, in a day. Nobody gave a fuck. You know about *that*?

MIKE

(Very angry)

No. (Beat) But Dan wrote a column about some kids in New York losing their playground!

PETE

It's the principle. You belly-ache about American kids and their playground. So they give you shit about Palestine. They know you've defended Israel in the past. And *The Daily* editors are mostly Jews.

DAN

Not *all*—

MIKE

(Interrupting)

You can't let anybody threaten people cause of what they write! Or how can we talk about *anything*? We've gotta stick together!

PETE

What you write matters a fuck of a lot! It's like Lenin said: No state lets itself be attacked with guns. So how can it ignore words, that have more power in the long run? Or some shit like that.

MIKE

John Lennon said *that*?

PETE

(Cracking up, smiling at DAN)

You're kidding, right? Vladimir Lenin! Father of the Russian Revolution.

MIKE

I knew that. That's why we're not Communists.

PETE

Speak for yourself!

MIKE

If we can't talk freely, how can we ever decide what's right?

PETE

Freedom of the press is for guys who own presses. (*To DAN*) They give *you* fuckers a false sense of power, letting you play with a real newspaper while you're here. So you've gotta use it for the people! Or the people give you shit! Like they should!

DAN

If there were one *people*. One simple thing—

PETE

(*Interrupting*)

You guys are way too bourgeois (sic) for me. You gotta read Marx, man, if you wanna know what's happenin'. And no, man (*Smiling at MIKE; laughing briefly*), I don't mean Groucho! (*Beat*) You guys wanna go smoke some grass or some shit?

MIKE

I'm getting every guy in the house to agree we're protecting Dan. You'll go along with that, right?

PETE

What are we gonna do?

MIKE

Well – like – we're all gonna be on the alert if he screams any time, OK? Watch closely to see who's round the house. Walk him to campus. And start locking the front door! At least at night!

DAN

(*Overlapping*)

They came in the middle of the day of course.

PETE

(*Overlapping*)

Come on! That's crazy!

MIKE

You wanna see Dan beaten to a bloody pulp?

DAN

(*Looking increasingly worried*)

Wait a minute!

PETE

I didn't *say* that. But you *can't* lock the front door all day. What, twenty-some people live here? Fifteen more boarders? Nobody's gonna wanta carry *keys*. Or give anyone a fucking armed guard round the clock! We can't change our whole way of life.

MIKE

We've gotta sacrifice to defend our own!



PETE

Look: I support popular pressure on the bourgeois press.

DAN

Jesus, Pete!

MIKE

What the *fuck* can that *mean*? (A 'light bulb' goes off; grabs note back from PETE) Have you been on the piano [NOTE: or other instrument] here the whole last few hours?

PETE

Most of it.

MIKE

You see any Arabs here?

PETE

You think I know who's runnin' around all the time? I'm into my music. (*Beat*) No – I haven't – particularly – seen – any *Arabs*.

MIKE

Anyone unusual? Who doesn't belong?

PETE

Huh?

MIKE

(*Holding up the sheet of paper again*)

Unfamiliar faces! Look at the way the note's written. Little capitals, with a pencil.

DAN

(*Looking over at paper again*)

Designed to look – maybe a little – scary.

PETE

(*Overlapping*)

So?

MIKE

(*Pulling out pencil*)

Can we see what it looks like if *you* write a note like that in all caps?

PETE

What are you *talkin'* about?

DAN

You're not *saying* –

MIKE  
I just wanna *see*.

PETE  
This is totally crazy!

DAN  
Mike—

PETE  
(*Interrupting*)  
You think *I* did this?

MIKE  
I just wanna *see!*

PETE  
But *why?* You *actually* think—

MIKE  
(*Interrupting*)  
You just said it was *justified!*

PETE  
I'm trying to show what oppressed people will do when they're crushed into the ground.

DAN  
(*To MIKE*)  
You really think—

MIKE  
(*Interrupting; gesticulating*)  
I'm taking what he says seriously. Like nobody else seems to—

PETE  
(*Interrupting*)  
And you think you could tell—

MIKE  
(*Interrupting*)  
I just want to see—

DAN  
(*Interrupting*)  
I don't think we could—

MIKE

*(Interrupting)*

Why won't he show us? He says it's justified!

DAN

*(Overlapping)*

He didn't actually say *that*.

MIKE

You're with us, Pete, or you're against us.

PETE

*(To MIKE; overlapping)*

I am *not*! You know who started that expression? Stalin! *I'm* a Trotskyist!

DAN

That's what went wrong with the revolution.

PETE

*(Shaking head)*

Revolution's not a tea party.

MIKE

*(Handing PETE paper and pencil)*

Shut the fuck up! Just write a note to Dan in block capital letters with the pencil.

*With disgust, PETE writes 'Fuck you, fat bourgeoisie' in big block capital letters in pencil and hands paper back to MIKE.*

*(Looking it over)*

It's him!

DAN

*(Walking over, reviewing paper, shaking head)*

I don't believe— *I* sure can't tell.

MIKE

*(To PETE; overlapping)*

*You* better get outa here *now*.

PETE

*You* get outa here! *I've* lived here twice as long as *you*!

DAN

*(Overlapping)*

Guys! Guys! We've gotta be able to trust each other.

MIKE

You gonna help us keep Dan safe?

PETE

What do you want me to do?

**This is Not the End of the Play**  
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