

# Trouble in Tahiti + A Quiet Place

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## Synopses

### TROUBLE IN TAHITI

A trio sings about the charms of ideal family life in 1950s Suburbia, U.S.A. In their house, Sam and Dinah quarrel at breakfast. After ten years of marriage they wish they could be kind to each other, but there is no real communication between them. In his office, Sam clinches a deal and makes a loan. The trio ironically extols his business acumen and big heart. Dinah relates a dream: as she struggled to find her way out of a garden, a voice beckoned to her, promising that love would lead her to a quiet place. The couple avoid each other at lunch, reminiscing about the beautiful garden of peace and life where they met. The trio sings again about suburban life. Rather than attend his son's school play, Sam goes to his own handball final and then practices boxing at the gym, commenting on his own will and desire to succeed. Dinah excitedly describes the escapist musical *Trouble in Tahiti*, which she has just seen at the movies. Sam and Dinah return home. The couple argue again briefly before Sam wearily suggests going to a movie – some new musical 'about Tahiti'. Dinah winces, then agrees, and they both depart.

### A QUIET PLACE

#### PROLOGUE

A car crashes – a chorus looks on and comments on the victim.

#### ACT I THE FUNERAL HOME

Sam stands immobile and mute at the funeral of his wife, Dinah, as their friends and family circle uncomfortably. Their grown children, Junior and Dede, as well as Dede's husband (and Junior's lover), François, are late. Sam is estranged from his children: Junior, who is mentally ill, had fled to Quebec to dodge the Vietnam draft, and Dede and François live with and care for him there. After the service, Sam excoriates the three of them, venting his anger, sorrow and confusion.

Junior loses self-control, stripping off his clothes burlesque-style and accusing his father of killing his mother. They come to blows over Dinah's coffin. Sam storms out, followed by Dede and François. Junior, alone, looks over the wreckage of the funeral.

#### ACT II THE FAMILY HOME

Later that night, Sam reads Dinah's decades' old diaries detailing her marital unhappiness and anger towards Sam. He discovers a letter from Dinah but cannot bring himself to read it. Dede enters and together they go through Dinah's closet. Dede tries on Dinah's dress and Sam is stunned at the resemblance.

François confronts Junior about his behaviour at the funeral. Junior has a psychotic episode and conjures painful fantasies, first of his father shooting him as a child, then of an incestuous relationship with Dede. François finally gets Junior to sleep, and he and Dede meet outside. François expressing how much Dede means to him. Sam goes into Junior's room but is unable to kiss his sleeping son goodnight. He returns to his room and reads Dinah's letter.

#### ACT III THE GARDEN

The next morning Dede weeds her mother's garden. She and Junior play games from their childhood. François and Sam join. At the height of their game, François hurtles into Sam's arms – Sam embraces him and welcomes him to the family. He asks François to take Dinah's letter and read it out loud. It is a suicide note – Dinah asks her family to 'Accept, and live.' Sam tells the family that there were Christmas cookies with the letter. Dede stifles an awkward laugh, before the tension breaks and they roar with laughter. Dede suggests they might stay on with Sam a few days, but a discussion over who will sleep in which room becomes another fight. François lashes out at the family for their inability to escape their past and tears up Dinah's letter. Dede, Junior and Sam collect the scraps scattered on the ground. Junior tells Sam that 'it hurts so much to mean so much to you' and Sam finally embraces his son. François in turn reaches out to Dede, who, mustering all her courage, takes his hand. Sam and Dede reach out tentatively to one another.