

Suspense

"Zero Hour"

by

Ray Bradbury

adapted by

Anthony Ellis

(Originally broadcast April 5, 1955)

CAST

Announcer

Mink

Anna

Mary Morris (mother)

Henry Morris (father)

Helen

Telephone Operator

EFFECTS

MUSIC UP

F/X: CLOCK CHIMES in B/G

ANNOUNCER: And now, tonight's presentation of radio's outstanding theatre of thrills –

Suspense!

F/X: CLOCK CHIMES slowly in B/G

ANNOUNCER: Tonight, Suspense brings you a repeat performance of one of the most controversial plays ever presented over your

radio. It is called "Zero Hour" by Ray Bradbury Starring Miss Iza Ashdown, here is tonight's Suspense play, "Zero Hour."

MUSIC UP (scary version of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star")

F/X: Two female children laughing

MINK: (in B/G) Oh, boy, this is fun.
("having fun" dialog continues in B/G under announcer)

ANNOUNCER: What a game. Such excitement they hadn't known in years. Mink talked earnestly to someone near the rose bush, though no one was there. Then the two little girls, shouting, laughing at each other, such fun, such tremulous joy.

F/X: SCREEN DOOR OPENING and CLOSING

ANNOUNCER: Mink ran into the house all dirt and sweat. For her few years she was loud and strong and definite.

F/X: Sound of POTS and PANS being through into a sack continues under announcer.

ANNOUNCER: And her mother, Mrs. Morris, peeling vegetables at the sink, watched with amusement as her daughter threw into a sack old pots and tools and things which were relegated to childplay.

MARY: My goodness, Mink, what's going on?

MINK: Oh, the most exciting game ever, just ever!

MARY: Oh?

MINK: It's alright I take these, Mom?

MARY: Just don't dent them and it's alright.

MINK: Thanks, mom, we won't. Bye

MARY: Alright, Dear. Oh, what's the name of the game dear?

MINK: Invasion.

MARY: Invasion?

MUSIC STING

ANNOUNCER: Invasion. And in the garden now a serious concentration. Mink with an assortment of pots, pans and wrenches, forks, spoons...and her friend, Anna, a little younger, tongue in teeth, taking notes on a pad.

F/X: Utensil sounds

MINK: This. This. And this. What's it say next?

ANNA: Wait a minute, Mink.

MINK: Well hurry up.

ANNA: 4...9...7...A and B and X.

MINK: 4...9...7...A and B and X.

ANNA: A folk an a string an a hex...hex...hex a gone al

MINK: A folk an a string an a...hex a gone al . What do we do next Mr. Drill?

ANNOUNCER: And then Mink talking to the rosebush again. And to her own satisfaction, at least, receiving some kind of answer which she relayed to Anna.

ANNA: Triangle. How do you spell it?

MINK: Oh, any ol' way. Doesn't matter.

F/X: Birds chirping

MINK: Now write "beam."

ANNA: I haven't got "triangle" yet.

MINK: Well, hurry! Zero hour's by five o'clock, we haven't got all day.

MUSIC STING

F/X: Dishes CLINKING.

ANNOUNCER: Then time out from "Invasion" for lunch. Mink bolted down the soup and, coincidentally, crammed a sandwich into her mouth.

MARY: Now you slow down, Mink. Whatever's waiting will wait a few minutes longer.

MINK: But I can't! Drill's waiting for me.

MARY: Drill? That's a peculiar name. Is he a new boy in the neighborhood, dear?

MINK: He's new alright.

MARY: Well, I don't think I've ever seen him. Which one is Drill?

MINK: Oh, he's just around. You'll make fun. Everybody makes fun. All the kids do.

MARY: Well, I don't think that's very nice. Is Drill shy?

MINK: Yes, in a way. I don't know. I gotta go now, mom, if we're gonna have the invasion.

MARY: Now you finish your milk, miss. Who's invading what?

MINK: Martians invading Earth from up there!

MARY: Oh, I see. And, um, Drill's a Martian?

MINK: I think so. He's had a very hard time getting here.

MARY: I should imagine.

MINK: They couldn't figure out a way to attack Earth. How to get in or something. And Drill says they have to do it by surprise. And even get help from your enemy.

MARY: Oh, a fifth column, huh?

MINK: Uh-huh! And all this time they haven't been able to figure out how to attack until one day they thought of children.

MARY: Well, that was bright of them

MINK: And they thought of how grown ups are so busy they never look under rosebushes or on lawns.

MARY: Oh, that's where Drill is now? Under the rosebush?

MINK: Uh-huh. With all his friends, too! And there's something about kids under eleven with imagination. It's real funny to hear Drill talk.

MARY: Well, it must be. (laughs) You better run along out if you want to have your invasion before dark. Oh, and bath tonight. School tomorrow, you know.

MINK: Drill says I won't have to take any more baths.

MARY: Oh, he does does he?

MINK: And we can stay up until ten o'clock!

MARY: Well, your friend, Mr. Drill, had better mind his Ps and Qs or I'm gonna call up his mother and...

MINK: That's just it! Drill says you're dangerous because you don't believe in Martians. Just like you think Drill's a kid. Well, he's not. And their gonna let us run the world when they get in. All of us Kids. And I might even be Queen!

MARY: Well, that's nice, dear. Now run along.

F/X: Dishes being stacked.

MINK: Mom?

MARY: What is it, dear?

MINK: Mom...when the invasion comes, we'll have to get rid of you and Daddy. But I'll be sure it won't hurt very much.

MARY: Well, thanks...thanks a lot.

F/X: Screen door OPENS and CLOSES.

F/X: PHONE RINGS

MARY: (humming)

F/X: FOOTSTEPS to phone

MARY: Hello?

HELEN: (on filter) Hello, Mary. How are things in New York?

MARY: Oh, Helen, how nice. Are you in town?

HELEN: Oh, no, I'm in Danbury. I was just thinking of you and thought I'd call.

MARY: Oh, it's long distance though, you shouldn't.

HELEN: Oh, I can afford three minutes. How's Henry?

MARY: Fine. And Bill?

HELEN: Oh, just fine. What about Mink?

MARY: Oh, wonderful. Noisier than ever. Oh, she's got a...a new game now. It's taken the place of hopscotch. Invasion.

HELEN: Is she playing that, too?

MARY: Well, yes. Are yours?

HELEN: Same thing. Some kind of geometric jacks, I suppose. Isn't it a scream? You know all the kids their age are playing it up here. Timmie's got a crush on some guy named "Drill"... I think that's what it is.

MARY: Oh, it...it must be a new password. Mink likes him, too.

HELEN: Oh, I didn't know it had gotten to New York. Word of mouth I suppose. You know kids. Funniest thing, I got a letter from my sister in Boston. She say her kids are playing it, too. It's just sweeping the country.

MARY: Well, I...I wonder where they learned it?

HELEN: Oh, don't ask me. All I know is what Timmie tells me at lunch - "zero hour's at five o'clock."

MARY: When?

HELEN: Today. That's when the invasion is going to be. Oh, these kids and their imaginations.

MUSIC UP and OUT

F/X: Ladies continues phone conversation in B/G

ANNOUNCER: And they talked a little more. Schoolgirl friends. Casual woman talk. But Mrs. Morris was thoughtful. She was thinking of other things - of adults, of children with imagination. Rosebushes, dimensions. She thought about how much she had forgotten about being a child. And she wondered about Mink...and all the kids who were at that moment playing Invasion.

MARY: I'm so glad you called.

HELEN: Give my love to Henry and a kiss for Mink.

MARY: I will. And to Bill and the kids.

HELEN: Thanks. Bye.

MARY: Goodbye

F/X: PHONE HANGS UP

MUSIC UP and OUT

ANNOUNCER: An hour drowsed by. I was three o'clock. there was an occasional hum inside the coolness of the house as a car passed outside. The street was lined with good, green and peaceful trees. And all across the city, in other gardens, in other places, children under eleven were excitedly playing a game. Talking to rosebushes and grass lawns, trees, shrubs.... Even children in apartment houses, high in the air, conferring with potted plants, cactus and

ivy. Mrs. Morris finished her housework and went to the kitchen.

F/X: Screen Door OPENS and CLOSES

MARY: Oh, hello, dear.

MINK: Hi, mom. Can I have a glass of water?

MARY: 'Course, I'll get it.

F/X: FOOTSTEPS to sink. WATER being poured into glass.

MINK: Pi R Squared. Point seven. A over fifty-six to the seventh degree. X, T, seven.

MARY: What, dear?

MINK: Oh, nothing, Mom.

MARY: Oh, here you are.

MINK: Thanks.

MARY: How are things going?

MINK: (while drinking) Huh?

MARY: The, ah, invasion?

MINK: Oh, that.

MARY: Yes, that.

MINK: Almost finished. When everything's right, Drill says we should be ready on time.

MARY: Five o'clock?

MINK: That's right. How'd you know?

MARY: Helen called me from Danbury. She says that, ah, Timmie's playing it too.

MINK: Hey, that's keen!

MARY: I guess all the kids are aren't they?

MINK: No, not all of them. (with disgust) Not guys like Jimmy Wood and Bob Wilson.

They're growing up and they make fun of us. They're worse than parents. they just won't believe in Drill. They're so smart just because they're growing up. You'd think they'd know better. They were little only a couple years ago. We'll get rid of them first. Drill says it's okay to kill them first.

MARY: Now, Mink, I don't like that kind of talk! Do you hear me. I don't like it at all.

MINK: Oh, Mom.

MARY: Now I mean it! You keep on that way and there'll be no more playing. You'll have to tell Anna to go home and you'll stay inside until bedtime.

MINK: I'm sorry.

MARY: Well I should think so!

MINK: Thanks for the water, Mom.

F/X: FOOTSTEPS to door. Screen door OPENS and CLOSES.

MARY: Mink?

MINK: Yes, Mom?

MARY: What did those, ah, those numbers mean?

MINK: What numbers?

MARY: Those numbers you were saying to yourself before?

MINK: Oh, that. They're the things we have to do to get Drill and his friends out. That's all.

MARY: Look, dear, why don't you and Anna go down to the drugstore and get some ice cream? You don't even have to use your allowance, I'll pay for it.

MINK: Haven't got time, Mom. Thanks.

MARY: Well, I...I'd never believe I'd hear you say that.

MINK: I gotta go now, Mom.

MARY: Wait a minute! Mink, ah, I want you to tell me the truth. What is this...invasion silliness.

MINK: (exploding) It isn't silly!
(controlling herself) It's just a game, that's all. Mom, we're just playing an invasion. Excuse me, I gotta get back now. I'll see you later.

MUSIC UP and UNDER

ANNOUNCER: It was a game called "Invasion." Mrs. Morris' little girl, Mink, was playing it. So was Mink's friend, Anna and all the other children under eleven. It was called "Invasion." And Zero Hour was to be at five o'clock. Mrs. Morris was disturbed. She wasn't sure why...but there was something...something about parents shutting ears and eyes to what was happening. And because she was disturbed, she did something she didn't usually do - she called her husband at the office.

HENRY: (filter) Hello, dear.

MARY: Oh, hello, Henry. I'm sorry to bother you, but Miss Maxson said you weren't busy.

HENRY: Oh, not too. I should be able to get home early today. Everything alright?

MARY: Yes.

HENRY: You alright?

MARY: I...I'm fine.

HENRY: Mink?

MARY: Oh, she's...Henry?

HENRY: What?

MARY: Oh, ah...nothing. I just wanted to

talk to you for a minute...that's all.

HENRY: (laughs) Listen, are you sure you're alright?

MARY: Oh, yes.

HENRY: Mink been getting on your nerves?

MARY: N...not really.

HENRY: Well you tell her to behave or when I get home she and I are gonna have a talk. As a matter of fact, she's been a little fresh lately and I don't think it's good.

MARY: Well, she's playing outside. She's fine.

HENRY: Honey, is something wrong?

MARY: Why, no, I told you I...I was thinking about you and wanted to talk, that's all. Nothing wrong with that.

HENRY: Not a thing.

MARY: You go back to your work, dear. I'll see you soon.

HENRY: Alright.

MARY: What time do you think you'll be home?

HENRY: Oh, 'bout five...maybe a little earlier.

MARY: Five. Oh...

HENRY: Hey, what? Come on, what?

MARY: Well, I...I was just thinking...nothing really, just Mink and you and me. Goodbye, dear.

HENRY: You are okay aren't you?

MARY: Yes I'm fine, goodbye

HENRY: Goodbye.

F/X: PHONE HANGS UP

MUSIC UP AND OUT

ANNOUNCER: Another hour passed and it was half passed four. The day began to wan. The sun lowered in a peaceful blue sky. Shadows lengthened on the green lawn. Outside it was quiet. The two little girls more intent than ever upon their endless movement of design and pattern with the implements before them. Mrs. Morris watched from the window and she had never known Mink to have such powers of concentration. She had turned on the radio and sat drinking a cup of coffee and turned over her thoughts.

F/X: RADIO MUSIC in B/G

F/X: COFFEE CUP CLINKING

MARY: Children. Children. Children. Love and hate side by side. Sometimes children love you, hate you, all in half a second. Strange, children. Do they ever forget of forgive the whippings and the harsh strict words of command? I wonder? I wonder? How can you forget or forgive those over and above you? Those tall, silly dictators. Those... parents.

MINK: (calling from off mic) Mom?

F/X: SPOON DROPS on COFFEE CUP

MARY: (startled) Oh, what is it, dear?

MINK: (off mic) Have we got a piece of lead pipe and a hammer?

MARY: Well, I...I don't know. There might be in the garage. What do you want them for?

MINK: (off mic) We just need them.

MARY: Well, if you tell me what for, dear, maybe I can...

MINK: (off mic) I can get them. Thanks, Mom.

MARY: Is...is something wrong?

MINK: (off mic) Drill's stuck halfway and if

we can get him all the way through it'd be easier. Then all the others can come through after him.

MARY: Well, can I help?

MINK: (off mic) Thanks, Mom, I can fix it.

MARY: You better get through, Mink. I want you to take your bath before your father comes home

MINK: (off mic) Awright.

MARY: Now he's coming home early. And Mink....Mink....

ANNOUNCER: Mink had disappeared behind the shrubs and Mrs. Morris knew it was ridiculous to make an issue of it. Besides, what was the issue? Invasion? Drill? Zero Hour? Unaccountably, a cool breeze came up. And although normally for that time of year, would have been relief, Mrs. Morris felt a chill. She closed the window.

F/X: Window CLOSES

MUSIC UP and OUT

ANNOUNCER: Time passed. A curious waiting silence came upon the street. Deepening. Then from the living room, Mrs. Morris heard...

F/X: MANTLE CLOCK STRIKES FIVE O'CLOCK

ANNOUNCER: Five o'clock. Zero hour. It had come. And now it had gone. But was the clock right? Mrs. Morris, knowing how foolish it was, knowing it - went to the phone and dialed.

F/X: PHONE DIALS

MARY: (under dialing) Ah, silly. It's silly.

F/X: PHONE RINGS ON LINE

OPERATOR: When you hear the tone the time will be exactly four fifty-four and twenty

seconds.

F/X: PHONE BEEP

MUSIC UP

ANNOUNCER: Four fifty-four and twenty seconds and Mrs. Morris knew it wasn't as silly as she thought. Because it wasn't five o'clock yet. Not Zero Hour yet. Then the car drove up into the driveway.

F/X: CAR STOPPING

(following dialog happens off mic)

HENRY: Hi, Mink. How's it going? Hi, Anna.

MINK: Hi, Daddy.

ANNA: Hi, Mr. Morris.

MINK: Fine.

HENRY: Got a kiss for your old man?

MINK: Haven't got time now, Daddy.

HENRY: Well that's a nice thing. What are you doing?

MINK: We're playing Invasion.

HENRY: Oh, swell. Your mother in the house?

MINK: Uh-huh.

HENRY: Okay, be good.

MINK: I will. Zero Hour In a few minutes, Daddy.

HENRY: (chuckling) Alright, I'll be ready.

MUSIC UP

ANNOUNCER: Mrs. Morris heard him chuckle. Then his steps up the walk to the front door.

F/X: FOOTSTEPS on concrete

F/X: KEYS IN DOOR. DOOR OPENS

HENRY: (calling) Mary.

F/X: DOOR CLOSES

MARY: I'm in the living room, dear.

HENRY: Oh, hi. Our daughter didn't have time for a kiss. How about you?

F/X: KISS

MOTHER: (nervous laugh) Hard day?

HENRY: Not particularly.

MARY: Would you like a cocktail?

F/X: FOOTSTEPS to get drinks

HENRY: You read my mind.

MARY: Martini?

F/X: MAKING A MARTINI

HENRY: Perfect. Anything exciting happen today?

MARY: No. Oh, Helen called. from Danbury. I...I told her she was crazy, but she just felt like calling.

HENRY: Like you calling me this afternoon – crazy, huh? Hey, what was that all about?

MARY: Well, I told you. I...I just wanted to.

HENRY: Hum. Hey, incidentally, what's this new game the kids are playing – Invasion. That's a nice depressing thought. (pause) Is she alright? Come to think of it, she looked kind of funny.

MARY: She's alright. What the time, Henry?

HENRY: A couple of minutes after five. Why?

MARY: No, no, the clock's wrong. By your watch.

HENRY: Oh, I've got two minutes to. I'm probably slow. You got something on the stove?

MARY: No, I...I just wondered.

HENRY: Honey, hey, look at me. What's the matter?

MARY: Nothing, really.

HENRY: Now...

MARY: Really!

HENRY: Mink's been up to something...

MARY: No of course not...

HENRY: Then what?

MARY: I...I guess I'm...a Little tired. Upset, that's all.

HENRY: You want to go out for dinner?

MARY: Oh, no, I've...got a...steak here.

HENRY: I'll tell you what, I'll barbeque.
How'll that be?

MARY: Oh, fine (starting to panic)
Wha...what was that!

HENRY: What?

MARY: Well, I...thought I heard something.

HENRY: Well, I didn't.

MARY: I must have been imagining it.

HENRY: Hey you are jumpy. Why Don't you have
a drink, it'll do you good.

MARY: No, I don't want one. What's the time!

HENRY: (getting annoyed) Mary, what is this?
Now I mean it. Something's wrong and I want
to know.

MARY: It's silly. It's...so silly. I'm on
edge, that's all.

HENRY: Mary.

MARY: I am!

HENRY: I don't like this. That kid's done

something hasn't she? I'm gonna get her in here...

MARY: No, no, Henry please don't! She hasn't. It's nothing at all. I just...

F/X: HUMMING BEGINS and continues UNDER

HENRY: What's that?

MOTHER: I...I don't...know.

HENRY: Those kids haven't got anything dangerous out there have they? I noticed a lot of junk lying around.

MOTHER: (tentative laugh) I...I thought it was a game. She wouldn't have done it herself. (beginning to get hysterical) They made her do it!

F/X: BUMP HUM

HENRY: What the devil!

MOTHER: (more hysterical) Maybe you better go out and tell her to stop playing now. It's after five! You tell Mink to put off the invasion until tomorrow.

HENRY: It's coming from outside. What are they up to? I'd better take a look!

F/X: FOOTSTEPS

HENRY: Mink! Mink!

F/X: EXPLOSION

HENRY: Good Lord!

MOTHER: Oh, ah!

F/X: EXPLOSIONS UNDER THE FOLLOWING

HENRY: Bombs! Bombs! They're bombing!

MARY: No, no, it's upstairs. I know it is. In the attic. That's where it is.

MUSIC UP and OUT

F/X: TWO SETS of FOOTSTEPS RUNNING

HENRY: Mary, Mary it is not up there!

ANNOUNCER: He ran after her confused, not a little frightened. She seemed to know something.

MOTHER: In the attic.

ANNOUNCER: her mind had worked that quickly. Any excuse to get him away from the outside – to get him upstairs to the attic in time. And outside there were more explosions and they could hear the children screaming with delight.

HENRY: It is not in the attic, it's outside! Mink's out there! What's the matter with you?

F/X: FOOTSTEPS STOP

MARY: (she's is now hysterical) No, no, I'll show you! Hurry! Get inside quick!

F/X: DOOR CLOSES and LOCKS

(Mary breathes heavily and moans in panic under the following. She is now practically crazed)

MARY: Now we're safe until the night.

HENRY: Are you crazy! Why'd you through that key away!?

MARY: Maybe we can sneak out later! Maybe we can escape!

HENRY: For heavens sake! the kid's out there! Do you want her to get ki...

MARY: Oh, no, no, you don't know, you don't. We've got to stay here, we've got to. It's horrible! We've got to, you got to stay here with me.

HENRY: At this point I don't know how the devil I can get out! Where's that light....

MARY: Be quite, please, be quite. they'll hear us, they'll find us. Henry please.

F/X: PHONE RINGS

HENRY: Well who's going to answer the telephone?

F/X: HUMMING BEGINS and PHONE CONTINUES TO RING

(Mary is crying in terror throughout)

HENRY: There's that noise again! It's in this house! Mary what is this? Mary what's happening? You know now answer me!

MARY: (she continues her cry of fright)

HENRY: Stop it, Mary, stop it! Somebody's downstairs! Who's down there? Who?

MARY: Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. Oh, hush, please, please be quiet. They might go away, please, please.

MUSIC STING

ANNOUNCER: Between his wife's terror and the electric humming from below, Mr. Morris felt a great fear. They trembled together in silence in the attic. Mr. and Mrs. Morris – parents of the little girl. then they heard steps coming up up the stairs...

F/X: FOOTSTEPS on STAIRS

ANNOUNCER: ...and a voice.

MINK: (calling sweetly almost singing)
Mommy. Daddy. Where are you?

ANNOUNCER: And a queer cold light became visible under the door crack. The strange odor and the alien sound of eagerness in Mink's voice was almost more than they could bear. each wanted to scream.

F/X: HUMM BUMP

MINK: Mommy. Daddy.

ANNOUNCER: And another sound...

F/X: LASER SOUND ATTACKING DOOR LOCK

ANNOUNCER: And the attic lock...melted.

(we hear whimpering of Mary and Henry)

ANNOUNCER: Mink. Mink with bright little eyes and tousled hair, peered inside. And behind her, tall, wavering blue shadows frightful shadows.

MINK: Peek a boo.

MARY and HENRY: (bloodcurdling screams)

END MUSIC UP