

I'M LISTENING

A Dramatic Reading

by
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Out of a sound sleep, I sat straight up. The lessons my body had learned a decade plus before, reacting to a baby's cries in the middle of the night, kicked in. I didn't hear the phone until it rang a second time, shattering the stillness. Unwilling for it to ring again, I lunged for the phone. The time glowed red in the dark: 1:17 a.m. My stomach took a split-second trip to the basement. I was in no condition to handle anything gone wrong at this hour!

I tried to talk, but only croaked into the receiver. My voice was still tangled in sleep. I stopped, cleared my throat. "Hello."

"Mom, it's me."

I reached over and turned on the lamp next to my side of the bed. My husband rolled over.

"Mom, I'm sorry to call so late. But I'm in trouble. Big trouble.

I waited, not making a sound. I didn't want to break the connection. Trouble in the middle of the night—a precious daughter out somewhere, on her own, calling for help. If you were in my place, if you were the mother of this teen-aged daughter...

I was caught between the fear of doing the right thing thoughtlessly and dread of doing something wrong. There was sobbing on the line, heart-breaking to hear.

"Oh honey, what trouble are you in?" My husband sat up, placed his hand under my elbow, supporting me. Until then, I hadn't realized I was shaking. He mouthed, "Who is it?" and reached for the receiver. I shook my head, and he slid out of the other side of the bed.

"I'm so scared, I don't know what to do." She took a deep trembling breath, but said nothing. An awkward silence began and lengthened as neither one of us said anything, only to be broken by a click, as my husband came back into the bedroom, listening on the cordless extension.

"Don't hang up! Don't hang up!"

"Don't worry, I'm still here. It's ok, I'm here."

With that reassurance the dam burst and the whole story began to pour out.

--- END OF FREE PREVIEW ---