

Lights Out

DARRELL HALL'S THOUGHTS

By Wyllis Cooper

Originally Broadcast March 23, 1938

Transcribed by Megan Johnson for Arizona TheatreWorks

CAST

Announcer

Darrell

Hall

Wayne

Girl (spirit fiend)

Mary

Spirit Voice #1

Spirit Voice #2

Spirit Voice #3

Spirit Voice #4

Man on the Street #1

Man on the Street #2

Woman on the Street #1

Woman on the Street #2

Judge

Jury Foreman

Man in Court #1

Man in Court #2

Woman in Court #1

Woman in Court #2

NARRATOR: (Hauntingly) Lights out, everybody.

F/X: Bell tolls 12 times, wind up at 6th tolls. . . wind continues after bells die and climax's with a gong

NARRATOR: Tonight, Light's Out presents another psychological drama. A play in which the principal part is taken not by the character himself, but his thoughts. The voice you are about to hear is that of the thoughts of one Darrell Hall, accused murderer, sitting in a courtroom awaiting the return of the jury, which is to decide whether he is to live or die. And as he waits the thoughts in his mind sieve and swirl, sieve and swirl, sieve and swirl. . . (continuing)

HALL: Guilty. . . not guilty. . . guilty. . . not guilty. . . guilty. . . not guilty. . . guilty. . . Father in heaven, why don't I stop thinking those words? Words those jurymen are saying.

WALLA of voices saying "guilty" or "not guilty"

HALL: No, no I've got to stop thinking of what's going on in that room. The jurymen,

I've got to stop thinking of them. I've got to keep my head clear, I've got to figure things out. When did all this start? Yes, I remember. That night, Wayne and I were sitting in my room talking about dreams. I remember he said...

WAYNE: Oh, come on, Darrell, don't expect me to believe that one.

HALL: (talking) Well I'm certainly telling you the truth.

WAYNE: A fellow with your imagination wasting your time teaching biology to a bunch of co-ed nitwits. No, sir, you should be writing fiction.

HALL: (laughing) I assure you, my dear Wayne, I've told you the truth.

WAYNE: You're really serious?

HALL: Of course I am.

WAYNE: You actually mean that in all your life you've never had a dream?

HALL: Never.

WAYNE: Not even when you were a child?

HALL: To my knowledge, I've never had a dream in all my life.

WAYNE: Well how do you like that?

HALL: (laughing) I like it very well. I close my eyes. . . oblivion. . . and then I wake up. No nightmare hangovers for me, thank you.

WAYNE: Now wait a minute there, let me get this straight. You mean you've never even had a dream after, you know. . . after eating a Welsh Rarebit at midnight or after eating a dozen green apples or anything like that?

HALL: Believe me, Wayne, I've never had a dream of any shape, form or description in all my life. A dream to me is just a word. Something that happens to other people but not to me.

WAYNE: But everyone must dream.

HALL: Well, perhaps. But it just so happens that my subconscious doesn't work that way. I tell you again, I have never dreamt.

WAYNE: Well what do you know about that? Just unbelievable, I tell you, unbelievable.

HALL: (thinking) Yes, that's what he said, unbelievable. It was unbelievable that I'd never dreamt. And then after awhile he went away and left me there. It was early evening. But I remember that, somehow, strangely, I was very tired. I sat down in the easy chair.

(talking) Oh, I'm so tired.

(thinking) I closed my eyes, and slept. And then, then, it happened. A strange murmuring in my head.

F/X: murmur begins and continues

Yes, that's how it started! A murmuring as if in warning. And then in the darkness around me, strange faces lifting and falling. White faces, faces without hope, their eyes full of horror. Their white blood was dripping, bleeding wordlessly in the ways that made the heart in me cry out in pity. Suddenly, I knew I was asleep and dreaming. Yes, dreaming for the first time in my life. And these faces I was seeing were things out of the dream. And even as I knew that, F/X: murmur out

the dream was gone. Blackness. And yet I knew that I was still asleep. I had a terrible feeling of foreboding of a horror to come in that dream. What! How? I didn't know. But I wanted to stop sleeping. I wanted to open my eyes quickly before. . . (Silence) and then I saw. . . her. Moving slowly toward me out of the darkness that was my dream. At first, a white wraith-like thing, and then I saw it was a woman. Yes, the body of a woman but the face, Father in heaven, that face. Gross, unclean, thick, bestial brows, the lecherous writhing of thin crimson lips that lifted from teeth, white and pointed, and flecked with blood. Yes, her glorious body, and a face from Hell. Closer. . . closer to me. And then she spoke. . . one word. . .

GIRL: Kill.

HALL: Yes, that's what she said, kill. And as she said it she moved closer. Her hands went out, her eyes, in my dream I screamed! (PAUSE) I awoke. I remember,

F/X: clock chimes, continuing

just at that second, the clock on the mantel began striking. Five. . . six. . . seven. . . thankfully, I counted each chime, since the hearing of it meant that I was awake. Awake out of the horror of that dream. When the clock had stopped chiming I sat there. My one thought was "If this is dreaming, let me never dream again". I heard a sound. What was that? I sat still, afraid to move! And then I laughed, it was my own heart. F/X: heart thumping

My own heart, still pounding with fright at what I'd seen in my first dream. Oh, why do I sit here thinking of what has been. The jury in there. . . they've got to hang me.

F/X: Walla of "guilty" and "hang him"

No no, I mustn't think of them. Better to keep my thoughts on how it all started. Better to figure things out. Where was I? Ah yes. . . sitting there, listening to the beating of my heart, thinking of the horror of that dream. And then, suddenly, that same wordless murmur I'd heard in my dream was whispering in my head again.

F/X: murmur begins and ends

As quickly as it began it was gone. How could this be? I was awake. Awake! This was no dream. Then why had I heard that wordless entreaty? That same sound that had come

from those miserable white faces that had floated before me while I slept. Why? Why!?!?

GIRL: Ah.

HALL: I heard it. A sound behind me. Who? . . . Why yes, my friend Wayne. It must be he, come back into the room, standing behind my chair, thinking I was asleep. I turned around and said. . . (talking) Wayne, is that you? (blood-curdling scream) (SILENCE)

(thinking) Yes, I screamed. I screamed so loudly there was blood in my throat, for it was she again. That woman. That woman out of my dream. But this wasn't a dream. She was standing there, I tell you, she was standing there looking at me. And those lips out of Hell said that one word. . .

GIRL: Kill.

HALL: I jumped to my feet. No one in the room, no one I tell you. I was standing there, my head reeling. Who was she? Where did she come from? But there was no one in the room. Had there been anyone there? I didn't sleep that night, but by morning, yes, by morning I had it all figured out. Two dreams, that's what it'd been, and the second had been more vivid than the first. Why of course, I'd never dreamed before, so of course my first dreams would seem reality. How easy it was to quiet the unrest in my mind. Easy to make oneself believe what one wants to believe. And yet, some measure of uncertainty remained with me, and Mary saw it in my face when I had dinner with her that night. . .

F/X: sounds of a restaurant

MARY: Darrell, do you mind if I ask you something?

HALL: (talking) Why, what a question, of course not.

MARY: Is there something wrong?

HALL: You mean with the dinner? Well you know, this is my favorite restaurant.

MARY: With you, dear. Has something gone wrong at the university?

HALL: Why do you ask that?

MARY: The worry in your eyes.

HALL: Oh.

MARY: What is it dear?

HALL: Oh, it's nothing, it's nothing important.

MARY: You changed your mind about loving me?

HALL: Mary.

MARY: Then tell me what it is, please.

HALL: Alright. It's really nothing to concern yourself over, just a . . . a dream.

MARY: Dream? Darrell, you dreamt?

HALL: Yes, last night.

MARY: How marvelous. Now you're normal even when you sleep.

BOTH LAUGH

HALL: That's right. I'm back to normal.

MARY: And here I thought from the expression on your face that it was something really important.

BOTH LAUGH AGAIN

MARY: And I suppose in your first dream you dreamt of a glorious seductive woman.

HALL: No Mary.

MARY: Ah. Did you have a nightmare?

HALL: If you don't mind, let's not talk about it anymore. Shall we have our dessert now? Now, I suggest the hot green apple pie with cheese.

MARY: Darrell, was it as bad as all that?

HALL: Horrible.

MARY: Oh, that's cruel. Your very first dream an unhappy one. Oh well, I'm sure that if you dream again you've more interesting times ahead. Oh, Darrell, look at the time, a minute to seven, and we promised the Armstrongs we'd pick them up at seven-fifteen.

F/X: murmuring begins

MARY: Darrell, what is it? Your face. . .

HALL: Do you hear it?

MARY: Hear what?

HALL: You do hear it, don't you? The voices.

MARY: Voices? Darrell, what are you talking about? Why the people in this restaurant are the most well behaved.

F/X: murmuring stops

HALL: Gone. Just the way it was before.

MARY: Darrell please, if this is a joke please tell it to me.

HALL: GASP

MARY: Darrell, well what is it? What are you staring at? What's behind my chair? What's there, Darrell, tell me. . .

HALL: (SCREAM)

F/X: clanging

MARY: Darrell, the table.

F/X: confusion in the restaurant

MARY: Why did you throw over the table? Darrell, what is it? What is it? Why did you scream like that? What's the matter with you Darrell?

PAUSE

HALL: (thinking) Yes, she wanted to know why I had done it, screamed, thrown over the table. They all wanted to know. But how could I tell them? Tell them of her, standing behind Mary's chair. That thing of degradation. And those lips saying kill. I went home. Mary thought I was overworked. . .

MARY: Darling, you've been working so hard. Go home and rest, dear, that's all you need, rest.

HALL: (still thinking) Rest, rest, what good was rest? I had to reason things out. All my life I'd lived with reason and then this, this horror. I had to know all about it. Though I was certain it was no dream, what I had seen there in the restaurant was no thing of sleep. Hallucination! Yes, that was it. I had been working hard. Too much work was the answer, and rest would cure that, yes, indeed. And so I rested through the next day. It was quite dark when I awoke. The phone rang. . .

F/X: phone rings

It was Mary, calling to find out how I felt.

MARY: Are you sure you're alright, Darrell?

HALL: (talking) Yes, Mary, yes I'm fine, thank you.

MARY: You sound all right.

HALL: Your advice was good, dear. Apparently rest was just what I needed.

MARY: Then go along back to bed. I'll talk to you tomorrow.

HALL: Alright, dear. Thanks for calling.

MARY: Goodbye, Darrell, sleep well tonight.

HALL: (thinking) I hung up the reciever.

F/X: click

And then the clock on the mantle began striking.

F/X: clock strikes

VOICE #1: Always at seven, always at seven, always at seven, always at seven.

HALL: Yes, that was true. Each time it had been seven when it happened. And then, with the last chime of the clock I realized it was seven again. Seven! Would I see her again? I stood there, back up against the wall. Waiting, so quiet. I could here the clock ticking away the seconds. Would it happen again, this hallucination of mine? I waited. I heard no pitiful murmur of voices. Just quiet.

F/X: clock ticking

So dark in the room. I could see the shadowy emptiness of the chair against the other wall. And then the chair was no longer empty. There was some one in it! I said. . . (talking) Who's there? Talk to me, who's there?

(thinking) No answer. The strange darkness in the room. Deeper and deeper I could see nothing and then two swirling pools of flame and white. Closer and closer. I stood there, I couldn't move. A rumbling began in my brain.

F/X: rumbling fades in

Fear, I tell you, fear tearing up my brain, louder and louder while those red circles of light came closer and closer. Father in heaven, what was it? What!?!?

F/X: rumbling reaches climax and then falls silent

And then I knew. It was her eyes. Her eyes burning close into mine. Into the brain of me, bounding one thought into me.

GIRL: Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill.

HALL: Why did she say that? Why? Why? Kill whom? Why should I kill? Why should I kill? If I had known then,

F/X: door opens

WALLA

HALL: The jury, they're coming back, the verdict, what? No, not yet, still out. Oh, they've got to find me guilty, I've got to hang. I've got to. If I live. . . oh, but I mustn't think of that. I must think of what happened. Where was I? Ah, yes, that, that woman. Her eyes pounding that word into me, and then gone again. This was no dream. Then what? A voice within me whispered. . .

VOICE #2: (with increasing intensity) Crazy. . . Crazy. . . Crazy!

HALL: (talking) No! That horror was real. It was real, real as the flesh of me. (thinking) And with that realization a cold wind blew around me and latched at my heart. Oh, that she was reality, somehow I knew that I was lost. And so it began. Night after night, at the stroke of seven. First that wailing dirge of those lost souls. . .

F/X: murmuring begins

And then her writhing lips. . .

GIRL: (with increasing intensity) Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill.

HALL: Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Father in Heaven! Words began pounding in my head so that even when she wasn't there I heard them. If I hid in my room, if I didn't go out, people would see this madness that had come over me. I went nowhere and soon I knew that they were talking of me. Wayne. . .

WAYNE: I don't know what's come over Darrell, hides in his rooms, won't even talk to me. Something's wrong, very wrong.

HALL: And Mary. . .

MARY: Please Darrell, you've got to let me see you. This talking over the phone. . . what's wrong? What's wrong?

HALL: Night after night the horror. . .

F/X: murmuring begins

And the greater horror. . .

GIRL: Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill.

HALL: Mary pleaded with me.

MARY: Darrell if you love me please let me see you, talk to you. Come over to my house tonight, oh please, Darrell, perhaps I can help you. Please darling, please.

HALL: I didn't want to go, but I went that night. Perhaps she could help. Yes, help me understand the madness of those wailing voices, drifting white faces. Understand the horror of that woman. Mary, so understanding, so gentle, she could help me clear my head of the madness.

F/X: door opens and closes

MARY: Oh, Darrell, you're here at last.

HALL: Mary, help me. You will help me.

MARY: Oh Darrell, your face, so white.

HALL: Oh I. . .

MARY: Don't talk yet, sit here and rest.

HALL: I'm sane, Mary, believe me, I'm sane.

MARY: Of course, dearest, of course you are.

HALL: It's that madness outside of me, those white drifting faces, moaning at me.

MARY: Rest, darling.

HALL: And that woman out of Hell.

MARY: Woman?

HALL: Her eyes, lips, telling me to. . .

F/X: clock chimes

HALL: The time!

MARY: What?

HALL: The time! What time is it?

MARY: Why it's seven.

HALL: GASP

MARY: Darrell what is it?

HALL: I'd lost track! I've got to get out of here!

MARY: Darrell don't! Wait! Don't go!

HALL: Too late.

MARY: Darrell what is it?

HALL: Too late.

MARY: Late?

HALL: You hear them, don't you Mary?

MARY: I'll call a doctor.

F/X: murmuring begins

HALL: Listen to them. Their voices are so loud tonight. Listen Mary!

MARY: Darrell, don't! There's no one here.

HALL: Do you hear them? You must hear them! What are they saying? Louder and louder trying to tell me something. What are you saying, out there? What are you telling

me?

MARY: Darrell! Stop! Stop!

F/X: murmuring stops suddenly

PAUSE

HALL: They're gone! The faces, voices. . . gone! GASP Now she'll be here.

MARY: Darrell, please, you're frightening me.

GIRL: Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. Kill. (Continues)

HALL: You hear her, Mary, you hear her.

MARY: No, Darrell, please.

HALL: Louder and louder and louder. I hear her! Make her stop, Mary. Stop it! Stop it! I can't take anymore! Yes, yes! Go away! Go away and I'll kill! I'll kill! I'll kill!

MARY: Darrell don't!

HALL: Kill, kill, kill, kill (Continues)

MARY: GROANS IN PAIN

HALL: . . . kill, kill, kill GASP Mary! Mary!

PAUSE

HALL: (thinking) Dead. I had killed her. My sweet, gentle, little Mary. Killed her with my own hand. I opened my hand.

F/X: thump

HALL: She fell to the floor. I went out into the street.

F/X: wind

HALL: People all around me. Hurrying. I was in no hurry. What that woman had wanted, I had done. I had killed. I walked all night, it didn't matter where. And in the morning I found myself on the campus of the school. Before the very building in which a class was waiting for my lecture. I went in.

F/X: door opens, voices, door closes

HALL: I walked up on the platform.

F/X: footsteps, voices fade

HALL: And looked down into their faces. I said to them. . .

(talking) Ladies and Gentlemen. My lecture today will be on a selective fact of evolutionary. . .

(thinking) I stopped. A murmur in the air, those voices. . .

F/X: murmuring begins

HALL: . . . again. But it was broad daylight I'd never heard those voices in daylight before. What did they want of me, what were they saying? There was a strangeness in their pitiful voices. Yes! Yes like a dirge, a dirge of tears, who fall for someone, for me, yes, for me. And then. . .

GIRL: (cackling/laughing)

HALL: Her voice. Laughing, laughing, triumphantly. Then I understood. For the first time I understood everything. She had triumphed over me. That was why those lost souls were wailing a dirge over me. I was hers, hers forever!

(Cackling stops)

HALL: I turned and ran out of there like a mad man, ran, ran. And as I ran, those voices of the damned were taunting me.

F/X: murmuring begins very loud

VOICE1: You are doomed as we are doomed.

VOICE 2: We listened to her. . .

VOICE 3: Now you are one of us.

VOICE 4: Through all eternity.

HALL: No! No! I covered my ears with my hands and ran! No use, I heard them.

VOICE 1: Go to the gallows.

VOICE 2: Pay for what you have done.

VOICE 3: No rest for those who murder.

VOICE 4: One hope, man, one hope.

F/X: voices out

HALL: So that was it. My one hope. If I paid society for my crime, she would fail. I would be free of her that thing! That essence of evil. That phantom who called me to murder so that their souls would be slaves to her for all eternity. Yes, yes, I'd pay for my crime. I ran all the way back to Mary's house. Yes, I'd pay gladly with my life to have peace for the rest of oblivion. I went back into the house. Yes, Mary was lying there. Cold. I lifted her. Those same hands that had crushed the life out of her, lifted her and carried her out into the sun. My eyes were so filled with tears that I could hardly see

where I walked. People began milling about me.

WALLA

MAN #1: He's got a woman in his arms.

WOMAN #1: Why's he carrying her?

MAN #2: She must have fainted.

WOMAN #2: No, no she's dead.

MAN #2: What?

MAN #1: Who killed her.

ANGRY WALLA

MAN #1: Enough of that. Hey mister, who killed her?

HALL: (talking) I did.

MAN: Who killed her?

HALL: I killed her. With my own hands I killed her. Please, I want to die for it.

WALLA

HALL: (thinking) And then the trial. My friends, they wanted to save me. Clever attorneys, sanity commissions and twists of the law. But I wanted to die. I tell you I had to die. If they set me free, if I lived and died as most men die the death they call a natural one, then she would have me. Oh no! I want to hang by the neck until dead. I want that noose around my neck. The trap beneath my feet! The jailer pulls the switch. . .

F/X: bang

My feet dancing in air! The noose strangling me as my hands strangled Mary. Free of that horror with the writhing lips and blood stained teeth.

WALLA

JUDGE: Order in the court. Order in the court.

HALL: The jury. They're coming in. Guilty! They've got to find me guilty.

JUDGE: Gentlemen of the jury, have you reached a verdict?

FOREMAN: We have, your honor.

JUDGE: The Foreman will read the verdict.

HALL: Guilty, you've got to find me guilty. Guilty, Guilty! (continuing)

FOREMAN: We the jury, find the defendant guilty of murder in the first degree.

WALLA

HALL: (yelling) Guilty! You hear that? All of you? GUILTY! (LAUGHS JOYOUSLY)
I'll be free of you. I'll have peace. You failed, you fiend, you! You'll never get. . . chokes,
groans

F/X: thump

WALLA

MAN #1: Stand back, everybody.

WOMAN #1: Doctor! Right this way doctor!

WOMAN #2: Ambulance! Call an ambulance!

DOCTOR: Stand back, please. It's no use, this man is dead. Heart attack.

MAN #1: Holy. . . would you take a look at his face?

MAN #2: Yeah, as if he was lookin' at the devil himself.

GIRL: (Cackle laugh)

MUSIC