

Nightmares Do Come True
By Ian Guy

Narrator
Robert Hopkins
Matron/Shuffling figure
Dr. Catt
Innkeeper/Shuffling figure
Samuel Bell/Shuffling figure
Elizabeth Bell

The stage is dark. Slowly the lights come up to reveal, seated in a chair, an elderly man. His legs are covered by a blanket, by his side is a small table on which is a glass and a small bottle. He holds, in one hand, a diary. His left hand is in his lap, the hand covered by a fold in the blanket. Slowly the man raises his head and addresses the audiences.

Narrator: Ah. Thank you all for coming. I hadn't imagined that so many people would want to turn out on so cold a night as this to listen to an old man's ramblings. But then ghosts have always had the power to attract, to fascinate and, of course, to terrify. For that is what you will hear tonight. A tale so terrifying that you may never sleep again. And as you cower under your bedclothes later trying to tell yourself that ghosts do not exist remember what I tell you now, remember my words. I was there. All that I am about to tell you now *did* happen. I witnessed most of the events myself. I was involved. I was there. I saw and, what is worse, I heard. Sounds that I will never forget until my dying day. Sometimes I think I still hear. When all around is quiet, when I sit alone in my room, when the day is at its end, when the world sleeps I can still hear it. You can see a bottle on the table. A fine wine some of you may think or a refreshing cordial. No. It is my medicine. A medicine I have had to take ever since that fateful day so many years ago. It calms, it soothes, it heals, but it doesn't make me forget. Here, in this journal written all that time ago, is my story. A story, I can tell, you are longing to hear. Very well then. Hear it and never close your eyes again.

The lights on stage come up in a slow fade to reveal, in the gloom, a small bed. In the bed is a sleeping boy, Robert Hopkins. As the Narrator continues to speak he is seen thrashing from side to side, moaning quietly. He mumbles in his sleep, quietly at first then louder culminating in a series of screams or yells.

Narrator: The year was 1896 and thirteen year old Robert Hopkins slept fitfully in his bed at school. It was his first term as a boarder at Thetford Grammar School. Thetford, if you do not know it, is in Norfolk. Norfolk, a county so flat, so bleak, so empty where the wind shrieks across the flat landscape and the sky is so wide and so big it makes you feel small and lost. And there is no place to hide. Robert lies asleep in his bed, in the topmost dormitory that he shares with another 9 boys. They sleep peacefully, untroubled, the day's events at school the only things on

the edges of their minds. But poor Robert Hopkins is troubled. He moans, he shrieks, he cries out. But still he sleeps. His cries wake the formidable Matron, a woman not best pleased to be woken from her sleep. Sleep that has been interrupted for many nights in a row by the boy. With a groan she gets out of her warm bed and walks the short distance across the landing and into the dormitory.

Enter the Matron, a formidable woman in her 50's. She is dressed in nightdress, a dressing gown and a night cap. She carries a small candle.

Matron: *(in a hissing whisper)* Hopkins! Hopkins! Wretched boy. Wake up before you rouse the whole school from their beds. *(she shakes him awake)* I will *not* have this again boy. Wake up now and stop your screeching.

Hopkins wakes with a start.

Hopkins: Matron? I'm sorry Matron, did I wake you again?

Matron: Did you wake me indeed. Do you think I wander the school at this time of night for my health? Of course you woke me. Screaming fit to wake the dead you were. If I hadn't stopped you you'd have woken the rest of the boys then where would we be.

Hopkins: I'm sorry Matron. I truly am. But it was him again. He was coming for me. From over the heath.

Matron: Heath? What heath? Look out of the window boy, what do you see? *(She moves to the window and holds up the candle)* I see no heath! I see a road. An honest to goodness road that runs all the way from here in Thetford to the market at Brandon six miles away. There is *no* heath. I told you that last night, I told you the night before that and I tell you again now. This is just a bad dream you're having. There is no heath outside your window and there is certainly no man coming for you. Although I tell you this Robert Hopkins I will take no more of your nonsense. First thing tomorrow morning you and I will be paying a visit to Dr. Catt. You tell your silly story to him and see what he has to say. I'll tell you what he has to say. "Utter nonsense" he'll say and he'll take his cane and beat this silliness out of you. Now go back to sleep and make sure you're quiet or I'll beat you to sleep myself. Is that understood Hopkins?

Hopkins: Yes Matron. I'm sorry Matron. I'll be quiet, I promise, you'll not hear me again tonight.

Matron: There'll be trouble if I do.

She exits. Hopkins get out of bed and moves to the window.

Hopkins: I know you're out there. I know you want me for something and I know

you're coming to get me. But I'll best you. I'm not frightened of you, I'm not. I'll show you.

The light in the dormitory fades out and Hopkins exits. During the next speech the 'bed' becomes a desk.

Narrator: Young Hopkins spent the rest of the night with his face pressed up against the window waiting for the mysterious and terrifying stranger and next morning, after breakfast, Matron was as good as her word and marched the boy straight to his Housemaster Dr. Catt. Dr. Catt was new to both the school and the area

The lights come up to reveal Dr. Catt, the new Headmaster, a European gentleman in his 40's, sat at his desk. He is marking books. There is a knock at the door, he calls "enter" and Matron enters. She is now dressed.

Matron: I'm sorry to bother you Sir but it's Hopkins, I'm at as loss as to what to do with him. He'll soon become a disruptive influence on the other boys if something's not done.

Catt: Hopkins?

Matron: One of the new boys this term sir. He's placed in the top dormitory. And a right terror he's turning in to. Had me up in the night more times than I care to remember Sir. And he's getting worse, screaming and moaning fit to wake the dead.

Catt: Is the boy ill Matron? Should the doctor be summoned?

Matron: No sir, nothing like that. Nightmares he says. But I think it's just trouble making. I had him marked down as trouble the minute I laid eyes on him. There's nothing wrong with him that the birch wouldn't cure sir. If you asks my opinion.

Catt: Thankfully I am *not* asking your opinion Matron. Have the boy's family been informed? It could just be a case of simple homesickness. A letter from his parents could be just the cure that he needs.

Matron: The boy has no family Sir. He's was a foundling by all accounts. Left on the doorstep of a local parsonage nearby when he was but a month old. Brought up by the Parson and his childless wife out of the goodness of their hearts. When they both passed over there was money put aside for his schooling.

Catt: So the boy is all alone.

Matron: Which is why we're the ones who're left.....

Catt: Let me speak to the boy please Matron. See if I can get to the bottom of what's troubling him. There's no need for you to stay.

Matron: (*icily*) I see. Well I'll just get him in then.

She exits and returns immediately with Hopkins who is now dressed in his school uniform.

Matron: Now you stand up straight Hopkins. And speak out loud and clear when Dr Catt asks you questions.

Catt: Thank you Matron that will be all.

She exits

Catt: Now then Hopkins, Matron tells me that you've been troubled with bad dreams, would you like to tell me about them?

Hopkins: It's just one dream sir. I keep having the same one. Sometimes I see more than I did the night before but it's always the same one.

Catt: How long have you been having them?

Hopkins: Almost three months now sir.

Catt: And it's always the same one?

Hopkins: Yes sir.

Catt: Well, start at the beginning and tell me what you can remember.

Hopkins: Yes sir. It never seems that I've been asleep for long and I find myself on a long stretch of heath land - gorse, heather, grass-grown holes and mounds - and there's a dismal silver moon which shows up all the twisting on the track. And then, in the distance, I see a patch of mist, or it looks like mist. But then I see that it's moving along the track. But not in a straight line. It seems to flit from side to side disappearing from time to time behind clumps of gorse and thorn trees. As it gets closer I see that it's not mist, it's a man and he's running and then skipping and jumping over the larger pieces of flint of the path. He's moving in a funny way. And then I see that he's coming straight towards me so I start to run. But he redoubles his efforts to reach me. On he comes, getting larger as he moves forward in the moonlight and then the moon falls on his face and I see him clearly. He has the most loathsome face Sir, all silvery white and ashen grey but there's something not right about his features sir, they look 'wrong'. And he's hurrying. And in his hands, which he holds in front of him, he's clutching a circular wooden plate. There are ruffles at his wrists but the material is all yellowed and decaying. Like his skin.

The boy pauses, shaken by his own storytelling.

Catt: Is that all?

Hopkins: No sir. There's a bit more. (*Dr. Catt motions for him to continue*) I try to get away Sir but my feet feel like they are made of lead. I feel such terror that this...this thing will catch me. I try to run but I can hear him behind me. The moment comes when he's hovering right over me. I am hypnotised with fear because I can see his face closer now. It's thickened and puckered and he has real menace about him. Just as he's about to press his face up to mine I manage to scream for help and that's.....and that's when I wake up.

Catt: And the dream is always the same? Always the same place, always the same man?

Hopkins: Yes sir. Sometimes I see more of what's on the horizon. A sort of strange building but it seems so odd that...

Catt: Describe it to me.

Hopkins: Well sir there's the building. A long narrow building with a central tower. Just the one single tower in the middle. And the tower has thatched cap.

Catt: A thatched building is not so unusual here in Norfolk Hopkins, there are many hundreds. And the same across the border in Suffolk. If there were only a few we could try and trace it but with so many hundreds it would be impossible.

Hopkins: Trace it sir? Do you think the building is real then sir? Do you believe me?

Catt: Yes Hopkins, I believe you. In my youth I was a student of hypnotism and spiritualism, I still have an interest but my life as a school teacher takes all my time now. Your story fascinates me and I will find out what I can. I think I know what sort of man he was though, he is, or perhaps was, a leper. The bowl you say he was carrying marks him out as one although why he should be seeking you out I do not know. Have you ever seen a leper before Hopkins?

Hopkins: No sir, never. I think one once came to the parsonage when I was very little so my Mother said but it was a woman not a man. She was after alms. She was given some pennies and some bread and sent on her way. There were more of them passing through the village my Mother said because she heard the bell that the lead one rang as they made their way through. Some of the boys and men threw stones but the parson, my father, made them stop, so they did.

Catt: Well try not to worry too much about it Hopkins. I'm sure if we both put our minds to it we'll come up with an answer to these dreams. I have to be away from

school for a few days now but when I come back we will talk again on this. In the meantime I hope your sleep is not troubled too much.

Hopkins: Thank you Sir. But Matron said...

Catt: Don't you worry about the Matron, I'll make sure that she understands the situation.

The lights on Dr. Catt and Hopkins fade and the Narrator is once again illuminated. The bed/desk is moved to the back of the stage, the chair to the front.

Narrator: And so he did. Dr. Catt was as good as his word and although Matron had many more interrupted nights as Hopkins dreams continued she never once took him to task for it. The good Dr. was away just over a week on school business - visiting the families of boys who were to join the school at Christmas time and at the last place, a small Inn on the outskirts of Thetford, once affairs had been settled, he sat down by the fire for a drink and a meal before setting off for home.

The lights come up and show Dr. Catt sitting by a fire. The Innkeeper enters with a tray on which is a tankard of ale, a bowl of soup and a hunk of bread.

Innkeeper: There you go Dr. that should keep the wolf from the door. My wife and I hope that you enjoy the meal and your ale.

Catt: Thank you, you're very kind, I'm sure I will. Your Inn is very quiet tonight, I trust that business is well.

Innkeeper: Oh don't you worry about us sir, there'll be enough passing trade to keep us busy. It's a busy enough road.

The lights dim a little as Dr. Catt and the Innkeeper continue their 'talk' - the actors should mime at this point. As the 'talk' progresses the Innkeeper shows Dr. Catt some pictures.

Narrator: And so Dr. Catt passed a pleasant evening chatting to the friendly innkeeper. All thoughts of Robert Hopkins and his dreams pushed to the deep, dark corners of his mind. They discussed how long the man had been running the Inn, they talked of the local area, the people and the architecture. The Innkeeper had local scenes adorning the walls of the Inn and he showed them enthusiastically to the Dr. A brief mention, a look at each one and they moved on to the next when suddenly one of the prints caught the Dr's attention more than the others.

The lights come up on Dr. Catt and the Innkeeper

Catt: (suddenly) This one, where is it?

Innkeeper: That one's quite local sir. Do you know it?

Catt: No. I've never seen it before in my life but I've had this building described to me by someone else. What do you know about it?

Innkeeper: Only local chatter sir. I know it's called Warren House and it's somewhere along the Brandon road. Not that you'd know it was there if you didn't know about it as it's set back from the road. A fire almost destroyed it about ten years ago, no one knows how it started, and it was partially rebuilt but there always seemed to be 'bad luck' about the place if you know what I mean. No one would take to it. As far as I know it's never been finished and is now starting to fall into disrepair again.

Catt: Does no one have charge of the building?

Innkeeper: There's a Warrener lives in a cottage nearby, name of Samuel Bell if I remember correctly. He sort of keeps an eye on the place, acts as a caretaker as it were. He and his wife seem happy enough to have an albatross in their back garden.

Catt: There is someone I must take to meet this Mr. Bell. Does he welcome visitors?

Innkeeper: Truth be told sir they're an odd couple, keeps themselves to themselves. But there's no malice to them, reckon they'd welcome you in soon enough.

The lights fade on Dr. Catt and the Innkeeper and they leave the stage taking all props with them.

Narrator: And so the die was cast. A chance meeting, a glimpse of a faded picture, a mysterious house, a strange couple. The fates were all conspiring. Soon the terrible nightmares would be explained and the demons quelled. Dr. Catt hurried back to the school and told young Hopkins his strange tale. The boy could scarcely contain his excitement or his fear as a date was agreed upon for them to go and meet Mr. and Mrs. Bell at the ruins of Warren House. You can but only image the thoughts that were going through the boys head as they approached the desolate spot for there it stood, a hoary tower of medieval brick, grey stone and russet walls. On all sides stretched the warren, sweeping miles of sand, furze and loneliness, with scarcely a friendly barn or a haystack studding the whole landscape. All around, the sandstone mounds and hummocks had been worn smooth by countless waves of windblown sand. Into this Dr. Catt led a frightened boy of thirteen summers. A boy whose life was about to be changed forever.

The light come up to reveal Dr. Catt and Hopkins on a bare stage, they are both wearing coats and Hopkins wears a cap. Samuel Bell, a slightly gruff man in his

40's enters quickly behind them.

Bell: It has that effect on people. Takes them back a bit when they sees it. Not that we get that many folk who want to look at it. Who'd want to come out here to take a look at a crumbling ruin with a foul past?

Catt: Mr. Bell you startled us. We didn't hear you coming.

Bell: What good would a Warrener be if half the animals in the countryside heard me coming? Be no point being the man who takes care o' the rabbits if there's no rabbits to be had would there.

Catt: No, of course not. Mr. Bell my name is Dr. Leopold Catt, this is Robert Hopkins we made an arrangement to meet so that we could see Warren House.

Bell: I know who you are although why you want to go looking round this place just because of some dream is beyond me.

Hopkins: Excuse me sir but it's *exactly because* of my dream that we want to see the house. To see if there's anything that would give us a clue as to why I dream about it.

Catt: Can you, for instance, tell us the history of the house. Has it always been called Warren House?

Bell: Not much to say really. Been a house here for hundreds of years in some form or another though t'wasn't always called Warren House you're right. Used to be known locally as The Lepers House. It was a place of seclusion for lepers and most people kept away. See those old mounds over there? That's where the poor unfortunates was buried when the disease and the sufferin' got so bad it took 'em off.

Hopkins: Why did it shut? Did they all die?

Bell: There was a bad fire here oh, maybe ten, twelve years ago. Not quite sure how it started. Some say one of the lepers went mad and caused it, some say it was folk from nearby who was frightened they'd get sick others say it was a lightning strike. I wasn't here then so I can't tell you for sure. A lot were killed in the fire, those that lived got moved somewhere else.

Catt: And no one has lived here since?

Bell: No. Some incomer from Suffolk tried to renovate and was planning to move in but first his mother and then his wife got took ill and died. Then one of the builders fell from the roof and was killed and another said he was being followed by a shadow and never came back to work. Things never got started again after that.

Catt: And now...?

Bell: it's slowly decaying. Floors is rotting, windows are going, bits collapse here and there. I generally stays away although my wife comes here from time to time to tend to the chickens that we have roaming free here. They use an old stone coffin as a trough and perch in the old refractory. Nothing bothers them.

Hopkins: Can we go inside sir. I feel I shan't rest until I have put aside this awful story that haunts my dreams.

Bell: Go ahead. But I'll not join you. I stay on the outside of that place. Always feel like I'm being watched and that I'm not alone when I've had to go in before. My wife, Elizabeth, she's in one of the downstairs rooms, she'll show you around. She thought a bird had got stuck in one of the rooms in the tower, says she saw it beating its wings against the window earlier but she can't find it. She'll be in there somewhere looking for it. You can go in through there.

He points to an open doorway. At his urging Catt and Hopkins go through it.

Narrator: And so the young boy and his teacher stepped over the threshold into the dark, dank ruin. What horrors would they find within? Through room after rotting room they roamed, never looking back, their only aim to find out the meaning behind the dreams. Their goal, a freeing finality.

Hopkins and Dr. Catt appear through another door.

Catt: Mrs. Bell? Mrs. Bell? Are you here?

Hopkins: Is she here sir?

Catt: She must be here somewhere, we've looked everywhere else. Mrs. Bell?

Mrs. Bell, a weather-beaten woman in her 40's enters. She is dressed, eccentrically, in the style of a gypsy. Robert removes his cap.

Mrs. Bell: I'm here. I heard. Such a noise. Shouting fit to wake the dead. Was that your intention?

Catt: Mrs. Bell, your husband said you were here and that you'd show us around although I must say we have seen most of it in our efforts to find you.

Mrs. Bell: I'm sorry for that but I thought I heard the bird back up here again. This room is one of the few that still has its glass, easy for a bird to get stuck up here.

Hopkins: When we were climbing the stairs I felt I was being watched, I don't like it here.

Catt: We'll be gone soon enough.

Mrs. Bell: That's a well-worn stair right enough, all those stone steps worn down by many, many years of the naked feet of the lepers walking up and down. This is the topmost room in the tower, nowhere else to go from here. They must have come up to look out and see the countryside. A bleak countryside when all's said and done. (*looking intently at Hopkins, as if for the first time*) There's something about you boy. Something familiar. You been here before?

Hopkins: Only in my dreams. And even then never in the building, I could only see it in the distance.

Mrs. Bell: You have a link to this house, I feel it. I'm sensitive to the spirits, they're on the edges of our awareness now, they're watching, waiting. (*moving to a cupboard (bed/desk) in the corner*) Here, look, there are a few things left that were salvaged after the fire. The workmen wouldn't touch them so they were just left. When Mr. Bell and I came here I did a bit of sorting. (*she takes out some wooden platters, bowls and a bell*). Here, hold them.

Hopkins: What are they?

Mrs. Bell: These are some of the begging bowls. The lepers used to carry them down to the Brandon road below where they squatted to beg from wayfarers and farmers. This is the leper's bell. The leper who led the party through a town or village walked a hundred or so yards ahead, ringing it to warn people to remain in their houses until the lepers had passed. It's been here in the tower ever since the lepers left. Although there was that one time when.. (*she pauses*)

Catt: Please, don't stop. Continue with your story.

Mrs. Bell: Well once there was farmer at Two-Mile-Bottom Common who did take the bell to use it as a sheep bell. It seemed to bring a curse with it. His cows went dry and barren, his sheep went down with rot while his small daughter died of some horrible disease. There was no rest for the farmer until the bell was brought back here.

Hopkins: Dr. Catt, this bowl, the bigger one, it's the one that the man in my dream carries. (*anguished*) Why is he tormenting me?

Mrs. Bell: We could summon them if you want. I could speak to them?

Catt: Are you a medium? Can you do this? I don't want any harm to come to the boy.

Hopkins: Please Dr. Catt, let her. I have to know who this man is, I have to know why I keep seeing him.

Mrs. Bell: I can try, that's all I can promise. Sometimes I feel things, sometimes I hear things. They may *not* come but I feel they are not far away. Come. Let's try.

The lights dim slightly as they prepare

Narrator: This was it, the climax of the whole terrible story. The moment when Dr. Catt and Robert Hopkins learned the truth. A truth that would scar one of them for the rest of their lives. Mrs. Bell arranged the group the way she wanted them then went into a deep, dark trance. Her breathing became shallow and steady, her head sunk to her chest then shot up again suddenly, her eyes staring wildly into the distance. And then came the sound (*A bell rings*) the sound of a leper bell being rung. But by whom? There were only the three of them in the room. A fog or a mist began to fill the room, the temperature dropped, all sound vanished.

The stage is flooded in a blue wash and 'mist' appears from all sides

Mrs. Bell (*using a different voice*): Robert Hopkins? Robert Hopkins?

Hopkins: What do I say Dr. Catt? What do I do?

Catt: Answer her Hopkins. I'm here, no harm will come to you.

Mrs. Bell: Robert Hopkins?

Hopkins: Yes? I'm here. Who are you? What do you want?

Mrs. Bell: Robert Hopkins, I have missed you. I have missed you so much. You are a fine strong boy.

Hopkins: Who *are* you?

Mrs. Bell: I come.

From out of the mist appear two shabby, hooded figures. One a man, one a woman. They are dressed in rags and bandages. The man carries a bell which he rings as he walks. The actors do not look at them as they cannot 'see' them.

Mrs. Bell: I cannot stay long. Others do not wish me to be here but I needed to see you, to know you are safe, to know that 'he' has not taken you.

Hopkins: Who is this 'he'? Why does he want me?

Mrs. Bell: 'He' is evil Robert, 'he' wants to do you harm, 'he' intends that you should be with us, with your family, where you belong/

Hopkins: With my family? Dr. Catt what do I say? What does all this mean?

Catt: Be strong Robert. If you want to get to the bottom of this mystery you must trust that this woman will guide you to the truth.

Mrs. Bell: Robert, Robert, it is no longer safe, the evil one comes. He is stronger than I, much, much stronger (*during this speech a mist swirls around them*). I cannot protect you Robert. I love you as only a Mother can but I cannot protect you from 'him'.

Hopkins: Mother? My Mother was a leper?

Catt: You told me that a woman tried to see you when you were a child but that they were chased away. It must have been her. She wanted to see you then and couldn't and is now trying again in death but there is someone wanting to stop her.

Mrs. Bell: He comes. He comes. *She screams loudly and appears to fall into a faint*

A third, stronger male figure, also hooded and dressed in rags and bandages appears. The other two lepers shy away from him in fear. He moves and stands beside Hopkins. Again the actors do not 'see' the ghost.

Hopkins: What do we do? Do we try and wake her?

Catt: Leave her. I suspect we are nearing the end.

Mrs. Bell revives and now speaks with a deeper more sinister voice

Mrs. Bell: Robert Hopkins. You were lost from us. Given away by the pathetic creature that bore you. That one who sprang from my loins should be so feeble disgusts me. You were to lead us when I was gone, you who carry my blood will join us and lead us again. They went to the fire that I summoned and perished so that we could stay together. My family must be one again.

Hopkins: *You* killed my Mother. You're my Grandfather and you killed your own daughter and now want to take me as well. What kind of a monster are you? You'll not have me, I'll not come. I'll fight you. I'm stronger than you. Goodness and light are on my side.

Mrs. Bell: Do *not* fight me boy, I am your blood

Hopkins: I *will* fight you. Leave me, leave this place. *Leave me alone.*

Robert raises his left arm, the hand is in a fist

Mrs. Bell: You will join us Robert Hopkins. You will lead us.

The 'Grandfather' figure moves forwards so that he is on the left hand side of

Robert. He reaches out and grabs the boys left arm. Robert screams.

Hopkins: Something's got me Dr. Catt. My arm, my arm!.

Mrs. Bell: Now you will join us. Do not fight it.

Catt: In the name of God leave the boy alone. Be strong Robert, say with me the Lord's Prayer.

Dr. Catt and Hopkins begin to recite the Lord's Prayer as the lights dim and their voices fade away quietly. Mrs. Bell slumps into Dr. Catt's arms, Robert lowers his head and rubs his left arm. The blue light goes as the light comes up once more on the Narrator.

Narrator: A terrifying ordeal to be suffered by one so young don't you agree. A trial for all involved but in the end good, and God, prevailed. The reciting of the prayer, and the firm determination of young Hopkins, drove the demons back from whence they came, Robert was rendered unconscious by the efforts, Mrs. Bell was no better once she came out of her trance but they came out of Warren House alive. Robert was no longer troubled by the dreams, his tormentor was gone but he no longer felt comfortable in Norfolk. He still feared the presence. So the good Dr. Catt arranged for him to finish his schooling in London and there, to this day, he remains. He feels safe in the heart of the City. But enough, thank you for listening to my tale, I must go, I'm tired.

He rises with difficulty due to his useless arm and slowly moves across the stage until he his standing behind Robert Hopkins.

Narrator: My name you say? Oh, Yes. Of course, I have to finish the story. Who am I? My name is Robert Hopkins. This is my story. All you have heard *did* happen, it happened because I was there and, at the end, when that vile creature took hold of me part of the accursed dream became reality. My arm, it burnt like fire, it withered, it peeled, it flaked, it died. My arm became infected with leprosy but it spread no further. It is why I can never forget, even when I sleep. And there are still times, when all is quiet, when the light is going and when no one else is near (*pause*) I can still hear the bell.

As the lights fade a bell can be heard ringing in the distance.

Curtain