

## **Meridian 7-1212**

***From the Columbia Radio Workshop***

***A radio play by Irving Reese***

***First broadcast August 24, 1939.***

### **Cast**

Announcer

*Time service operators*

Dot Day

Miss Tanner

Helen Cleary

Miss Wallace, their supervisor

*Other phone operators*

Hotel operator

British operator

British overseas operator

American operator

Unnamed Writer for *Manhattanite* magazine

Jim Fawcett, same

Male voice

Mr. Bradley, manager of time service

John

Grace, his wife

Joe and

Scott, American drunks in London

Percival, uptight British desk clerk

Ed, a lawyer

Neal, his assistant

Johnson, a criminal

**DOT (F)**

**When you hear the signal, the time**

**will be 11:30.**

**SFX TONE**

ANNCR                   The Columbia Radio workshop  
presents as the eighth program in  
its festival series...

DOT                   Meridian 7-1212.

ANNCR                   Written and directed by Irving  
Reese.

DOT (F)                When you hear the signal, the time  
will be 11:30 and one quarter.

SFX TONE.

DOT (F)                When you hear the signal, the time  
will be 11:30 and one half.

SFX TONE.

DOT (F)                When you hear the signal,

MUSIC DRAMATIC UNDER

the time will be 11:30 and (fade  
off)

MUSIC DOWN AND OUT



WRITER Mm-hmm. You can get me a cigarette.  
I finished the third pack an hour ago.

JIM Sure. Here.

WRITER Thanks. Maybe this'll be the Camel that broke the straw's back.

JIM Oh, very bad. You need some sleep.

WRITER Sleep? I can't go home unless this gets finished, and I can't finish this unless I get some sleep. What do you suggest, Mr. Worst of Experience?

JIM Go home.

WRITER Now stop being an idiot. I gotta have the copy in the hands of the printers at nine tomorrow morning.

JIM Ah, that's tough.

WRITER What time is it anyway? I've probably missed the last train connection.

JIM Dunno. Left my watch at home. You  
can call up.

WRITER Call up what?

JIM Meridian 7-1212.

WRITER What's that?

JIM The telephone time service. Excuse  
me, I forgot you were a commuter.

SFX PHONE PICK UP.

WRITER Meridian what?

JIM 7-1212.

SFX DIALING

WRITER M-E-7-1-2-1-2.

SFX PHONE RINGING.

WRITER Well that's something new I learned  
today.

DOT (F) When you hear the signal, the time  
will be 11:32 and one quarter.

SFX TONE.

SFX PHONE HANGUP.

WRITER 11:32. And I've been trying to get  
an idea since 8 this morning.

(Pause) I got it!

JIM You got what?

WRITER My story.

SFX PHONE PICKUP, DIALS.

WRITER Boy, this is a natural.

JIM What are you talking about?

WRITER Now, wait, wait.

SFX PHONE RINGS

DOT (F) When you hear the signal, the time  
will be 11:32 and one half.

SFX TONE.

WRITER Hello, operator. This is the editorial department of Manhattanite Magazine. I'd like to ask you...

DOT (F) When you hear the signal, the time will be 11:32

MAN Yeah, I know, girlie.

DOT AND WRITER (UNISON) and three quarters.

SFX TONE.

WRITER Listen, girlie, this is important. It'll only take a minute.

DOT (F) When you hear the signal, the time will be 11:33.

SFX TONE.

WRITER Hello, hello?

SFX JIGGLES PHONE.

WRITER Ah, she won't listen. Hey, Jim, help me out, willya?



JIM Ah, forget it. I'll be calling you.

WRITER Good luck.

MALE VOICE Meridian 7-1212.

SFX PHONE PICKUP, DIALS.

DOT (F) When you hear the signal, the time  
will be 11:33 and three quarters.

SFX TONE.

DOT (F) When you hear the signal, the time  
will be 11:34.

SFX TONE.

DOT (F) When you hear the signal,

DOT (F off) the time will be 11:34 and one  
quarter.

SFX TONE

MISS TANNER (Whispers) Okay, Dot. I'll relieve  
you now.

DOT Thanks, baby. I'll be back soon.

MISS TANNER When you hear the signal, the time  
will be...

SFX DOOR CLOSES.

MISS WALLACE

What's the trouble, Miss Day?

DOT

I've got a pretty nasty headache.

I'm sorry, Miss Wallace.

MISS WALLACE

Oh, that's all right. Do you want to go home? I'll arrange relief.

DOT

No. Thank you very much. I'll be all right in a moment.

MISS WALLACE

You go down to the rest room and relax. I'll send Miss Cleary down with you. Miss Cleary? Cleary?

HELEN

Yes, Miss Wallace?

MISS WALLACE

Will you go down to the rest room with Miss Day? She isn't feeling well.

HELEN

Certainly. Come on, Dot.

DOT:

Thanks, Helen. (off) Thank you, Miss Wallace. I'll be back soon.

MISS WALLACE

That's all right. Stay as long as you like.

SFX WALKING

HELEN

What's the matter, kid?

DOT

Just a headache, Helen. I'll be all right.

HELEN

Sure it's just a headache?

DOT

Of course. Why?

HELEN

Aw, come on. Spill it, kid. You haven't been yourself for a long time now. Is it a guy?

DOT

No, no really, Helen.

HELEN

Then you're homesick.

DOT

No. (more intently) Honest, Helen, it's nothing.

HELEN

All right. All right, kid.

SFX DOOR OPENS

HELEN

Well, here we are.

SFX DOOR CLOSES

HELEN

Now you lie down on the couch.  
There. Now I'll just tuck this  
around you.

DOT

(sigh) I feel better already. I  
don't need the blanket, Helen.

HELEN

Now you just lie still. While I fix  
you something.

DOT

Don't bother, Helen.

SFX BOTTLE OPENS, POUR.

HELEN (off)

I wish you'd tell Aunt Helen what's  
worrying you. Maybe she could help.

DOT (quiet)

I'll be all right.

HELEN

Sure you will. Here. Now drink this  
down - fast.

SFX DRINKING.

HELEN

Now that's it.

DOT

Whew. Must be good medicine. Tastes  
so bad.





- the last in Tommy's life. (pause)  
And he didn't do it. He couldn't  
have. He wrote me he was in the  
bank when it happened and someone  
swore he handed a gun to the man  
who did the killing but he had  
nothing to do with it.

HELEN (sympathetic reaction) Listen, kid. I'm gonna see the  
supervisor. We'll both get the  
night off. You come home with me.

DOT  
Oh, no, Helen. I'd die if anyone  
else knew. I'm so ashamed. I'm even  
sorry I told you.

HELEN  
But look, we don't have to tell  
them why we're going. I'll just say  
you're sick and I'm taking you  
home.

DOT  
No. No please. Nothing can help  
now. I'm better off working. I'd go  
mad just sitting around here  
thinking about it. I'd go mad!  
Please.







seconds regardless. You hear them  
but they can't hear you.

Jim (chuckles)

I know. We tried to question the  
girl and she paid no attention.

SFX FOOTSTEPS STOP

BRADLEY

Well here we are. You see the girl  
in the glass-enclosed office?

JIM:

Yeah.

BRADLEY

She's the time service operator.  
It's all soundproofed so no noise  
gets through.

JIM

Oh, yes.

BRADLEY

She's got three watches to check  
by, you'll notice. That little  
green light is the signal for her  
to start talking. The tone signal  
comes automatically.

JIM

And the girls are relieved right on  
the hour?





service. Is it because their  
watches stop or what?

DOT (off)

When you hear the signal the time  
will be 11:40 and three quarters.

SFX TONE.

BRADLEY (Whispers)

We don't know. All the calls come  
in on the dial system and you can't  
trace dials.

JIM (Whispers)

Ah, that's too bad. It would be  
interesting to know. Could you  
offer a guess, from personal  
knowledge? We could quote you...

DOT

When you hear the signal the time  
will be 11:41.

SFX TONE.

BRADLEY (Whispers)

Your guess would be as good as  
mine. Time plays an important part  
in the lives of people in a big  
city. We get several hundred calls  
an hour. Maybe somebody trying to













JIM (whispers) Well, I mean there wouldn't be any reason for anyone outside New York City to call Meridian for the time.

DOT (Under) When you hear the signal, the time will be 11:45 and one half.

SFX TONE

BRADLEY (whispers) Oh, no. New York City has its own local time service because of the difference in time. Now in Chicago, people call Cathedral 8000. And in Los Angeles, Overick 8900. It would be very silly for someone from Chicago, or anyplace outside of New York to call here for the time, don't you think?

JIM (whispers) Of course. It was stupid of me to ask. It would be very silly for anyone outside of New York  
... (fades)

SFX BIG BEN CHIMES.

SCOTT (Drunk) I said Percival, send us a drink.

PERCIVAL Well, it's quite late, sir.

JOE Quite late sir, says he. C'mere  
c'mere c'mere. Listen, Percival,  
it's never too late for another  
drink.

SCOTT and JOE (Raucous laughter)

PERCIVAL Gentlemen, gentlemen, don't you  
think you better go to your rooms?  
It's nearly five a.m.

SCOTT (imitates Percival) Don't you think you better go to  
your rooms?

JOE Laughs.

PERCIVAL (blustery protests)

SCOTT Hey now. We want another drink.  
SFX SLAPS BAR  
And we ain't going to our rooms  
SFX SLAPS BAR  
till we get another drink.  
SFX SLAPS BAR

JOE You tell 'em ole boy ole buddy ole  
pal. Now send us another drink.

PERCIVAL I'm very sorry, gentlemen. You're in London, you know, and it's against the law to serve intoxicating spirits at this hour.

JOE We don't want intoxicating spirits. We want Scotch.

SCOTT and JOE laugh.

SCOTT That's a good one. We don't want intoxicating spirits. We want Scotch.

PERCIVAL Gentlemen, you'll awaken all the guests.

JOE ou betcha we'll wake up all your guests...if you don't get us a drink.

SCOTT You said it, ole pal. You said it. A drink to the king!

JOE No no no no no no. We've been drinking to the king all day. Let's drink to the queen.

SCOTT Right right right right. This one  
is for the queen. All right,  
Queenie!

SCOTT and JOE Laugh.

PERCIVAL Gentlemen, I am only the desk  
cl(a)erk. I have nothing to do with  
liquor...

SCOTT Call up the Queen and tell her Joe  
and his li'l pal from New York  
wanna have a drink.

JOE That's right. That's right. Gimme  
gimme gimme that phone there. I'll  
get Buckleham Palace.

PERCIVAL Gentlemen, gentlemen, please. The  
Queen's asleep.

SCOTT Then get us a drink.

PERCIVAL Gentlemen (exasperated) It's five  
a.m. There are rules prohibiting...



PERCIVAL                    Please, gentlemen, please don't shout.

SCOTT                        Well, what about it, Percival?  
What time is it in li'l ole New York?

PERCIVAL                    I believe there is a difference of five hours. That would make it 12 o'clock in New York.

SCOTT                        Well what about the daylight savings time, huh?

JOE                            There ain't no more daylight savings time.

SCOTT                        Oh yeah, well five bucks says there is. Five bucks.

JOE                            Okay, it's a bet. Oh boy, I got a sucker here. Here, give me the phone, Percival. I'll get you the time all right.

SFX RATTLES CRADLE

JOE                            Hello, hello?

BRIT OP (F) Are you there?

JOE I never heard no complaints,  
dearie. (Laughs)

BRIT OP (F) I beg your pardon.

JOE Aw, that's all right. You didn't do  
nuthin'. Get me Meridian 7-1212.

BRIT OP (F) Sorry, sir, but there is no such  
exchange.

JOE Ah that's what you think. Yes there  
is. You just get me New York.

BRIT OP (F) All right, sir, I'll get you  
overseas service.

JOE Overseas? Oh, yeah, yeah.

BRIT OVERSEAS OP (F) Overseas service.

JOE Get me Meridian 7-1212 in New York,  
Li'l old New York.

BRIT OVERSEAS OP (F) Just a moment, sir. Hello New York,  
hello New York.

US OP (F) Hello London. Number please.

BRIT OVERSEAS OP(F) Meridian 7-1212.

US OP (F) You must be mistaken, London.  
That's the New York time service.

JOE No mistake at all, dearie. You just  
get it.

US OP (F) Very well, sir.

SFX PHONE RINGS

DOT (F) When you hear the signal, the time  
will be 11:50 and one half.

SFX TONE

JOE Thank you, dearie.

SFX PHONE HANGUP.

SCOTT What'd she say? What'd she say?

JOE (cackles) She said the time was 11:50 and,  
uh, somethin'. (Cackles again ) I  
told 'em, didn't I, Percival? This  
wise guy.

PERCIVAL Yes, sir, You told him.

JOE Hand over the five bucks, Mr. Smarty. Hand it over. Get it up.

SCOTT Okay, okay. Here.

PERCIVAL Begging your pardon, sir...

JOE What'd you do?

PERCIVAL The transatlantic call will be three pounds.

SCOTT How much is three pounds?

PERCIVAL That is fifteen dollars in American money.

JOE That's okay, that's okay. Mr. Wise Guy here, he'll pay it.

SCOTT Oh, no. No no no no no. Calling New York was your idea, not mine.

JOE Oh, so you're gonna get technical, eh? Reneging?

PERCIVAL Gentlemen...

JOE So you're gonna Welch, huh?



you're sending an innocent kid to  
the electric chair.

JOHNSON

I'll bust right out cryin' in a  
minute

LAWYER

All right. There isn't enough time  
to try being decent with you. I've  
done everything I can. Now get  
this. I don't care what happens to  
me, but I'm not letting that kid  
burn. Sit here and think it over.  
If you change your mind, call me.  
I'll be right behind that door. And  
remember this: if Tommy Lambert  
dies, you're not going to leave  
this room alive.

JOHNSON

Ah, you can't scare me.

LAWYER

All right, just think it over.

SFX FOOTSTEPS, DOOR OPENS AND CLOSES.

NEAL

How'd you make out, Ed?





saw Tommy Lambert hand the gun to Roy Peters in the Oswego National Bank.

JOHNSON

So what?

NEAL

Was that true, Johnson?

JOHNSON

Yes, Mr. Lawyer. On my word of honor as a good Boy Scout, (shouts in pain) Cut that out! Stop!

NEAL (Through clenched teeth) How's that feel, Johnson?

JOHNSON

I'll take care of you later. Ow!  
Don't! You're killin' me!

NEAL

Would you like to talk now, rat?

LAWYER (off)

Neal! Neal! What are you doing?

NEAL

Giving Mr. Johnson a taste of what he needs.

JOHNSON

Ow! Stop him!

NEAL

Yeah, this won't bother him any more than the shock of 2000 volts through the Lambert kid's body.

JOHNSON                    You better stop him or you'll burn  
too! Oooowww!

NEAL                        Feel it, skunk!

JOHNSON                   Stop it! Stop it! Okay, I lied. I  
got paid to say I saw the gun. I  
needed the money.

NEAL                        All right, rat! Now he'll be quiet  
for a minute. We've got to move  
fast. What time is it?

LAWYER                    Quarter to twelve.

NEAL                        But you said it was quarter to  
twelve last time I asked.

LAWYER                    Good Lord. My watch stopped. I'll  
get it.

SFX PHONE PICKUP, DIALS.

LAWYER                    M-E-7-1212.

SFX PHONE RINGS.

DOT (F)                    When you hear the signal, the time  
will be 11:59.

SFX TONE

SFX HANGUP.

LAWYER

Oh God.

NEAL

What's the matter?

LAWYER

An innocent boy is going to die. In  
one minute.

DOT

When you hear the signal, the time  
will be 11:59 and one quarter.

SFX TONE

(Pause)

DOT

When you hear the signal, the time  
will be 11:59 and one half.

SFX TONE

(Pause)

DOT

When you hear the signal, the time  
will be 11:59 (beat) and three  
quarters.

SFX TONE.

(Pause)

DOT (falling apart)            When you hear the signal, the time  
will be 12 o'clock.

SFX TONE

DOT                                Tommy! Tommy!

SFX ELECTRIC CHAIR HUM.

ANNCR                            You have been listening to the CBS  
presentation of Meridian 7-1212, an  
original radio play by Irving  
Reese. It was produced and directed  
by the author through an  
arrangement with Paramount Pictures  
and came to you from Hollywood as  
the eighth program in the Columbia  
Workshop Festival Series. It  
originally aired August 24, 1939.

