



Albert T. Viola

Adapted from the works by Edgar Allan Poe

Norman Maine Publishing

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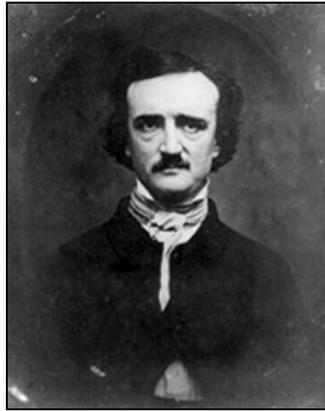
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The Tell-Tale Heart, The Raven, the Black cat

CLASSIC HORROR COLLECTION. This collection contains three of Edgar Allan Poe's most popular Gothic horror stories and preserves all of the psychological terror that made them classics. In "The Black Cat" (1842), a prisoner tells how, in an alcoholic rage, he kills his favorite pet, a black cat, and then murders his wife and entombs her body in the cellar. In "The Raven" (1845), the author is lamenting the death of his true love, Lenore, when he hears a rapping on his chamber door and is visited by a raven. As the author asks the raven a series of questions in which the raven merely replies, "Nevermore," the author goes from being weak and weary to completely grief-stricken over the loss of Lenore and realizes his soul "shall be lifted—nevermore." In "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843), a murderer begins to hear the heartbeat of his victim as he is being questioned by police. As the heartbeat grows louder, the murderer becomes increasingly agitated until he confesses to having killed an old man with a "vulture eye," dismembering his body, and hiding the body parts under the floor.

Performance Time: Approximately 60 minutes.

Check out our collection of humorous Edgar Allan Poe stories entitled "Three Sundays in a Week," which includes the stories "Some Words With a Mummy," "Lionizing," and "Three Sundays in a Week."



(1809-1849)

About the author

One year after Edgar Poe's birth in 1809, his father abandoned the family, and then Poe's mother died the following year. Poe went to live with the Allans, who lived in Richmond, VA, and he was given the name Edgar Allan Poe, though he was never adopted by the family. Poe married his 13-year-old cousin, Virginia Clemm, in 1835, and it is thought that her death from tuberculosis just two years later inspired much of Poe's writing. The publication of Poe's poem "The Raven" (1845) made him an instant success, but he always suffered from financial problems during his lifetime. In 1849, Poe was found wandering the streets of Baltimore and was taken to the hospital, where he died at the age of 40.

The Black Cat (3 Flexible)

PRISONER: Dressed in a light blue prisoner's uniform; flexible.

DOCTOR: Well-dressed; flexible.

GUARD: Wears a prison guard uniform; flexible.

The Raven (1 M, 1 F, 1 flexible)

POE: Edgar Allen Poe.

RAVEN: Dressed in black with black see-through material covering the face; flexible.

WOMAN: Ghostly figure who wears a long white dress with long sleeves and a high collar and a white veil that covers her from head to waist.

The Tell-Tale Heart (4 Flexible)

SUSPECT: Flexible.

INSPECTOR DEVON: Lead investigator; flexible.

INSPECTOR WINTHROP: Flexible.

OFFICER KIRKPATRICK: Flexible.

NOTE: For flexible roles, change wording script accordingly.

Sets

The Black Cat: 1850, Baltimore, Maryland. A jail cell. The cell has bare walls and a single bunk bed hung and attached to the wall with chains. Directly across from the bed is a small table and a straight-back chair. There is a high window with iron bars CS.

The Raven: 1845, Baltimore, Maryland. The study of Edgar Allan Poe. There is a door SR and above it is the statue of Pallas Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom. There is a tree just outside the door. An ornate armchair with violet velvet upholstery is upstage of the door. There is a large mahogany desk with a picture frame, an empty glass, and a bottle of cognac on it. A life-size metal skull sits on the downright corner of the desk and a large globe is DSR of the desk. A wheel candelabrum of several candles hangs above the desk. A bookcase filled with books stands USC, and there is a lattice window SL.

The Tell-Tale Heart: 1842, New England town. The kitchen of a small Cape Cod style home. The walls are roughly plastered. There is a hole in the floor, which is missing a wooden plank. In the center of the kitchen there is a large table and two straight-back chairs—one to the right and one to the left of the table. There is an old black woodstove USR with a captain's chair next to it and a few logs stacked nearby. A red glow emanates from the wood stove. There are two windows SR, and between them sits a bench on which there is a pail and dipper. Above the bench, a towel hangs from a nail, and above that, a double-barreled shotgun is suspended from two pegs. There is a door DSL, which leads to another room, and a front door SR.

Props

The Black Cat: Large bag or briefcase, writing tablet, pen, ink bottle, tin cup, water pitcher.

The Raven: Piece of paper, bust of Pallas, stack of papers, picture frame with a picture of a Lenore in it, bottle of cognac, cognac glass, metallic skull, paper mache raven (see production note under Special Effects.)

The Tell-Tale Heart: Wood-burning stove, 3 floor planks, washcloth, 2 pieces of luggage, men's handkerchief, glass of water, water pitcher, pail with dipper, shotgun.

Special Effects

The Black Cat: Bell tolling midnight.

The Raven: Rumbling of thunder, crack of thunder, flashes of lightning, clock striking midnight, roll of thunder, tapping on a wooden door, Raven flying (see production note below.)

The Tell-Tale Heart: Red glow from wood-burning stove, crack of thunder, knock at the door, heartbeat.

Production Note

Raven flying and perching on the bust of Pallas. Attach two eyehooks to a black paper mache raven. Attach a wire to the two eye hooks. String the wire from outside the lattice window. The raven can be slowly pulled with a thin wire attached to its nose. The raven will be pulled upward and offstage into the darkness above the bust of Pallas. An actor dressed in black with black see-through material covering the face will stand on a ladder just outside the door. As the paper mache raven disappears into the darkness, the actor can use a raven hand puppet to make the raven appear as if it is perched on the bust of Pallas.

“The fury
of the demon
instantly possessed me.
I knew myself
no longer.”

The Black Cat

(AT RISE: 1850, Baltimore, Maryland. A jail cell. A Prisoner, dressed in a light blue prisoner's suit, is sitting on a chair staring out at the audience. A Guard, wearing a uniform, enters the cell.)

GUARD: There's someone here from the sheriff's office to see you.

PRISONER: Yes, yes, send him in. *(The Guard steps to the door and motions to the visitor to enter. A well-dressed Doctor enters, carrying a large bag.)* I did not expect a doctor.

DOCTOR: I am qualified phrenologist.

PRISONER: I do not need anyone to study the skull and bumps on my head. I wanted someone qualified to help me tell my story.

DOCTOR: The study of the skull is craniometry. Phrenology focuses on personality and character. I was told you wanted to reveal details of the crime that were unknown before. I work for the constable when he is in need of my services. He felt I might also be helpful to assist you in telling your story. *(Doctor takes out a tablet, a pen, and ink.)*

PRISONER: What are you doing?

DOCTOR: I am also a phonographist. *(Prisoner looks up, puzzled.)* Phonography. Pitman shorthand. I will record all that you reveal. I'm sure you don't want to leave anything out.

PRISONER: No, nothing must be left out.

GUARD: I'll be right here, Doctor.

PRISONER: *(Firmly.)* I am not mad!

GUARD: I'm just following orders.

(Prisoner gives the Guard a stern look.)

PRISONER: *(To Doctor.)* Please sit, so you can write. *(Doctor sits on the bed.)* Yes, I need to reveal the entire story.

Tomorrow I die. I have only a short while before my death, and this is enough time to come to terms and accept responsibility for the consequences of my actions.

DOCTOR: I understand.

PRISONER: Although, the events I refer to have terrified, tortured, and now will destroy me. Perhaps after hearing what I am about to relate to you—a series of mere household events that grew out of proportion—I want those in the future to understand and sympathize with me and thusly come to the conclusion that what I refer to was not odd at all. Because of your field of study, I invite you to ask any questions that will make my story comprehensible, and I will answer.

DOCTOR: Thank you. I'm ready.

PRISONER: Again, just a series of mere household events. Let's see, now, where do I start?

DOCTOR: Why not from the beginning?

PRISONER: Yes, of course. Ever since I was a child, I was noted for my obedience, sensitivity, and kindness. This made me a target for teasers and bullies.

DOCTOR: Did you have any friends?

PRISONER: No, and I was an only child.

DOCTOR: How did you occupy your time at home?

PRISONER: Animals.

DOCTOR: Animals?

PRISONER: I loved animals and my parents indulged me with a great variety of pets. I spent most of my time with them.

DOCTOR: What was it about them that you loved?

PRISONER: I was never so happy as when feeding and caressing them. This trait, love of animals, grew with me into my manhood. It was my greatest source of pleasure.

DOCTOR: When did you meet your [wife]? *[Note: If Prisoner is female, change the pronouns accordingly and "wife" to "husband."]*

PRISONER: She was a family friend. We married early. I was so happy to find in my wife a similar interest, a love of animals. She lost no opportunity bringing home the most agreeable of domestic pets. We had birds, goldfish, a fine dog, rabbits, a small monkey, and a cat. The cat was a large and beautiful animal, entirely black, astute, and wise to an astonishing degree. My wife, who was a bit superstitious, alluded to the ancient popular notion, which regarded all black cats as witches in disguise. Not that she was ever serious about her comments. I only mention it in passing. Pluto...this was the cat's name—

DOCTOR: (*Writing.*) Pluto?

PRISONER: Yes, Pluto...named after the Greek God of the underworld. He was my favorite pet and playmate. I alone fed him. He attended me wherever I went about the house. It was even with difficulty that I could prevent him from following me through the streets. Our friendship lasted, in this manner, for several years until my behavior started to change. I had been drinking alcohol a great deal. I grew, day by day, more moody, more irritable, more insensitive to the feelings of others.

DOCTOR: And your wife?

PRISONER: I verbally abused her daily. I eventually succumbed to alcoholism.

DOCTOR: And the pets?

PRISONER: My pets sensed this immediately. I not only neglected but mistreated them. All but Pluto. I restrained myself from causing him any harm. Everyone else was fair game...even my wife.

DOCTOR: You mistreated her as well?

PRISONER: I physically abused her.

DOCTOR: How long did this continue?

PRISONER: My disease grew upon me—for what disease is like alcohol! And at length, even Pluto—who was now becoming old and consequently somewhat shy and weak—even Pluto began to experience the effect of my ill temper.

DOCTOR: What happened next?

PRISONER: One night returning home much intoxicated from one of my haunts about town, I noticed the cat avoided me. I ran after him and seized him. In his fright at my violence, he inflicted a slight wound upon my hand with his teeth. The fury of the demon instantly possessed me. I knew myself no longer. I took from my waistcoat pocket a penknife, opened it, grasped the poor beast by the throat, and deliberately cut out one of his eyes from the socket.

(Pause. Prisoner and Doctor look at one another.)

DOCTOR: How do you feel about what you have done?

PRISONER: I blush, I burn, and I shudder speaking about the damnable atrocity.

DOCTOR: Go on.

PRISONER: When reason returned with the morning, I experienced a sentiment of half-horror, half-remorse for the crime of which I had been guilty. But it was, at best, a feeble and equivocal feeling, and the soul remained untouched.

DOCTOR: Did you refrain from drinking alcohol?

PRISONER: No, I again plunged into excess and soon drowned in wine all memory.

DOCTOR: What happened to the cat?

PRISONER: He slowly recovered. The socket of the lost eye was frightful to look upon, but he appeared to no longer suffer from pain.

DOCTOR: How did the cat respond to you?

PRISONER: He went about the house as usual, but, as might be expected, fled in extreme terror at my approach.

DOCTOR: How did you feel about that?

PRISONER: There was still love in my heart for the cat, but that love soon turned to irritation because of my actions. I soon developed an uncontrollable desire—a feeling of perverseness, one of the most primitive impulses of the human heart, an unconscious desire to do all things, even

wrongs, for pleasure's sake. This uncontrollable spirit moved me to consummate the injury I had inflicted upon the unoffending brute. One morning, in cold blood, I slipped a noose about its neck and hung it from the limb of a tree. Hung it because I knew that it had loved me and because I felt it had given me no reason of offence. Hung it because I knew in so doing I was committing a sin—a deadly sin that would so jeopardize my immortal soul as to place it, if such a thing were possible, even beyond the reach of the infinite mercy of the most merciful and most terrible God. *(Stands and begins to pace.)* On the night of the day on which this cruel deed was done, I drank myself to sleep only to be awakened by the cry of "fire." The curtains of my bed were in flames. The whole house was blazing. It was with great difficulty that my wife, a servant, and myself made our escape from the intense and uncontrollable fire. The destruction was complete. My entire worldly wealth was swallowed up, and I resigned myself to a future filled with despair. *(Moves to the table and looks at what the Doctor is writing.)* Are you documenting all of this?

DOCTOR: Everything. You may go on.

PRISONER: Good! On the day succeeding the fire, I visited the ruins. The walls, with one exception, had fallen in. This exception was found in a compartment wall, not very thick, which stood about the middle of the house, and against which had rested the head of my bed. The plastering had here, to a great measure, resisted the action of the fire—a fact that I attributed to its having been recently spread. About this wall, a large and curious crowd collected, and many seemed to be gazing at a particular portion of it with eager attention. The words "strange," "peculiar," "odd," and other similar expressions excited my curiosity. I approached and saw—as if graven in a detailed image as if it were a sculpture upon the white surface—the figure of a gigantic cat. The impression was given with an accuracy truly marvelous. There was a rope about the animal's neck.

(Prisoner and Doctor are still for a moment.) Would you like a drink of water?

DOCTOR: No, thank you.

(Doctor continues to write. Prisoner gets a tin cup, pours water into it from a pitcher, and sits on the bunk bed. Guard exits.)

PRISONER: Well?

DOCTOR: *(Looks up from writing.)* Yes?

PRISONER: And how do you find my character and personality, may I ask?

DOCTOR: You are a unique man. Do you believe there was a link between the disaster and the atrocious act you mentioned?

PRISONER: A link?

DOCTOR: Cause and effect?

PRISONER: Of course, nothing more. Like I said, a simple series of household occurrences that grew out of proportion.

DOCTOR: Of course.

(Guard returns.)

PRISONER: *(To Guard.)* Yes, what is it?

GUARD: They will be coming for you soon.

PRISONER: Thank you. *(To Doctor.)* We must hurry and get all the details and facts on paper. I don't want to leave anything out.

DOCTOR: I'm ready.

PRISONER: *(With renewed energy.)* For months, I could not rid myself of the spirit of the cat. I went so far as to regret the loss of the animal. I continued to drink and began to think about finding another pet of the same species to take its place.

DOCTOR: Did you ever find one?

PRISONER: One night, as I sat half stupefied in a tavern, my attention was suddenly drawn to some black object sitting

upon the head of one of the immense hogsheads of gin or rum, which was the chief furniture in the room. I approached it and touched it with my hand. It was a black cat—a very large one—fully as large as Pluto and closely resembling him in every respect but one. Pluto had not a white hair upon any portion of his body, but this cat had a large, although indefinite, splotch of white along nearly the whole region of his breast. We stared at one another for the longest time. Then I touched him.

DOCTOR: How did the cat react?

PRISONER: He immediately arose, purred loudly, rubbed against my hand, and appeared delighted with my notice. This was the very creature of which I was in search of.

DOCTOR: What did you do then?

PRISONER: I sought out the landlord and at once offered to purchase it from him. However, he said he had never seen the cat before and did not know who owned it.

DOCTOR: What happened next?

PRISONER: I continued my caresses and later I went home. As I was walking, I sensed the cat was following me. I permitted it to do so, occasionally stooping and patting it as I proceeded. When he reached the house, he became extremely comfortable and familiar.

DOCTOR: How did your wife react to you bringing home the cat?

PRISONER: He immediately became a great favorite to my wife. However, for my part, I soon found a dislike for him arising within me. This was just the reverse of what I had anticipated. I became annoyed and disgusted with his fondness for me. By slow degrees, these feeling of disgust and annoyance rose into the bitterness of hatred.

DOCTOR: How did you handle your feelings?

PRISONER: I avoided the creature—a certain sense of shame and the remembrance of my former deed of cruelty prevented me from physically abusing it.

DOCTOR: Did you?

PRISONER: What?

DOCTOR: Did you abuse it?

PRISONER: I did not...for some weeks strike or harm it, but gradually...very gradually...

DOCTOR: Yes?

PRISONER: I came to look upon it with unutterable loathing and to leave its loathsome presence, as if it were a deadly disease. With my hatred for this cat, however, its attachment to me seemed to increase. It followed my footsteps with a stubborn and unyielding discipline that is hard for anyone to comprehend.

DOCTOR: In what way?

PRISONER: Whenever I sat, it would crouch beneath my chair or spring upon my knee, covering me with its loathsome caresses. If I arose to walk, it would get between my feet and thus nearly throw me down, or fasten its long and sharp claws in my clothes... (*Opens his hands, spreads his fingers like claws, and places both hands on his chest.*) ...mounting and scrambling to my breast. It was then I wanted to destroy it with one blow, but I restrained myself from doing so, partly because I remembered my former crime, but chiefly—let me confess it at once—by absolute dread of the beast. This dread was not exactly a physical evil...and yet I should be at a loss how otherwise to define it. I am almost ashamed to admit it, but the terror and horror with which the animal inspired me was heightened by its grotesque and fearful spirit that haunted me. My wife called my attention, more than once, to the character of the mark of white hair, of which I have spoken, and which constituted the sole visible difference between the strange beast and the one I had destroyed. You do remember the mark I refer to?

DOCTOR: Yes, a large splotch of white on the region of its breast.

PRISONER: Yes, but very indefinite. But by slow degrees—degrees nearly imperceptible—its outline became distinct. It was now the representation of an object that I shudder to

name—for this, above all, I loathed, and dreaded, and would have rid myself of the monster had I dared. It was now, I say, the image of a hideous—a ghastly thing—of the gallows! Oh, mournful and terrible engine of horror and of crime...of agony and death!

(The Doctor takes the pitcher and pours some water into a cup. Shaken, the Prisoner sits on the bed, and the Doctor hands him the cup.)

DOCTOR: Have some more water.

[END OF FREEVIEW]

“Once upon
a midnight dreary,
While I pondered
weak and weary,
Over many a quaint
and curious volume
of forgotten lore...”

The Raven

(AT RISE: 1845, Baltimore, Maryland. The study of Edgar Allan Poe, midnight. The rumbling of thunder is heard at a distance. A crack of thunder is followed with flashes of lightning seen through the lattice window. Poe is seated and writing at his large mahogany desk. Poe finishes writing on a piece of paper. He picks it up and places it on a stack of papers to the right of him. He starts writing on a new sheet of paper. He writes a few sentences, picks up the paper, looks at it, makes a correction, and places it on the stack of papers on his left. He stands, picks up a picture, and looks at it adoringly. He sits back down at his desk. A clock strikes midnight. Exhausted, Poe places his elbows on his desk and lowers his head onto his hands. After a moment, he picks up a bottle of cognac and pours himself a glass. He places one hand on the metallic skull and with the other hand, swirls the cognac, sniffs it, and then takes a sip. The roll of thunder is heard. Poe picks up the stack of papers and begins to read.)

POE: *(Reads.)* Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered
weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore,
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a
tapping, *(A slight tapping is heard from the door. Poe quickly
looks at the door. He turns back and sets the manuscript down.
He addresses the audience directly, as if telling them the story.)*
As of someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber
door.
“‘Tis some visitor,” I muttered, “tapping at my chamber
door—
Only this, and nothing more.”

(Thunder cracks. Flashes of lightning.)

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December,
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the

floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow; vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the lost
Lenore— *(Poe touches the picture frame and looks at the
picture with tenderness. Speaks to picture.)*
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels named
Lenore—
Nameless here for evermore.

*(Poe takes his hand off of the frame. Thunder rolls and cracks of
thunder are heard. Lightning flashes across the darkened room.
To audience.)*

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple
curtain
Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt
before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood
repeating
(More tapping at the chamber door. He looks at the door.)
“’Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door—
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door—
This it is, and nothing more.”

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
(Gets up and crosses to the door.)
“Sir,” said I, “or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore.
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came
rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber
door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you”—here I opened wide the
door— *(Opens the door wide. Thunder is heard much louder
and lightning is more intense than before.)*
Darkness there, and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there
wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream
before
But the silence was unbroken, and the darkness gave no
token,
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word...

(A small pin light beams down near a tree just outside the door.)

WOMAN: *(Offstage.)* Lenore!

POE: This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the
word...

WOMAN: *(Offstage, like echo.)* Lenore, Lenore, Lenore...
*[Note: For the following, the words sound as if spoken in an echo
chamber. The first "Lenore" is repeated much like Poe's
pronunciation and the second and third "Lenore" fade and drift
away.]*

[END OF FREEVIEW]

“Here! Here!
It is the beating
Of his hideous heart!”

The Tell - Tale Heart

(AT RISE: 1842, winter, 4 a.m. The kitchen of a small Cape Cod style home in a small New England town. The rolling and cracking of thunder is heard. A red glow comes from the stove. Moonlight and flashes of lightning light the stage. The cracking of thunder is heard. The Suspect is frantically replacing a single plank in the living room floor. He looks around and starts scrubbing the area near the plank in the floor. He continues cleaning different spots and areas of the room that lead from the SL door to where the single plank was placed in the floor. When he finishes, he puts the washcloth into the wood-burning stove. A knocking at the door is heard.)

SUSPECT: Yes? Who is it?

DEVON: *(Offstage.)* It's the police. *(Suspect answers the door. Inspector Devon, Inspector Winthrop, and Officer Kilpatrick are at the door.)* Sorry to bother you so early in the morning. I'm inspector Devon. This is Inspector Winthrop and Officer Kilpatrick.

SUSPECT: No bother. Please come in. *(They enter.)* What can I do for you?

DEVON: We received a complaint.

SUSPECT: Complaint?

DEVON: Yes, someone heard screaming and said it came from within this dwelling.

SUSPECT: Screaming?

DEVON: Yes, suspicion of foul play has been aroused; information has been lodged at the police office by one of your neighbors, and we have been ordered to search the premises.

SUSPECT: *(Laughing.)* Oh, no! Ha, ha! Ha, ha!

DEVON: [Sir]? Why are you laughing, sir? *(Suspect continues to laugh.)* *[Note: Change to "Madame" if Suspect is female.]*

SUSPECT: Oh, I'm sorry. I was not laughing at you. I was referring to the screaming. The screaming came from me.

DEVON: You? Why were you screaming, sir?

SUSPECT: It came from one of my dreams. I shrieked, officer.
Please accept my deepest apologies and extend them to the neighbors.

DEVON: We understand the owner of this home is an elderly man who lives here.

SUSPECT: That is correct.

DEVON: Where is he? We would like to ask him some questions.

SUSPECT: He is absent...in the country. Come look through the house. There is no one here. Please search. Search well.
(Devon nods and Kirkpatrick begins to enter the door SR.) That's my chamber.

(Devon looks at the door SL.)

DEVON: *(Indicating SL door.)* Is that the door to the old man's chamber?

SUSPECT: Yes, it is. *(Devon nods to Winthrop. Winthrop opens the door and goes into the room.)* You'll find his treasures are secure, undisturbed. *(Brings out some chairs from the table in the far corner of the room.)* Please sit. Rest.

KIRKPATRICK: *(To Devon.)* Nothing, Inspector. Everything seems in order.

SUSPECT: *(To others.)* Please, sit. Can I get you some tea?

(Dunlap and Kilpatrick remain standing.)

DEVON: No, thank you, sir, we need to get back to our post.

SUSPECT: Well, this is an unexpected pleasure having company at 4 a.m. How long have each of you been in the service of the law?

DEVON: Fifteen years. Winthrop has been in the service for 12 years.

SUSPECT: *(To Kirkpatrick.)* And you?

KIRKPATRICK: One, going on two. (*Winthrop enters, carrying two pieces of empty luggage. To Inspector Devon.*) Everything is untouched in the old man's room, Inspector. But I did find these two empty pieces of luggage.

DEVON: How odd... (*To Suspect.*) You said the old man was absent in the country. Did he not take luggage on his trip?

SUSPECT: But he did, Inspector. He has a third small piece of luggage which he took. (*Pause.*) It was a short trip.

DEVON: And might what you do, sir? What is your relationship to the old man who owns this dwelling?

(*Man sits CS and puts his head in his hands as if in pain.*)

KIRKPATRICK: (*To Suspect.*) Are you all right, sir?

SUSPECT: My head aches. It's nothing. What? What were you saying?

KIRKPATRICK: Would you like some water, sir?

SUSPECT: No, I'll be fine, thank you. What's that noise?

DEVON: What noise, sir?

SUSPECT: That ringing.

KIRKPATRICK: Ringing?

SUSPECT: Yes, that ringing.

DEVON: I hear no ringing, sir.

SUSPECT: A sound. A beat. A low, dull, quick sound, not unlike a watch enveloped in cotton. (*Low beating of a heart is heard.*) Listen...

(*Others listen.*)

DEVON: I hear no ringing, sir. You are becoming pale, sir. Perhaps you would like to go back to bed and lie down till first light. We'll be leaving now.

(*Sound of beating heart becomes louder.*)

SUSPECT: Hear it! What's that ringing? It is not within, I tell you. You are officers of the law. (*Strongly.*) You should know where the ringing is coming from. Can't you hear it? A sound. A beat. (*Gets up and begins pacing. He goes to different areas of the room listening and trying to discover where the sound is coming from. Beating becomes louder.*) What manner of men have we who call upon the law to intrude upon someone's home at an unholy hour?

DEVON: They are most concerned neighbors, sir.

SUSPECT: Concerned? They are watchers. They see all. They sit, wait, and watch.

DEVON: I must agree, sir, but of late, there have been more crimes committed in this neighborhood than any other in the town.

WINTHROP: (*To Suspect.*) There are all manner of men who haunt the streets at night.

KIRKPATRICK: (*To Suspect.*) A man was murdered in this neighborhood two months ago.

WINTHROP: (*To Suspect.*) Not to mention several women attacked after dark.

DEVON: (*To Suspect.*) Those who live in the area are becoming anxious and uneasy, sir, particularly when they hear something out of the ordinary.

WINTHROP: (*To Suspect.*) A husband and father of two was arrested not far from here last week by Officer Kelly.

SUSPECT: Who did he dispatch?

KIRKPATRICK: He didn't murder anyone, sir. Kelly picked him up looking into your neighbor's windows while on his beat.

SUSPECT: Yes, the beat. Listen...it's the beat, again.

(Beating of the heart becomes louder.)

DEVON: What beat, sir? We meant the "beat," the territory assigned to Officer Kelly.

SUSPECT: Yes, louder.

DEVON: What, sir?

SUSPECT: The beat—the sound—is getting louder.

DEVON: What beat, sir? There is no sound, sir. We should be leaving. Sorry to have disturbed you, sir. Oh, I do have just one last question, sir.

SUSPECT: Yes, yes, what is it?

DEVON: Why do you happen to be dressed at four in the morning?

SUSPECT: *(Continues to pace.)* I told you, I shrieked from a dream and could not go back to sleep. I got dressed because I could not go back to sleep.

DEVON: But why did you dress? Where would you go in a thunderstorm at 4 a.m. on a cold winter morning?

SUSPECT: What are you insinuating?! No more questions! Do you hear me? No more!

DEVON: Yes, sir. Why don't you rest, sir? Have a seat.

SUSPECT: Have a seat? Rest? *(Shouts.)* I will have a seat! *(Picks up his chair. Shouts.)* Hark! You know. You suspect but say nothing! You had no intention of leaving. I can't stand your hypocritical questions and smiles any longer. You have formed an alliance with the watchers! *(Smashes the chair down on the floor onto the plank he replaced earlier. Sound of heartbeat is louder. He looks at the plank with fright and slowly moves away from it. Shouts.)* Hark! Louder! Louder! Louder! Louder! *(To Police, shouts.)* Villains! Dispense with your charade!

[END OF FREEVIEW]