

THE TELL-TALE HEART-part 2

If still you think me mad, you will think so no longer when I describe the wise precautions I took for the concealment of the body. The night **waned**; and I worked hastily, but in silence. First of all I **dismembered** the corpse. I cut off the head and the arms and the legs.

Then took up three **planks** from the flooring of the chamber, and deposited all between the scantlings. I then replaced the boards so cleverly that no human eye - not even his - could have detected any thing wrong. There was nothing to wash out - no **stain** of any kind - no blood-spot whatever. I had been too **wary** for that. A tub had caught all - ha! ha!

When I had made an end of these labours, it was four o'clock - still dark as midnight. As the bell sounded the hour, there came a knocking at the street door. I went down to open it with a light heart, - for what had I now to fear? There entered three men, who introduced themselves, with perfect suavity, as officers of the police. A **shriek** had been heard by a neighbour during the night; suspicion of **foul play** had been aroused; information had been lodged at the police office, and they (the officers) had been deputed to search the **premises**.

I smiled, - for what had I to fear? I **bade** the gentlemen welcome. The shriek, I said, was my own in a dream. The old man, I mentioned, was absent in the country. I took my visitors all over the house. I bade them search - search well. I led them, at length, to his chamber. I showed them his treasures, secure, undisturbed. In the enthusiasm of my confidence, I brought chairs into the room, and desired them here to rest from their fatigues, while I myself, in the wild audacity of my perfect triumph, placed my own seat upon the very spot beneath which reposed the corpse of the victim.

The officers were satisfied. My manner had convinced them. I was singularly **at ease**. They say, and while I answered cheerily, they chatted of familiar things. But before long, I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone. My **head ached**, and I fancied a ringing in my ears: but still they sat and still chatted. The ringing became more distinct: - it continued and became more distinct: I talked more freely to get rid of the feeling: but it continued and gained definiteness - until, at length, I found that the noise was not within my ears.

No doubt I now grew very pale; - but I talked more fluently, and with a **heightened** voice. Yet the sound increased - and what could I do? I was a low, **dull**, quick sound - much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I gasped for breath - and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly - more vehemently; but the noise steadily increased. I arose and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations; but the noise steadily increased. Why would they not be gone? I paced the floor to and fro with heavy strides, as if excited to fury by the observations of the men - but the noise steadily increased. Oh God! what could I do? I foamed - I raved - I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder - louder - louder! And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? **Almighty God!** - no, no! They heard! - they suspected! - they knew! - they were making a mockery of my horror! - this I thought, and this I think. But anything was better than this agony! Anything was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die! and now - again! - hark! louder! louder! louder! Louder!

'Villains!' I shrieked, '**dissemble** no more! I admit the deed! - tear up the planks! here, here! - it is the beating of his hideous heart!'

Abridged from Edgar Allan Poe, January 1843

waned: *décroître* – **dismembered:** *démembrer* – **planks:** *planches* – **stain:** *tâche* – **wary:** *méfiant*

shriek : *cri aigu* – **foul play :** *acte criminel* – **premises :** *lieux*

bade : *inviter*

at ease : *à l'aise* – **head ached:** *mal de tête*

dull : *ennuyeyx*

almighty God : *Dieu tout puissant*

dissemble : *masquer, prétendre*