

From the full length play:

Night of the Macabre

By Tracy Wells (excerpt adapted from *The Telltale Heart* by Edgar Allan Poe)

MAN/WOMAN, *a disturbed man/woman who has become obsessed with the odd-looking eye of his older housemate and is plotting to kill him*

MAN/WOMAN

(suddenly sinister, talking to himself)

The eye! Why must he force me to stare at that monstrous orb? A vulture's eye! All day long when it is tucked away behind that dark swatch of cloth I am at peace. I love the old man. He has never wronged me. He has never given me insult. I enjoy his company and his conversation. But once that patch is removed...once that gruesome oculus is revealed...I lose all sense of reason. Calm turns into panic. Thoughts turn to blood. When it falls upon me, my blood runs cold. And so by degrees—very gradually—I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever.

(shakes his head)

I'm not mad...no, not even a little. Madmen are impulsive. Madmen can't think logically. But I am nothing if not cautious and sensible. I have never been kinder to the old man than I have this week. All day long I would sit with him and eat with him and keep him company. A better friend than I he has never known.

(sinisterly, creeping slowly closer to the bedroom)

But at night...as the clock struck midnight... I crept to his room and turned the latch of his door and opened it—oh, so gently! And then, when I had made an opening sufficient for my head, I put in a dark lantern, all closed, closed, that no light shone out, and then I thrust in my head.

(laughs sinisterly)

Oh, how cunningly I thrust it in! I moved it slowly—very, very slowly, so that I might not disturb the old man's sleep. It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed. Ha!—would a madman have been so wise as this? And then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern cautiously—oh, so cautiously—cautiously I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye. And this I did for seven long nights—every night just at midnight—but I found the eye always closed; and so it was impossible to do the work; for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye. And every morning, when the day broke, I went boldly into the chamber, and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a hearty tone, and inquiring how he has passed the night. He would have been a very profound old man, indeed, to suspect that every night, just at twelve, I looked in upon him while he slept.

(creeping closer)

But tonight is the night. I can feel it. Tonight is the night I put the eye to rest...once and for all!

To read the rest of this play, please email tracywellsplaywright@gmail.com