

## **Peter Hammill**

### **"Act Four"**

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(The following morning)

MADELINE That must be Montresor...

Good morning! Oh, how lovely to see you -  
since Roderick told me you were coming  
I have been so excited.

Now you are here, all will be well once more.

I was not here last night to greet you,  
you must think me ill-mannered,  
but sadly I am not enjoying the good health I used to...

MONTRESOR Yes.

Madeline, I must confess it's hard finding words  
that say what I feel...

MADELINE Oh, Montresor, you're being solemn  
and it's all quite uncalled for.

I feel quite sure I'm growing stronger  
and the doctor agrees with me -  
so you see all will be well once more.

Five years ago we were a very different family,  
but how things change!

Roderick and I were both living abroad when father  
died.

We both returned from Florence  
to take up Roderick's inheritance.

The House was dark and so full of sadness.

But you know my brother and how sensitive he is.

He lives in the music of his wild melodies.

Now as time went by so his songs grew sadder,  
now he never smiled as he played.

Now he sings of death and some things even madder;  
shuts himself away, brooding to himself,  
come to me at night,  
staring at my face 'till I fell afraid.

MADELINE MONTRESOR

When I am better we must all  
holiday together

as in the old days. Yes, you know  
how much I'd love that

You would be good for us both,  
as good for us both as before

You look so much the same!

I must confess that you have changed...

Do you remember? Everything.

The fragile hour,  
the silent walk with a friend.  
MONTRESOR As we walk so we tread  
& MADELINE on the words left unsaid  
I can't say them no matter how hard I try  
We chatter on, then the moment's gone,  
the one for which I've hoped  
and I've prayed and I've planned.  
Stop the clock's advance!  
I need a second chance,  
I need that second's glance  
when my hand touched you hand.  
I'd take you in my arms and say 'I love you'  
but it won't come back to me.  
It's over now,  
it's over now,  
it's over now, you see.  
If I hadn't been afraid to touch you  
would you have been afraid to fall in love with me?  
Would it be over?  
Would it be over now?  
Perhaps it wouldn't be.  
And each hour limits choice  
in so gentle a voice  
'till the hour that we realise no choice remains.  
So we await  
just one chance to cheat our fate,  
but then if we hesitate  
we lose the power to act at all.  
For once that moment's past  
we simply stand aghast  
as life rolls to disaster  
and we stand and watch it fall.  
I'd take you in my arms and say 'I love you'  
but I think we both agree.  
It's over now,  
it's over now, you see.  
It's over now,  
it's over now, you see.  
If I hadn't been afraid to touch you  
would you have been afraid to fall in love with me?  
Would it be over?  
Would it be over now?  
Perhaps it wouldn't be.  
If I hadn't been afraid to touch you  
would you have been afraid to fall in love with me?  
Would it be over?  
Would it be over now?  
The way it seems to be.  
(Madeline exits as Usher enters)  
USHER MONTRESOR

Yes, she does not know it yet;  
Perhaps for the best  
so sure she will recover  
and so full of life full of life  
full of life,  
my brave my brave  
Madeline Madeline  
This House devours her  
so take her from this place  
preparing the final torment  
of its empty space empty space  
a silent, empty space silent empty space  
without  
without  
Madeline Madeline  
Madeline  
This is only a house my friend  
USHER Which, by dint of long and undisturbed  
endurance.  
by its mere form and substance,  
has obtained an influence, a silent  
yet importunate and terrifying hold  
which, for centuries,  
has moulded the destiny of my family  
and now makes of me whatever it is I am.  
The House is Usher and Usher is the House:  
the two are indivisible.  
It was born with us, prospered with us, suffered too.  
And it will, in some way, die with us, soon.  
I am the last of the Usher,  
mine is the last drop of Usher blood,  
The last of the Usher!  
The House has told me in midnight breathing  
from my chamber walls,  
the House has told me in the secret murmur  
of the stones that none can hear save I.  
I am the last of the Usher,  
my sister's death shall leave me so;  
I am the last of the Usher,  
so in Usher's House I will wait alone.  
MONTRESOR Roderick, this is nightmare talk.  
Come back with me, both of you, while you're yet able  
You can't stay here and rot!  
USHER There will be no rot!  
No rot in Usher!  
We have lived with thunder,  
and with thunder shall we fall!  
MONTRESOR I cannot make you come but hear what I  
say.  
Send Madeline with me to some healthy place.  
USHER No rot! No rot in Usher!

We have lived by lightning  
and but lightning shall we fall!  
No slide into slow decay,  
no shrivelling splendour  
no gradual ebbing away,  
no quiet surrender!  
No rot! No rot in Usher!  
We have lived as Titans and as Titans we must fall!  
USHER MONTRESOR  
Don't talk of rot  
Stop!  
No rot in Usher!  
Stop!  
Roderick, try and calm yourself  
Just tell me why I should! this cannot do you good.  
These thoughts...  
No!  
are folly.  
No!  
Everything I've tried to I have tried to help you  
tell you, you've misunderstood I've done everything I  
could.  
Come, why should we fight  
this way  
we have enough troubles.  
What was it we used to say? What was it we used to  
say?  
A problem shared is doubled! A problem shared is  
doubled!  
Ushers do not flee! Ushers to not flee!  
Montresors stand firm! Montresors stand firm!  
So we stand together, So we stand together,  
stand together stand together  
By dint of long  
and undisturbed endurance...  
we could defeat the House,  
my friend.  
VOICES OF We shall not  
THE HOUSE let him go!  
We shall not let him go!  
End of Act Four

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