

Peter Hammill

"Act Two"

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THE VOICES House. Wet Vaults. Caissons. We breathe...
OF THE Undercroft. Abutments. Stones. Wood.
Breathe...
HOUSE Buttresses. Bressumers. Spandrels. We
Breathe...
Columns and Pillars. Shafts. Arches. Capitals.
Breathe....
We breathe. We are waiting.
We rise. We are waiting.
We are Usher. House of Usher.
Pilasters. Quoins. Piers.
Spandrels and columns that shaft through the years.
House of Usher.
Wainscots. Stairs. Balusters. Cusps and Cornices.
Spandrels and Columns the capital years.
House of Usher.
We breathe. We are waiting
We rise. We are waiting.
We are Usher. House of Usher.
Beams. Corbels. Joists. Kingposts.
Copings and Chimney-shafts.
Ridge-ribs. Struts. Stanchions. Parapets.
Pediments. Mansards and Gargoyles.
The eaves. The dripping eaves...
Cupola. Finials. Gables. Tiles. Lead...
We breathe. We are waiting.
We rise. We are waiting.
We are Usher. House of Usher.
We are Keystone. We are Usher.
RODERICK USHER
("The Sleeper") The lady sleeps. oh, may her sleep
which is enduring so be deep!
Heaven hold her in its sacred keep!
This chamber changed for one more holy,
this bed for one of melancholy.
I pray to God that she may lie
forever with unopened eye
while the dim, sheeted ghosts go by.
My love, she sleeps. Oh, may her sleep
as it is lasting so be deep!
Soft may the worms around her creep!
Far in the forest, dim and old,

now may some tall vault enfold her;
some vault that oft hath flung its black
and winged panels fluttering back
triumphant o'er the crested palls
of her grand family funerals....
USHER MONTRESOR

I didn't mean to interrupt...
Montresor, you came!
Did you think I'd ignore your letter?
Montresor, you're here!
Come let me help you with your coat.
Sit down and rest yourself.
Oh, it's so good to see you here!
Now tell me all your news...
I see you've changed a bit, my friend...
Now won't you have a drink...
Yes, yes
but one thing at a time!
First you must tell me what...
But I expect I too have changed.
How many years could it be now
since last we said farewell?
It must be ten years
since our last meeting,
Yes, it must be ten years
since our last meeting since our last meeting.
Tell me what is wrong?
Your letter spoke
of a malady;
some desperate trial
you could not face alone...
Oh, no, you tell me all your doings!
Tell me.
Tell me
how you pass your days how you pass your days
Tell me
from the beginning. from the beginning
Tell me
everything everything
that's happened
since we went our since we went our
separate ways. separate ways.
Look at me...
I have not left these walls
these three years,
I do not dare to do so!
I am imprisoned and fear is my gaoler.
Each word I speak
seems too dangerous.
My slightest act could bring about

the very thing I fear
But fear of what?
Hush, and I shall tell you...
tell you...
USHER I shun the light,
creep in the gloom like a toad, a white worm,
tortured by the faintest gleam of sun.
I hear...
oh God, if you could only know the things I hear!
I hear the lake sucking at the walls,
I hear bats breathing
I hear the sky moan to join with the slime!
And this,
all this like thunder to me,
like thunder!
My senses scream at me:
Sight... Touch... Sight... Touch...
Sound and Taste... Sound and Scent,
All torment and claw at my sanity.
There is no hiding place for me,
for even in the quietest of my rooms,
I hear the walls in conversation;
I hear the palpitations of my heart;
I feel all that lives and does not move
and know it knows my feeling.
My only peace lies in my music
and then only because it drowns out
all other sounds and souls...
You may think that I am mad, but it is not so.
My senses reel beneath the blow of feathers falling
and more...
But no, I see you do not understand.
MONTRESOR Oh, my poor dear friend,
you must see you are not well.
I've read of this before,
I think it's called Hyperaesthesia.
I'm no doctor, but it's clear
your nerves have gone to pieces.
You need to get away,
you need a holiday,
you need a change of air!
You need an ocean cruise,
you need to be amused!
I tell you plain, this House
to me seems most unhealthy.
You're unattached, you're free to go, you're wealthy.
USHER MONTRESOR THE CHORUS

Leave this House.
Leave this House.
Leave this House

and come away.
Leave this House
I cannot!
Leave this House!
I cannot!
Leave this House!
Here I must stay.
Here I must stay.
You are wasting
your time.
He will never
leave...
I can never
leave here
therefore do
not ask me
say no more I've heard of this before
and let me be I think it's called Hyperaesthesia
I can never I'm no doctor but it's clear
leave here your nerves have gone to pieces.
therefore do your nerves have gone to pieces.
not ask me.
Say no more
and let me be
I cannot leave
He cannot leave
The House is I
The House is he
We are as one
They are as one
And I would die
and so must die
Now you must leave
I He cannot leave
cannot Now you must fly
leave The House is he
Now you must run
The They are as one
House is No-one will die
I And so must die
I cannot leave
Now you must leave
He cannot leave
The House is I
Now you must fly
The House is he
We are as one
Now you must run
and so must die
and so must die
No-one will die

USHER MONTRESOR THE HOUSE

We shall
not let
him go!
We shall not
Leave let him go!
Do not torture me! this We shall not
Do not try to persuade! House let him go!
We shall not
Leave let him go!
It only brings me grief this We shall not
House let him go!
Leave this House We shall not
I cannot leave let him go!
We shall not
let him go!
shall not let him go!

USHER MONTRESOR THE CHORUS THE HOUSE

Leave this House
I cannot
Leave this House
I cannot
Leave this House Leave this House
and come with me We shall not
let him go.
Leave this House
I cannot Never, never
Leave this House never!
I cannot
Leave this House
and come with me Never! Never, never,
never!
Never! Never, never,
never!
I can never We are bound
leave here together
therefore do for the last time so never
not ask me I entreat you He shall he shall
say no more never leave never leave
and let me be. We are bound
together
for the last time so never
I entreat you He shall he shall
Leave! never leave never leave.
Do not
talk to me Never
do not try never
to persuade Leave! never
He shall never
never leave

Leave this house
Oh Montresor never never
I beg of you never never
I can never never
never leave never never
I can never never never
leave this house Leave this house never never
I can never You are wasting never never
leave this house Leave this house you time never never
I can never he will never never never
leave this house Leave! leave never never
never!
The House
is I.
End of Act Two

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