

The Raven (1845)

BY EDGAR ALLAN POE (1809-1849)

Once upon a midnight dreary¹, while I pondered², weak and weary³,
Over many a quaint⁴ and curious⁵ volume of forgotten lore⁶ —

While I nodded⁷, nearly napping⁸, suddenly there came a tapping⁹,
As of some one gently rapping¹⁰, rapping at my chamber door.
“’Tis some visitor,” I muttered, “tapping at my chamber door —
Only this and nothing more.”

Ah, distinctly¹¹ I remember it was in the bleak¹² December;
And each separate dying ember¹³ wrought¹⁴ its ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly¹⁵ I wished the morrow; — vainly¹⁶ I had sought¹⁷ to borrow
From my books surcease¹⁸ of sorrow — sorrow for the lost Lenore —
For the rare and radiant¹⁹ maiden²⁰ whom the angels name Lenore —
Nameless *here* for evermore.

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling²¹ 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
“’Tis some visitor entreating²² entrance at my chamber door —
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door; —
This it is and nothing more.”

¹ dreary : sad and dull; boring; dismal

² ponder : think about carefully or deeply

³ weary : extremely tired

⁴ quaint : unusual and old-fashioned in a positive way

⁵ curious : strange, unusual

⁶ lore : collected knowledge of traditions

⁷ nod : lower and lift your head slowly and gently

⁸ nap : sleep for a short while

⁹ tap : knock gently

¹⁰ rap : strike with a quick blow

¹¹ distinctly : clearly

¹² bleak : cold; lacking in warmth; not hopeful or encouraging

¹³ ember : remains of glowing coal pieces in a fire that will soon go out

¹⁴ wring (wrought wrought) : bend and twist

¹⁵ eagerly : impatient of ; anxious for

¹⁶ vainly : to no avail; without success

¹⁷ seek (sought sought) : try to find

¹⁸ surcease : end

¹⁹ radiant : shining brightly ; glowing with love

²⁰ maiden : girl ; young woman

²¹ rustling : light noise, like the noise of silk clothing or leaves blowing in the wind

²² entreat : ask urgently

Presently²³ my soul grew stronger; hesitating²⁴ then no longer,
“Sir,” said I, “or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore²⁵;
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly²⁶ you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce²⁷ was sure I heard you” — here I opened wide the door; —
Darkness there and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering²⁸, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before;
But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token²⁹,
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, “Lenore?”
This I whispered, and an echo murmured³⁰ back the word, “Lenore!”—
Merely³¹ this and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,
Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before.
“Surely,” said I, “surely that is something at my window lattice³²;
Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore —
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore; —
’Tis³³ the wind and nothing more!”

Open here I flung³⁴ the shutter, when, with many a flirt³⁵ and flutter³⁶,
In there stepped a stately³⁷ Raven of the saintly days of yore³⁸;
Not the least obeisance³⁹ made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he;
But, with mien⁴⁰ of lord or lady, perched⁴¹ above my chamber door —
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door —
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

²³ presently : after a short time; soon

²⁴ hesitate : be reluctant to act because of fear or indecision

²⁵ implore : beg very earnestly and desperately

²⁶ faintly : slightly; not strongly; indistinctly

²⁷ scarce : very restricted in quantity

²⁸ peer : look carefully or with difficulty

²⁹ token : sth that serves as an indication or proof of sth else

³⁰ murmur : make a low, indistinct, continuous sound; complain in low, mumbling tones

³¹ merely : only

³² lattice : framework/structure of crossed metal or wooden strips

³³ ’tis : it is

³⁴ fling (flung flung) : move abruptly; throw; hurl

³⁵ flirt: (of a bird) move the wings quickly

³⁶ flutter : (of a bird) flap the wings rapidly (and often in an agitated manner)

³⁷ stately : dignified; majestic

³⁸ days of yore : the past; a long time ago

³⁹ obeisance : deferential respect

⁴⁰ mien : bearing or manner, especially as it reveals an inner state of mind

⁴¹ perch : sit in a high position

Then this ebony bird beguiling⁴² my sad fancy⁴³ into smiling,
By the grave and stern decorum⁴⁴ of the countenance it wore,
“Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou,” I said, “art sure no craven⁴⁵,
Ghastly grim⁴⁶ and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore —
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night’s Plutonian shore⁴⁷!”
Quoth⁴⁸ the Raven “Nevermore.”

Much I marvelled⁴⁹ this ungainly⁵⁰ fowl⁵¹ to hear discourse⁵² so plainly,
Though its answer little meaning — little relevancy⁵³ bore;
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door —
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,
With such name as “Nevermore.”

But the Raven, sitting lonely on the placid⁵⁴ bust, spoke only
That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.
Nothing farther then he uttered — not a feather then he fluttered —
Till I scarcely more than muttered “Other friends have flown before —
On the morrow *he* will leave me, as my Hopes have flown before.”
Then the bird said “Nevermore.”

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly⁵⁵ spoken,
“Doubtless,” said I, “what it utters⁵⁶ is its only stock and store⁵⁷
Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful⁵⁸ Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore —
Till the dirges⁵⁹ of his Hope that melancholy burden bore
Of ‘Never — nevermore’.”

⁴² beguile : attract or interest sb in order to deceive them

⁴³ fancy : imagination

⁴⁴ decorum : controlled, calm and polite behaviour

⁴⁵ craven : cowardly person

⁴⁶ grim : very serious or gloomy

⁴⁷ Pluto is the Roman god of the underworld

⁴⁸ quoth : said

⁴⁹ marvel: be filled with wonder or astonishment

⁵⁰ ungainly : clumsy; awkward

⁵¹ fowl: domestic bird kept for its eggs and flesh

⁵² discourse: speak

⁵³ relevancy: pertinence; relevance

⁵⁴ placid: calm and peaceful

⁵⁵ aptly: in a way that is suitable

⁵⁶ utter: say

⁵⁷ stock and store: here: the only thing that the raven has

⁵⁸ unmerciful: cruel or harsh

⁵⁹ dirge: lament for the dead, esp. in a funeral rite

But the Raven still beguiling all my fancy into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust and door;
Then, upon the velvet⁶⁰ sinking, I betook⁶¹ myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous⁶² bird of yore⁶³ —
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt⁶⁴, and ominous bird of yore
Meant in croaking⁶⁵ “Nevermore.”

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom⁶⁶'s core⁶⁷;
This and more I sat divining⁶⁸, with my head at ease⁶⁹ reclining⁷⁰
On the cushion's velvet lining⁷¹ that the lamp-light gloated⁷² o'er,
But whose velvet-violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o'er,
She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought⁷³, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer⁷⁴
Swung by Seraphim⁷⁵ whose foot-falls⁷⁶ tinkled⁷⁷ on the tufted⁷⁸ floor.
“Wretch⁷⁹,” I cried, “thy God hath lent thee — by these angels he hath sent thee
Respite⁸⁰ — respite and nepenthe⁸¹ from thy memories of Lenore;
Quaff⁸², oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!”
Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

⁶⁰ velvet: cloth with a soft and furry surface

⁶¹ betake oneself: cause oneself to go or do

⁶² ominous: suggesting that sth unpleasant is going to happen

⁶³ yore: time long past

⁶⁴ gaunt: very thin and angular

⁶⁵ croak: deep hoarse sound made by a crow (or a frog)

⁶⁶ bosom: chest

⁶⁷ core : centre

⁶⁸ divine (verb): find out by guessing

⁶⁹ at ease : relaxed

⁷⁰ recline : lean back

⁷¹ lining: layer of different material covering the inside of sth

⁷² gloat: look at with wicked pleasure

⁷³ methought: it seemed to me

⁷⁴ censer: container for burning incense

⁷⁵ Seraphim : fiery angels that guard God's throne

⁷⁶ foot-fall : sound of footstep

⁷⁷ tinkle: make a light, clear ringing sound

⁷⁸ tufted : covered with thick carpet

⁷⁹ wretch : deeply unhappy person; outcast; criminal

⁸⁰ respite : short period of relief

⁸¹ nepenthe : drug that takes away grief and sorrow

⁸² quaff: drink, esp. in big gulps and in large quantity

“Prophet!” said I, “thing of evil! — prophet still, if bird or devil! —
Whether Tempter⁸³ sent, or whether tempest⁸⁴ tossed⁸⁵ thee here ashore,
Desolate⁸⁶ yet all undaunted⁸⁷, on this desert land enchanted⁸⁸ —
On this home by Horror haunted — tell me truly, I implore⁸⁹ —
Is there — *is* there balm⁹⁰ in Gilead⁹¹? — tell me — tell me, I implore!”
Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

“Prophet!” said I, “thing of evil! — prophet still, if bird or devil!
By that Heaven that bends above us — by that God we both adore —
Tell this soul with sorrow laden⁹² if, within the distant Aidenn⁹³,
It shall clasp⁹⁴ a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore —
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore.”
Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

“Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend⁹⁵!” I shrieked, upstarting —
“Get thee back into the tempest and the Night’s Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken! — quit the bust above my door!
Take thy beak⁹⁶ from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!”
Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

And the Raven, never flitting⁹⁷, still is sitting, *still* is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming⁹⁸ of a demon’s that is dreaming,
And the lamp-light o’er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted — nevermore!

<https://www.bing.com/videos/riverview/relatedvideo?q=The%20Raven%20reading%20text%20youtube&mid=4A1575A966E55008A6ED4A1575A966E55008A6ED&ajaxhist=0>

⁸³ Tempter : the Devil

⁸⁴ tempest : storm

⁸⁵ toss : throw

⁸⁶ desolate : empty and without people, making you feel sad or frightened

⁸⁷ undaunted : courageously resolute in the face of danger or difficulty

⁸⁸ enchanted : bewitched; affected by magic

⁸⁹ implore : ask or beg in an anxious or desperate way

⁹⁰ balm : healing substance

⁹¹ Gilead is a place mentioned in the Bible

⁹² laden: heavily loaded or weighed down by sth unpleasant

⁹³ Aidenn is another word for Paradise

⁹⁴ clasp : hold firmly in your hands or arms

⁹⁵ fiend : evil spirit or demon

⁹⁶ beak: bird’s mouth

⁹⁷ flit : fly or move quickly

⁹⁸ seeming : appearing to be real