

His Right Eye

A Modern Radio Drama Adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart"

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This Senior Honors Thesis is accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation from the Honors Program of Liberty University.

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Abstract

Watching an actor manipulate emotions and physicality to breathe life into a character is extraordinary. Even more impressive is the ability of a performer to do this without being seen. Radio drama is an intriguing aspect of performance that is often underappreciated in current culture, but it can play an incredible role in communicating and allowing for emotion and truth to be presented richly.

Using Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Tell-Tale Heart" as the basis for this thesis, I have written a script for a radio drama that adapts the story for a modern culture. The Department of Theatre Arts Playhouse of the Airwaves will produce the drama after the script is completed. It is scheduled to be broadcast in Fall 2013.

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Introduction

Watching an actor manipulate emotions and physicality to breathe life into a character is extraordinary. Even more impressive is the ability of a performer to do this without being seen. The medium of radio drama is an intriguing aspect of performance that is often underappreciated in our culture, but it can play an incredible role in communicating and allowing for emotion and truth to be presented richly.

As one studies theatre, one finds that the use of the voice is crucial to conveying emotions and eliciting a response from an audience; it has extraordinary control over people. In radio drama, the voice has control over not only the auditory sense, but also over the imagination of the listener. Radio drama does not offer intricate sets, beautiful lighting, or even facial expressions to convey subtext. Rather, it requires the imagination of the listener to engage fully, and can greatly impact the psychology of individuals, moving them to greater emotion, thought and eventually catharsis. Radio drama also increases knowledge and respect of the voice as a tool in theatre and other aspects of communication and storytelling.

Writing for radio drama is also a challenging experience and, therefore, induces a greater creativity in the author. There are limitations to what can be done with sound. However, being forced to think about the importance of sound and its impact on a listener grows an individual artistically. Problem solving like this is a welcome task, especially

when the written piece is so reliant on sound effects, much like the drama presented in this thesis.

In 1843, Edgar Allan Poe published a short story entitled, “The Tell-Tale Heart,” about an unnamed man who describes a murder he has committed. The man hides the body under the floorboards and believes he has gotten away with the crime. However, he soon discovers his guilt manifesting itself in a hallucinated heartbeat coming from the floor, driving the murderer to the point of confession. This story was terrifying to me as a child. As I’ve gotten older, I’ve realized that what frightened me so much was my imagination. Any time I heard the tale, my thought life was heavily affected. I would always picture myself in the storyteller’s situation, and I can still vividly recall the sound of my heart beating as the story reached its disturbing ending. The memory of the gleeful terror I experienced is what initially attracted me to Poe’s story as a basis for my radio drama. I didn’t want to pass up the opportunity to bring the sounds of terror to life in a fresh way. Allowing the tale to play to the psyche of listeners is somewhat poetic in terms of the actual psychology of the written story, seeing as the original deals so heavily with the psyche of the narrator. I look forward to passing on a little of the joyful fright that I experienced as a child through the medium of radio.

Listening to a radio drama is a unique auditory experience, especially for those that love visual performance, because it denies the visual and relies solely on the auditory sense. From a performer’s view, writing this piece has been an exciting new journey to undertake. A performer typically relies on more than simply his or her voice to tell a story, so while this thesis has been a challenge, it has also been a great way of incorporating information and techniques learned over the past four years to tell a story as

iconic as “The Tell-Tale Heart” in such a limited performance capacity. Radio is certainly not dead. What a fresh and enjoyable way to illustrate this and perhaps introduce a new generation to the magic of drama.

SETTING: New York City

TIME: Present day

CHARACTERS:

CHRIS HAMILTON EDWARD's great-nephew. He is an intellectual artist with emotional baggage, and he is not the most grounded individual. 27.

CHARLOTTE MITCHELL A nurse and the girlfriend of CHRIS. She is gentle and caring and loves CHRIS, but she is an independent woman. 26.

EDWARD HAMILTON The great-uncle of CHRIS. He was badly injured in the war and lacks sympathy towards anyone. Mid to late 80s

HARVEY HAMILTON The father of CHRIS and caretaker of EDWARD. He is heard in flashback. He is kind but concerned for his son and uncle. Mid 50s.

DELLA RAE WILCOX The hospice worker in charge of EDWARD after HARVEY's death. African American. Mid 40s.

BILLY WEBSTER The outgoing owner and operator of The Art Space in Greenwich Village. Late 30s.

THOMAS BARTLETT A co-owner of The Grant Gallery, he is sophisticated and smooth. Mid 40s to 60s.

VIRGINIA SHAW An extremely wealthy but polite co-owner of The Grant Gallery. Mid 40s to 60s.

WAITRESS A bright and cheery coffee shop employee. Early 20s.

HIS RIGHT EYE

[SCENE ONE]

SOUND [A LIGHT RAINFALL; CONTINUES THROUGH THE FOLLOWING DIALOGUE]

SOUND [FADE IN SOUND OF HEARTBEAT. GRADUALLY GETS LOUDER UNTIL, AFTER THE FIFTH SET OF BEATS, IT STOPS SUDDENLY]

SOUND [UNDER FOLLOWING DIALOGUE, THE SOFT SOUND OF PEOPLE TALKING IN THE DISTANCE]

1. CHRIS: *(narrating)* Look with your heart and let your eyes interpret. My father used to tell me that. I think he stole it from *Jane Eyre*.... I never really understood it, but as I looked down at the casket where my father lay, I found there was nothing to interpret. Just emptiness. Emptiness that, days before, had been full of love, empathy, and joy in the simplest of things. I felt the warm sting of tears in my eyes.
2. CHARLOTTE: If this is too much for you, Chris, we can sit back down.
3. CHRIS: *(thoughts interrupted; takes big breath, on the exhale)* No... I'm all right.
4. CHARLOTTE: I'm sorry it's raining. The forecast wasn't—
5. CHRIS: He looks hollow. Don't you find that unnerving? I don't want my last memory of my father to be an expressionless corpse.
6. CHARLOTTE: That's a somewhat inappropriate statement, don't you think?
7. CHRIS: Inappropriate? Look at him! This is nothing like the man I remember. His
8. CHARLOTTE: Chris, don't—
9. CHRIS: Don't what, Charlotte? Get upset? In case you haven't realized, my father is lying dead in a box in the middle of the pouring rain in a run-down cemetery in Queens! Meanwhile his son, who didn't make life especially easy for him and who certainly didn't act like he cared for him during their last conversation, is alive and well and rambling around the Lower East Side as if nothing has happened! I think I'm allowed to be a little upset!

1. CHARLOTTE: You only call me Charlotte when you're mad. (*understanding*) It's not your fault, Chris.

2. CHRIS: (*narrating*) She's right to some extent. My father's death wasn't my fault. It was, in fact, caused by a weak heart and poor blood circulation. But the strain of our relationship didn't help. Ever since I graduated college, our interactions had been tense, but none more so than our last.

SOUND [RAIN AND TALKING SOUNDS STOP]

SOUND [FLASHBACK/TRANSITION MUSIC
(INSTRUMENTAL)]

SOUND [COFFEE SHOP NOISES, PEOPLE TALKING
SOFTLY IN THE BACKGROUND]

3. WAITRESS: What can I get for you today? We have a special deal going — half off any muffin with the purchase of one of our seasonal lattes.

4. HARVEY: No thanks. I'll just have a regular coffee and cheese Danish while I wait.

5. WAITRESS: I can do that, no problem! Do you happen to know what your date may want?

6. HARVEY: Wha— oh, no, not a date. (*chuckling*) I think I'm a bit beyond that.

7. WAITRESS: My mistake sir. I'm very sorry.

8. HARVEY: No, don't be. I'm actually waiting on my son. And there he is... Chris, over here!

SOUND [FOOTSTEPS]

9. CHRIS: (*uncomfortable*) Hey, Dad.

10. HARVEY: Sit down!

SOUND [CHAIR BEING PULLED OUT]

11. HARVEY: You want anything? They have a great cheese Danish.

12. CHRIS: I'm okay. Charley and I had breakfast together before she went to the hospital.

1. HARVEY: That'll be all then.
2. WAITRESS: Sure! I'll get that right out.

SOUND [WAITRESS'S FOOTSTEPS]

3. HARVEY: (*warmly*) Charley, huh? How is that lady friend of yours doing anyway? I haven't seen her in months!
4. CHRIS: You know Charley... works six days a week and then comes home with gross stories of nothing but blood and guts. I haven't wanted dinner in three days.
5. HARVEY: (*laughing*) That's what you get for dating a nurse!
6. CHRIS: What's this about, Dad? If you say Uncle Ed—
7. HARVEY: (*interrupting*) Chris, don't overreact. I asked to meet so we can talk like adults.
8. CHRIS: How many times do I have to say I want nothing to do with him?
9. HARVEY: He's family!

SOUND [CHAIR PUSHED BACK AS CHRIS STANDS]

10. CHRIS: No, Dad, he's your family!
11. HARVEY: He's my uncle, which makes him your great uncle, and your family too! Just listen to what I have to say! Please.

[PAUSE]

12. CHRIS: Fine.

SOUND [CHAIR, ONCE AGAIN, BEING PULLED IN AS CHRIS SITS]

13. HARVEY: Thank you. Your Uncle Edward is not doing well at all. He's gotten to the point where he can hardly move by himself. His scars still hurt. He wakes in the middle of the night yelling things I can't understand and clawing at his face. It's all I can do to keep him restrained.
14. CHRIS: Post traumatic stress?

1. HARVEY: I think so. I would take him somewhere to get help or even send him to that home we looked at upstate, but...
2. CHRIS: You don't have the money.
3. HARVEY: I've tried to save all I can, but it's hard when I'm with him most of the day. I barely make enough for groceries working the pharmacy on Saturday's. To make matters even more complicated, my cousin's daughter is getting married in two weeks in Mississippi. I RSVP'd that I would be there, but I can't drive that far, and I can't take Edward on a plane...
4. CHRIS: No.
5. HARVEY: Now wait a minute, Chris. You don't even know what I'm going to say.
6. CHRIS: You're going to ask me to babysit Edward for the week when you know perfectly well I can't be on the same block as that man, much less the same apartment!
7. HARVEY: It's time to get over this childish fear and be a man, Chris! You're a 26 year-old college graduate living in a loft apartment with no steady job and a girlfriend who pays most of your bills. The time to grow up and take some responsibility has arrived!
8. CHRIS: First of all, The Art Space in Greenwich is hosting an exhibit of my paintings in three weeks. It may not be a "steady job," but it's work. Second of all, I don't think you understand the emotional distress I had to overcome as a child. If you'll recall, I was in therapy for three years... don't you remember?

SOUND [CHAIR BEING PUSHED BACK AS CHRIS STANDS]

9. HARVEY: Chris—
10. CHRIS: (*interrupting*) Goodbye, Dad. Looking forward to our next heart-to-heart say... sometime next year?

SOUND [FOOTSTEPS]

11. HARVEY: Chris? Chris!

SOUND [WAITRESS'S FOOTSTEPS; PLATE SET
DOWN ON TABLE]

1. WAITRESS: Here's that Danish you ordered, sir, and I just put a fresh pot on... oh, left so soon?

2. HARVEY: (*sighing*) It would appear. Perhaps I'll take that coffee to go.

SOUND [COFFESHOP NOISE AND TALKING FADES]

SOUND [TRANSITION MUSIC OUT OF FLASHBACK]

SOUND [RAINFALL AND SOFT TALKING AGAIN;
CONTINUES THROUGH THE FOLLOWING
DIALOGUE]

3. CHRIS: (*narrating*) That was the last conversation I had with my father. He died three days later at the pharmacy. It was Saturday. Do I regret my words? Absolutely. But he was right. And now I had no choice. I had no money and no options.

4. CHARLOTTE: C'mon, Chris.

5. CHRIS: (*narrating*) Charlotte took my arm and turned me around, and that's when I saw him. My Uncle Edward. He was sitting at the back of the funeral awning in his wheelchair looking like something out of a gothic horror novel. A shriveled and balding piece of man, the right side of his face was covered in heavy scarring. It looked as fresh as the day it happened, or so I imagined. But then he looked up and I saw it: the thing that had haunted me as a child and still terrified me as an adult. His right eye. Gleaming a clear, cruel, crystal blue it stared at me through an unblinking socket, his eyelids burned off in the same wartime accident that had scarred him so terribly. I felt a lump rise in my throat, and I turned away as quickly as I could.

6. CHARLOTTE: Chris? What's wrong? (*calling after him*) Chris?

SOUND [DURING THE FOLLOWING MONOLOGUE,
SOUNDS ARE DISTORTED, GIVING A
DIZZYING EFFECT]

7. CHRIS: (*narrating*) I felt like I was going to be sick. I stumbled through the mourners feeling trapped. There were people everywhere. I was nauseous and dizzy as the air became heavy with the morbid feeling of death. Gasping, I escaped from under the shelter and ran

through the rows of gravestones until I reached a safe distance and threw up.

SOUND [THE DIZZY EFFECT STOPS AS THE SOUND OF CHRIS TRYING TO CATCH HIS BREATH IS HEARD]

Trying to catch my breath, I sat in the wet grass, the light rain falling on my face. And then Charlotte appeared, umbrella in hand from around the gravestone.

1. CHARLOTTE: I'm not sure Ethel Zimmerman appreciates that.
2. CHRIS: What?
3. CHARLOTTE: Ethel Zimmerman. She's the lady who gets to receive the wonderful... gift you left on her headstone.
4. CHRIS: *(breathing deep)* Sorry about that.
5. CHARLOTTE: Don't apologize to me. Apologize to Ethel.

SOUND [SOUND OF HAND PATTING HEADSTONE]

6. CHRIS: Sorry, Ethel.
7. CHARLOTTE: So....
[PAUSE]
You want to tell me what all that was about?
8. CHRIS: Would you believe... food poisoning?
9. CHARLOTTE: Nice try. What's really going on?
10. CHRIS: It's going to sound ridiculous to you and make me look pathetic.
11. CHARLOTTE: You just threw up at a funeral. Can't get much more pathetic than that.

SOUND [CHRIS STANDING UP]

12. CHRIS: Mind if we walk and talk? I don't think I can go back just yet.
13. CHARLOTTE: Sure.

SOUND[FOOTSTEPS IN WET GRASS]

1. CHRIS: Did you see the man in the wheelchair at the back of the tent?
2. CHARLOTTE: The gentleman with the scarring? Yes. Why?
3. CHRIS: That's my uncle. Well ... my great uncle actually. Edward.
4. CHARLOTTE: Uncle? You've never mentioned him before. I mean... what happened to him?
5. CHRIS: Well, no one knows exactly. He served in the Army in the War, and when he was 19, he was involved in an accident.
6. CHARLOTTE: Wait, 19? That's terrible. He had his whole life before him... what happened?
7. CHRIS: We don't really know for sure. When I was young, my grandpa told me Edward was burned helping save a man from a fire. But the story changed as I got older, so I'm not sure my grandpa even knew what happened. For some reason, the military wanted to keep it quiet.
8. CHARLOTTE: So he's a burn victim and a veteran. That doesn't really explain your reaction back there.
9. CHRIS: My uncle was extremely disfigured. The burns were so bad, they had to remove his right eye. His eyelid had been burned beyond use. When he was healthy enough to return from the war, he couldn't get work. No one wanted to hire a badly scarred invalid. So my grandfather took him in, and he lived with him until my grandpa's death. I never saw him though. He stayed locked in his room, never stepping foot outside the door. That is, until my grandpa's funeral.
10. CHARLOTTE: He died when you were 11, right?
11. CHRIS: It was a really difficult time, because I was extremely close to my grandpa. And then, suddenly, my uncle appeared at the funeral. As an 11 year old, I was nowhere near prepared for what I saw. To me, he looked like the epitome of evil, and I couldn't help but shutter when I shook his hand. And then he did the worst thing imaginable. He looked at me directly with his good brown eye, reached up to the blue glass eye, and took it out. I screamed, ran to

the bathroom, and locked myself in, but I could hear him laughing from outside the door.

1. CHARLOTTE: (*understanding*) Oh, Chris...

SOUND

[FOOTSTEPS STOP]

2. CHRIS: That one meeting haunted me for a long time.... Of course, there was no one to take care of Uncle Ed after my grandpa's death, so my parents decided to place him in a veteran's facility in Massachusetts. But then came the divorce, and my father couldn't afford to keep him there, so he took him in and I moved in with my mother. You know the rest, of course. She died my freshman year of college and I moved to the city to be near my dad, but I couldn't go back to living with him.

3. CHARLOTTE: Why didn't you tell me all of this when we started dating?

4. CHRIS: Honestly? I was afraid. These aren't memories I enjoy. That one moment has sufficiently altered my mental state — it's difficult for me to keep my thoughts in check. And ... I didn't want this to scare you into leaving.

5. CHARLOTTE: I have no plans to *leave* you.

6. CHRIS: You do realize that, with my dad now gone, I'm the one who's going to have to take care of him?

7. CHARLOTTE: I figured as much.

8. CHRIS: And that doesn't bother you?

9. CHARLOTTE: You have an exhibition coming up in two weeks. I'm due for a raise next month. I don't think it will be too long before we've saved enough money to send Uncle Ed back to that facility in Massachusetts.

10. CHRIS: You're sure about this?

11. CHARLOTTE: If I weren't, I wouldn't have said anything.

12. CHRIS: You're the best, Charley.

13. CHARLOTTE: Flattery will get you everywhere. Now come on. We should be heading back. It's time you faced your fear head on.

1. CHRIS: Once we reach the tent, there's no turning back. Can't we stay here for a little while longer?
2. CHARLOTTE: (*sardonically*) Nooope, we're going back. Come on — It'll be good for you.
3. CHRIS: Famous last words.

SOUND [END SCENE/TRANSITION MUSIC]

[SCENE TWO]

SOUND

[SAME RAIN AND TALKING AS BEFORE]

1. CHRIS: *(narrating)* As we reached the tent, I saw Uncle Ed's eye settle on me as he lifted his head at the sound of our approach. I felt a shiver run down my spine, but I didn't get sick again. When we reached the wheelchair, Ed looked up with his good eye, a deep chocolate shade of brown, and frowned.
2. EDWARD: What's this all about, then?
3. CHARLOTTE: Are you Mr. Edward Hamilton?
4. EDWARD: Who wants to know?
5. CHARLOTTE: My name is Charlotte Mitchell. And this gentleman with me is my boyfriend, Christopher Hamilton, Harvey's son.
6. EDWARD: Harvey's son, eh? Harvey never said anything about a son.
7. DELLA: *(voice growing louder as she gets closer)* Yes he did, Ed. Though I doubt you ever heard him.
8. CHARLOTTE: I'm sorry. I didn't realize—
9. DELLA: *(interrupting)* No need to apologize there, young lady. I've only spent a few days with Ed, but I can tell you one thing, his memory is pretty dysfunctional. How do you do? My name is Della Rae Wilcox. And you must be Christopher.
10. CHRIS: Please, Mrs. Wilcox, people just call me Chris.
11. DELLA: I'll call you Chris as long as you promise to call me Della!
12. CHRIS: *(small chuckle)* It's a deal. This is Charlotte.
13. CHARLOTTE: You can call me Charley.
14. DELLA: Pleasure to meet the both of you. Chris, I'm awfully sorry about your father. I didn't know him, but I know what it's like to lose a close family member. There's nothing easy about it. Especially when the weight of responsibility is passed on to someone so young.

1. CHRIS: Well, Della, I appreciate that. If I may ask, how did you come to be taking care of Uncle Ed?
2. DELLA: I work with Hill Street Hospice. We partner with the funeral home to provide care for elderly individuals left alone after a loved one's death, just until they can get the proper help they need. I've been with Ed in your father's old apartment for the past few days. I imagine he goes into your care now?
3. CHARLOTTE: That's right. We'll probably move Edward into Chris's apartment until we can raise enough money to send him to a veteran's home in Massachusetts.
4. DELLA: A good idea, to be sure. Like I said, I've only been with Ed a few days, but there's something about him that's unsettling. I don't mean his... *(voice lowers)* condition. I've been working for 30 years in hospice and I've seen all kinds of medical issues. What I'm talking about isn't medical. It's... I don't know... spiritual. There's an air that surrounds Edward that is very oppressive, and I don't think it's healthy for young people like you. The sooner you can get him in some proper care, the better!

SOUND [UNDER THE FOLLOWING MONOLOGUE,
THE SOUND OF THE TWO WOMEN
CHATTING]

5. CHRIS: *(narrating)* Spiritual? Oppressive? I knew I wasn't the only one who felt uncomfortable around Edward. All the work I had done in my years of therapy was slowly beginning to unravel. But then he spoke again.
6. EDWARD: Christopher. Wait a minute... I remember you.

SOUND [THE WOMEN STOP]

7. CHRIS: *(hesitantly)* Yes, Uncle?
8. EDWARD: You're the one who locked himself in the bathroom at Arthur's funeral, aren't you.
9. CHRIS: *(again, hesitantly)* Yes sir.

SOUND [EDWARD BEGINS TO LAUGH, GROWING
LOUDER THROUGH THIS NEXT
MONOLOGUE, ALMOST REACHING
MANIACAL PROPORTIONS]

[SCENE THREE]

SOUND [SAME RAIN AS BEFORE]

1. CHRIS: *(narrating)* After the funeral, Della helped us wheel Uncle Edward over to Charley's car. After squeezing him into the backseat, she gave us a friendly wave and went on her way. Charley and I got into the car, rather reluctantly.

SOUND [CAR DOORS OPEN AND SHUT AS RAIN SOUND GROWS MUFFLED THROUGH THE VEHICLE]

2. CHARLOTTE: *(friendly)* Alright! Everyone buckled? (EDWARD *grunts a response*) Good! We're off to Manhattan!

SOUND [THE CAR STARTS. THROUGH THE FOLLOWING MONOLOGUE THERE ARE THE NOISES OF CITY TRAFFIC AND FREEWAY]

3. CHRIS: *(narrating)* The entire ride passed in painful silence. Charley kept inhaling like she wanted to start a conversation, but never managed to get a single word out. The car felt hot and cramped, even in the cool autumn rain. My mind was set solely on the eye. I kept catching glimpses of it in my side view mirror, and every time it was fixed on me. A tingling sensation crept up my spine and prickled the hairs on the back of my neck. I was just about ready to say something when the sun peeked out from behind the clouds and I felt the warmth of it through the window. Remembering Charley's words from earlier, I shook off the disturbing feeling and tried to tell myself that this was going to be all right. I would face my fear like an adult, and it wouldn't be long before we could afford to send Ed off for good. After what felt like hours, we reached the apartment.

SOUND [THE CAR STOPS. SEATBELTS UNBUCKLING. CAR DOORS OPENING AND SHUTTING]

4. CHARLOTTE: Chris, help me get the wheelchair out of the trunk?

SOUND [TRUNK OPENS. THE SOUND OF THE WHEELCHAIR BEING TAKEN OUT AND OPENED DURING THE FOLLOWING EXCHANGE]

Sorry about the ride. I wanted to make conversation, but I never knew what to say. He's an imposing figure.

1. CHRIS: That's an understatement.

SOUND [TRUNK SLAMS]

2. CHARLOTTE: Will you get him out of the car and up the steps? I'm going to make sure the guest room is clean and there's nothing for the wheelchair to get stuck on.

3. CHRIS: I don't know if that's such a good idea, Charley!

4. CHARLOTTE: *(voice getting fainter as she goes inside)* For heaven's sake, Chris. It's just thirty seconds! Deal with it!

SOUND [CHRIS SIGHS. CAR DOOR OPENS]

5. CHRIS: All good back here? *(EDWARD grunts)* I'll take that as a yes.

SOUND [NOISE OF EDWARD GETTING INTO WHEELCHAIR]

6. EDWARD: Not very strong there, are you?

7. CHRIS: *(narrating)* He looked at me and smiled heartlessly. His eyes, two different colors, flashed in the now-bright sunlight. I felt nausea spring to my stomach again, but I swallowed it down.

8. CHRIS: Let's get you upstairs.

SOUND [CHRIS PULLING THE WHEELCHAIR UP STEPS]

9. CHRIS: *(narrating)* For such a small man, my uncle was heavier than I expected. I got up the first few steps with ease, but when I reached the middle of the staircase, I felt the strain of the wheelchair as gravity tried to pull it back down to the street. Then suddenly, in the midst of the old man's muttered complaints, a thought struck me. From this height, if the wheelchair were to slip from my grip and go tumbling down the stairs spilling onto the street, everyone would view it as an accident. There would be no accusations of foul play. It's hard for disabled people to navigate the streets of New York. My heart began to thump wildly in my chest at the thought of it.

SOUND [HEARTBEAT, WILD AND FAST]

Yes! I could claim the old man was starting to get agitated and that made me lose control! Everyone would believe the sad story and I could live the rest of my life knowing Uncle Edward and his eye would never bother me again! But then, I felt a hand on my shoulder.

SOUND [HEARTBEAT STOPS SUDDENLY]

1. CHARLOTTE: Come on, slowpoke. He's not *that* heavy!

2. CHRIS: (*narrating*) Shaken from my morbid daydream, I looked into Charley's eyes and forced a smile, realizing the twistedness of my thoughts. And yet, for some reason, my mind continued to play the scenario over and over again, well into the night.

SOUND [END SCENE TRANSITION/MUSIC]

[SCENE FOUR]

SOUND [CELL PHONE RINGS. AFTER THE THIRD RING, CHRIS ANSWERS.]

1. CHRIS: Chris Hamilton.
2. BILLY: Chris! Billy Webster from The Art Space.
3. CHRIS: Hey Billy. Good to hear from you. Listen, I was going to call later this week because I had some questions about the exhibit—
4. BILLY: Actually, that's why I called. Last night I was looking over some of the work you sent me a few weeks ago. I have to say, again, it's very impressive.
5. CHRIS: Well, thanks.
6. BILLY: In fact, I was so impressed I thought I'd call to see if you wouldn't mind adding a few pieces to the collection? Say, three or four?
7. CHRIS: In two weeks?
8. BILLY: I know it's a lot to ask, but I think you'd really benefit from it. We have a varied clientele with impeccable taste, and I know they're going to love your work! I've already had several phone calls asking about you.
9. CHRIS: (*embarrassed*) Uh ... I'm sure I could get a few more out before the exhibit.
10. BILLY: Great! Listen, I talked with Suki Scott last week and she raved about your show at her gallery, so I'm trusting you on this. Just send me the digitals a few days before. I'm giving you time, so I expect it to be good! Deal?
11. CHRIS: Absolutely!
12. BILLY: Wonderful! I'll see you in two weeks!
13. CHRIS: Sounds perfect! See you then!

SOUND [CHRIS HANGS UP THE PHONE. KEYS IN THE DOOR, UNLOCKS, AND THE DOOR OPENS]

14. CHARLOTTE: Morning!

1. CHRIS: Hey! There's my favorite nurse. Why so blue today?
2. CHARLOTTE: Ha. Ha. My green scrubs still have spaghetti stains on them from lunch last week. I thought it better to wear my blue today instead of disturbing all of my patients.
3. CHRIS: Well I like them. You look cute.
4. CHARLOTTE: In my scrubs? You're just trying to sweet-talk me.

SOUND [THEY KISS]

(coyly) You feel good about today, don't you? I thought I'd stop by on my way to the hospital to see how your first night went with the new roommate.

5. CHRIS: As well as can be expected, I guess. After you left last night, I made him some soup and haven't heard so much as a grunt from his room since. If all I have to do is feed him, maybe this won't become the miserable situation I thought it would.
6. CHARLOTTE: See? I told you it would all be okay-

SOUND [CHARLOTTE'S SPEECH IS INTERRUPTED FROM A PANICKED YELL IN EDWARD'S BEDROOM]

(unnerved) What was that?

7. CHRIS: Oh no-

SOUND [FOOTSTEPS RUNNING. THE BEDROOM DOOR OPENS. EDWARD'S YELLS ARE LOUDER NOW. THERE IS THE SOUND OF FITFUL TOSSING AND TURNING]

(shouting) Uncle Ed! Uncle Ed! Wake up; it's just a dream!

8. EDWARD: *(yelling)* GET IT OFF! GET IT OFF!
9. CHARLOTTE: Chris, grab his hands! He'll hurt his face if he keeps clawing at it like that!
10. CHRIS: *(sounds of struggle)* Edward! WAKE UP!

SOUND [EDWARD GASPS AWAKE AND SPUTTERS]

1. EDWARD: *(breathing heavily)* What's going on? Get off me!
2. CHARLOTTE: Are you okay?
3. CHRIS: You were having a nightmare. I was worried you were going to hurt yourself!
4. EDWARD: *(pause, then snarling)* Get. Out.
5. CHRIS: We were just trying to help!
6. EDWARD: *(shouting with rage)* I SAID GET OUT!
7. CHRIS: Okay!

SOUND [CHRIS GETS OFF THE BED AND SHUTS THE BEDROOM DOOR]

8. CHARLOTTE: What *was* that? Do you think he's okay?
9. CHRIS: Dad mentioned something about episodes like this. Apparently, they happen a lot.
10. CHARLOTTE: Nothing is ever as easy as it seems.
11. CHRIS: *(sighs)* I'll give him some time to calm down before I take him breakfast. You want some coffee before you head out?
12. CHARLOTTE: Sure.

SOUND [DURING THE FOLLOWING DIALOGUE, THE SOUNDS OF OPENING CABINETS, SCOOPING COFFEE AND BREWING CAN BE HEARD]

13. CHRIS: I got a call from Billy Webster at The Art Space before you came in.
14. CHARLOTTE: Oh?! What did he want?
15. CHRIS: He said he'd been looking over my stuff and talking with Suki Scott and now he wants me to add another three or four new pieces to the exhibit.
16. CHARLOTTE: That's great!

1. CHRIS: Well... yeah...
2. CHARLOTTE: But...?
3. CHRIS: I don't know. Three new pieces in two weeks? That's a little daunting. Especially when I don't have any idea what to paint.
4. CHARLOTTE: Paint what you know!
5. CHRIS: Which is...?
6. CHARLOTTE: You're the abstract here! Paint... Hmm. (*searching for an idea, then suddenly*) I've got it! You want to face your fear, right?
7. CHRIS: How many times do I have to keep hearing this?
8. CHARLOTTE: Calm down! I was going to suggest a good way of facing them might be to bring them into a tangible reality. You should paint your fear!
9. CHRIS: How am I supposed to do that?
10. CHARLOTTE: Come on, Chris, I can't be both nurse *and* artist.
11. CHRIS: I'm serious!
12. CHARLOTTE: I don't know! Maybe... close your eyes, remember the details of your most frightening experiences, and then let your hands do the rest.
13. CHRIS: You know, that's not a bad idea.
14. CHARLOTTE: Huh, maybe I should quit my job and become a starving artist as well.
15. CHRIS: I am *not* a "starving artist."
16. CHARLOTTE: Oh, excuse me! I forgot about your diet: blueberry Pop Tarts, fried bologna, and pink lemonade (*makes gagging noise*).
17. CHRIS: It's brain food!
18. CHARLOTTE: Call it what you will, it's disgusting! What time is it?
19. CHRIS: 8:30.

1. CHARLOTTE: *What?* Already? If I'm late, I can kiss that raise goodbye, and then we'll never be rid of you-know-who!

SOUND [CHARLOTTE GATHERS HER BAGS AND WALKS TO THE DOOR]

2. CHRIS: Wait, what about coffee?

3. CHARLOTTE: (*voice fading*) Gonna have to wait until tonight, babe! See you for dinner! (*yelling*) Sushi!

4. CHRIS: Sushi!

5. CHARLOTTE: Bye!

SOUND [DOOR OPENS AND CLOSSES]

6. CHRIS: (*narrating*) After Charley left, I figured it would probably be a good idea to check on Edward. I tiptoed to the door and pressed my ear up against it. Hearing nothing, I assumed he had fallen back to sleep, so I made my way towards the back of the apartment to my studio. Several half-finished canvases lay strewn around the floor.

SOUND [DURING THE FOLLOWING, THE SOUND OF A CANVAS BEING SET AND PAINT SQUIRTING]

I found a blank one and set it on the easel by the window; natural light was a must-have for me as I painted. I sat down and squirted a few colors onto my palette — deep blue, white, purple, and black. With a deep breath, I closed my eyes and waited for an image to appear. At first there was nothing. I tried to concentrate, remembering the events of my grandfather's funeral and my first encounter with my great uncle. The events played out normally at first. I saw the open casket, the silent tears of my father, and the groups of people dressed in black softly conversing with one another. Then suddenly, Edward appeared, dressed in his black suit, a hideously scarred demon sent to taunt me. His fake eye glowered at me, boring into my mind. I felt the dizzying effects and wanted to turn away out of panic, but I willed myself to stay and face the eye. It was only a memory after all. I mustered all the mental energy I could and focused on the eye as my hand began to move. Carefully, at first, it glided across the canvas with sweeping, gentle strokes. But the more I focused, the quicker my hand

1. CHRIS: *(feebly)* Nothing, Uncle.
 2. EDWARD: I'm hungry. Where's my breakfast, boy? Did you expect me to make it myself? It took me ten minutes just to get out of my bed!
 3. CHRIS: Of course not. I'm sorry; I was distracted.
 4. EDWARD: Harvey was never this ignorant of me. And I would never be treated this way if Arthur were still alive! I fought in the War, you know!
 5. CHRIS: Yes, Uncle.
 6. EDWARD: This better not become a daily occurrence, you understand me, Boy?
 7. CHRIS: It won't.
 8. EDWARD: You've got a long way to go if you hope to ever measure up to your father.

 [PAUSE]
 9. CHRIS: ...I'll get your breakfast.
- SOUND [END SCENE TRANSITION/MUSIC]

[SCENE FIVE]

1. CHRIS: A rat?

SOUND _____ [THE SQUEAKING OF A RAT]

2. CHARLOTTE: I think he's cute.

3. CHRIS: Charley, it's a rat.

4. CHARLOTTE: Yeah, so?

5. CHRIS: Maybe you didn't hear me the first two times. I said: It's. A. Rat.

6. CHARLOTTE: What's the big deal, Chris? Plenty of people have rats as pets.

7. CHRIS: But most of those people don't live in New York where the rat to human ratio is 6 to 1.

8. CHARLOTTE: You're making that up.

9. CHRIS: I am not! It was in the *Times* last week.

10. CHARLOTTE: Okay, now I know you're lying to me. You never read the *Times*!

11. CHRIS: (*getting indignant*) Do too!

12. CHARLOTTE: I refuse to argue this.

13. CHRIS: I just don't understand the appeal of having a rodent as a pet.

14. CHARLOTTE: They were delivered to the hospital this morning by mistake. We think they're supposed to be used for animal testing at that make-up company across the street. The least I could do was take him in. And I wasn't the only person to bring one home! Three of the other nurses at work took one as well!

15. CHRIS: But—

16. CHARLOTTE: (*interrupting*) Oh, come on, Chris! It's not even that difficult to take care of!

17. CHRIS: (*after a pause he gives in*) What's his name?

18. CHARLOTTE: He's got dark features, so I want to name him something exotic like... Francisco?

1. CHRIS: Francisco the Rat?
2. CHARLOTTE: Yes! I like it. Francisco the Rat

SOUND [THE RAT SQUEALS]

See! He likes it too! How can you say you don't like rats after seeing a cute little guy like this?

3. CHRIS: Easy, I'm a New Yorker.
4. CHARLOTTE: Chris!
5. CHRIS: I'm sorry! It's just — it's only been a week since Ed got here and I'm already at my limit with taking care of him. I don't know if I can handle a pet right now too, much less a creepy one like... Francisco.
6. CHARLOTTE: Fine. I'll take care of him. You won't have to worry about anything.
7. CHRIS: That's what you said about the orchid you wanted to grow in my studio, and what happened? You forgot to water it for *three weeks*, and it died. I'd hate to see the same thing happen to poor Francisco here.
8. CHARLOTTE: That won't happen.
9. CHRIS: Uh-huh.
10. CHARLOTTE: I can take care of another life just fine. I'm a nurse after all.
11. CHRIS: We'll see.
12. CHARLOTTE: In the meantime, I'm going to put him back in his box.

SOUND [THE SQUEAKING SOUND STOPS AS CHARLOTTE PUTS HIM IN A BOX AND SHUTS THE LID]

Have you finished the extra paintings yet?

13. CHRIS: You mean aside from the eye? I finished the second one today.
14. CHARLOTTE: Oooh. What is it?

1. CHRIS: I'm not entirely sure. It's not as clear as the eye. But I think it looks like a heart.
2. CHARLOTTE: Like a Valentine's heart?
3. CHRIS: No, more like a heart heart. Like, a real, human heart. I call it "Panic."
4. CHARLOTTE: "Panic." I like it. What was the eye one called again?
5. CHRIS: "Cruelty."
6. CHARLOTTE: Right. Sounds like you almost have yourself a winning series. Any ideas about your last piece?
7. CHRIS: Not yet. I'm hoping inspiration strikes soon though. The exhibit is only a week away, and Billy Webster called again today to check on my progress.
8. CHARLOTTE: How was Edward today?
9. CHRIS: Pretty miserable. I'm trying as hard as I can to be positive and upbeat around him, but he's so harsh all the time that I spend most of my days stewing in my anger. I'm starting to understand what Della means about feeling oppressed. I feel like I'm losing sight of the light at the end of the tunnel. Plus, I still have to fight to keep steady when I see his eye. I don't know why, but I'm still unsettled by it.
10. CHARLOTTE: Maybe you should see someone about this.
11. CHRIS: I spent three years in therapy when I was a kid. Remember? Besides, we don't have the money for that right now.
12. CHARLOTTE: But if it's going to help you—
13. CHRIS: It's out of the question.
14. CHARLOTTE: I'm worried about you. I don't like that you have to be here all day long with him by yourself.
15. CHRIS: You're sweet to worry over me, but I'm going to be okay. It won't be too much longer before we can send him north anyways.
16. CHARLOTTE: (*uncertainly*) Okay....

1. CHRIS: Let's not talk about it anymore. Let's talk about you instead. How was work today?
2. CHARLOTTE: Actually, it was busy. We had an elderly woman rushed in around two thirty this afternoon. She was the victim of a break-in. Apparently, the burglar was surprised to find her home and tried to suffocate her with her own sofa cushion. She barely had a pulse when we got her but we managed to pull it back up. She's resting comfortably now. But can you imagine something like that? Slowly losing the ability to breathe and being so frail you don't have the energy or ability to fight back?
3. CHRIS: (*muttering*) That's ... interesting.
4. CHARLOTTE: What was that?
5. CHRIS: What? Oh, I said that's frightening. You know, maybe I misjudged you on the whole Francisco thing. If you can save an elderly woman from the brink of death, I feel pretty positive you can take care of a little rat.
6. CHARLOTTE: Aww, you're sweet. I think. (*she giggles*) Have I told you that I love you today?
7. CHRIS: Not that I remember, no.
8. CHARLOTTE: Okay, just checking.
9. CHRIS: (*scoffs*) What? Playing hard to get I see... come here.

SOUND _____ [THEY KISS]

10. CHARLOTTE: I do love you, Christopher Hamilton.
11. CHRIS: I love you too, Charlotte Mitchell.
12. CHARLOTTE: (*coyly*) And Francisco...?
13. CHRIS: ...And Francisco.
14. CHARLOTTE: Good. Speaking of which, I should probably feed him. Where'd I put the box?
15. CHRIS: It's on the other side of the coffee table.

1. CHARLOTTE: Right! The guy at the pet store said that rats only eat...
[PAUSE]
Chris?
2. CHRIS: What?
3. CHARLOTTE: Francisco's not here.
4. CHRIS: What?
5. CHARLOTTE: He's not here!
6. CHRIS: You put him in the box, right?
7. CHARLOTTE: Yes!
8. CHRIS: And you put the lid on, right?
9. CHARLOTTE: Yeah! I don't understand how he could have gotten out unless he... oh no.
10. CHRIS: What?
11. CHARLOTTE: He chewed a hole in the box.
12. CHRIS: Charlotte! Come on!
13. CHARLOTTE: Give me a break, Chris! This isn't *my* fault!
14. CHRIS: Really? I don't see anyone else in this apartment who brought a rat over, do you?
15. CHARLOTTE: Just help me look for him!
16. CHRIS: He could be anywhere by now! In the kitchen cabinets, flushed down the toilet, making a break for freedom down the fire escape—
- SOUND [ANOTHER PANICKED YELL FROM EDWARD'S BEDROOM]
17. CHARLOTTE: Or trapped in the guest room with your Uncle!
- SOUND [RUNNING STEPS, BEDROOM DOOR OPENS AS YELLS GET LOUDER]

1. CHRIS: Uncle Ed? What's — what is going on in here?

SOUND [THE SMACK OF A BROOM HITTING A LAMP, WHICH THEN CRASHES TO THE FLOOR]

Calm down! Give me that!

2. EDWARD: I saw a rat!

3. CHARLOTTE: It's my rat, Edward! I brought it over to show Chris!

SOUND [THE RAT SQUEALS AS HE TRIES TO RUN BY CHRIS]

There he goes!

4. CHRIS: Got him! It's all right — he won't bother you anymore, Uncle. You can get back in bed.

5. EDWARD: Who keeps a rat as a pet anyway?

6. CHARLOTTE: I'll have you know I rescued Francisco here from having harmful chemical tests done to him.

7. EDWARD: It's a rodent. It deserved its fate.

8. CHARLOTTE: I hardly think that—

9. EDWARD: (*interrupting with a raised voice*) Did I ask what you thought? No. It's time for Christopher to start speaking for himself instead of having some trollop do it for him.

10. CHRIS: (*narrating*) I felt my face grow hot with anger at this statement. My grip on Francisco tightened.

11. CHRIS: How dare you say—

12. CHARLOTTE: Wait a minute Chris. I can handle myself here. I find that an unfair accusation, Edward.

13. EDWARD: (*menacing*) Don't play dumb with me. I know what you're doing — coming over at strange hours, whispering and giggling through the apartment.

1. CHRIS: Now you wait just a minute! (*narrating*) He had reached a new low. It was one thing to be rude, but to insult Charley?! My hand gripped the rat even tighter and I felt my heart racing. (*end narration*)

SOUND [HEARTBEAT FADES IN, FAST, BUT FAINT THROUGH THE FOLLOWING]

How dare you speak to Charlotte that way!

2. EDWARD: And you! You are nothing but an lazy, self-absorbed, untalented coward!

3. CHRIS: (*with rage*) THAT'S ENOUGH!

4. CHARLOTTE: (*quiet*) Chris—

5. CHRIS: WHO do you think you are? I take you into my home and this is how you treat me?!

6. CHARLOTTE: (*louder now*) Chris—

7. CHRIS: If it weren't for me, where would you be? On the street! Would you like that? Huh? Because I have had ENOUGH of you and your vicious attitude.

8. CHARLOTTE: (*even louder*) Chris!

9. CHRIS: AND FURTHERMORE—

10. CHARLOTTE: (*shouting*) CHRIS!

11. CHRIS: WHAT?

SOUND [HEARTBEAT STOPS]

12. CHARLOTTE: (*voice shaking*) Your hand.

13. CHRIS: (*narrating*) I stared at her, not understanding, and then I realized. I opened my hand and saw Francisco, limp and unmoving. I'd gripped him so tight that he'd been suffocated and crushed. I looked up at Charley, who had tears in her eyes, but before I could say anything, Edward began to laugh.

SOUND [EDWARD LAUGHS]

Not a light chuckle. This was the same disturbingly venomous laugh I had heard the day of my grandfather's funeral and, again, it was directed right at me.

1. CHARLOTTE: Let's go, Chris.

2. CHRIS: *(narrating)* I was still too stunned at the dead rat in my hands to move. I had killed something. It was dead because of me. I expected to feel sad, or remorseful, but strangely enough... I didn't. In fact, I felt strong. Strong but still angry. It was an odd mix of emotions. I was furious with Edward but now I felt empowered to do something about him. As I left the room, an idea prickled in the dark corners of my mind. Dim and disturbing visions played around my head as I thought back to my earlier conversation with Charlotte. I had suffocated a living thing once now; what could stop me from doing it again? The thought was so enticingly simple. I could get rid of Edward once and for all. My mind sped manically as my plan took shape. I apologized to Charley and told her it would be a good idea if she went home. I had a long night ahead of me.

SOUND

[END SCENE TRANSITION/MUSIC]

[SCENE SIX]

SOUND [DURING THE FOLLOWING DIALOGUE,
CHARLOTTE'S VOICE IS COMING THROUGH
A CELL PHONE SPEAKER]

1. CHARLOTTE: Are you sure she said she was okay with this?
2. CHRIS: Charley, I spoke with Della not an hour ago and she said it was fine. Edward can stay with her for the weekend while we are dealing with the opening of the exhibit.
3. CHARLOTTE: Okay... what time do you think you'll be headed back home.
4. CHRIS: Not until late. I have to stop by The Art Space and start setting up. Billy's letting me put together the exhibit myself. Not to mention, I still have one more extra piece to finish up when I get back home. I don't think I'll be getting much sleep tonight.
5. CHARLOTTE: Well, please be careful. You need to be refreshed for tomorrow. Tell Della I said hello!
6. CHRIS: I will! See you tomorrow!

SOUND [BEEP AS CHRIS HANGS UP HIS PHONE]

(narrating) I wouldn't be telling Della hello because I wouldn't be seeing Della at all. It was a lie, yes, but one necessary to my plan. Edward and I were already at The Art Space. I had told him we were stopping on our way to Della's house so I could drop off my work for the exhibit. But that wasn't the only reason.

7. EDWARD: It's drafty in here. Why did I have to get out of the car?
8. CHRIS: (narrating) He was right. It was cold in the studio. Billy had bought the space as a rundown warehouse, originally built in the late 1800s. He'd brought it up to code, but wanted to maintain the historic feel, so he kept much of the original architecture, including the large, wooden floorboards, making this spot the perfect location for my plan.
9. CHRIS: I wanted you to see the work I've done. I'm not as lazy as you may think.

SOUND [EDWARD GRUNTS A RESPONSE]

1. CHRIS: *(narrating)* I remained relaxed as I carried the paintings in from my car. I had to make sure Edward felt a sense of calm before I struck. I set the painting of the eye in the same part of the room as some loose floorboards to distract Ed from my preparation.
2. EDWARD: What's this over here?
3. CHRIS: That? That's the painting I was working on a few weeks ago — the day after you came to live with me. It's inspired by you. Why don't you take a look?
4. EDWARD: A painting inspired by me? Let's see what you — AHHH!
5. CHRIS: *(narrating)* I knew that cry. It was the same scream that had erupted from my mouth upon my first encounter with my great Uncle. It was the sound of human terror. Edward had come face to face with the same horror he had used to his advantage for all these years. I seized my chance.

SOUND[NOISES ECHO THE DESCRIPTION
FOLLOWING]

I reached out, plastic wrap in hand, and covered Edwards face with it. He was surprised, and fought back for a moment, shockingly stronger than I was expecting. There was an eerie silence that filled the room – the man could not scream because of the plastic. But then, another sound reached my ears. It was the sound of a heartbeat. I heard it faintly first, but it soon grew louder and louder, until I was sure the whole city could hear. I knew the sound was not my own heart but his, and, for a moment, the beating was so loud I thought his heart would burst. I gripped the wrap tighter, and the beating quieted. After a moment, the body stopped struggling and then the beating stopped. He was dead, and his vulgarity, his oppression, and most importantly, his eye, would never bother me again. The eye that had plagued me all these years, followed me as a memory I could never hide from, would be forever locked away, out of sight and mind. I worked quickly now to hide the body. I wrapped the corpse tightly in plastic, and then pulled up the loose floorboards, placing the body in a small opening right underneath the corner of the room. He was more difficult to move than I had thought, but with adrenaline pumping, I was able to get the body into the crevice without too much trouble. I then replaced the boards in such a way that no eye would ever be able to tell they'd been touched and allowed myself a moment to breathe. With something of an artistic flourish, I set the easel with the painting of the eye right on top of the hidden body,

then stood up to survey my effort. I felt strong. More than strong.
Free.

[PAUSE]

But I didn't have time to rest. There was still one more piece to
finish before the exhibit tomorrow. It was time to get to work.

SOUND [END SCENE TRANSITION/MUSIC]

[SCENE SEVEN]

SOUND [PEOPLE TALKING IN THE BACKGROUND]

SOUND [CLINKING OF GLASS, THE BEGINNINGS OF A TOAST]

1. BILLY: Ladies and gentlemen, may I have your attention?

SOUND [THE TALKING DIES DOWN]

Thank you. As you all know, we're here tonight to celebrate the work of a fantastic rising artist, Mr. Christopher Hamilton!

SOUND [GENTLE APPLAUSE]

Chris's work is daring and explosive. The Art Space is thrilled to be hosting him for the next two weeks. And now, I'd like to invite him to say a few words. Chris?

2. CHRIS: Thanks, Billy. I'm not sure I deserve those comments but... hey, I'll take it!

SOUND [POLITE LAUGHTER]

I'm thrilled and honored to be able to present this exhibit here at The Art Space. I picked some of my favorite canvases to show you all, but that's not all I've brought. A few weeks ago, Billy called and asked if I would add a few more pieces to this evening. Naturally, I said yes. I mean, let's be honest, you don't tell someone like Billy Webster anything different.

SOUND [POLITE LAUGHTER AGAIN]

So without any further ado, I would like to present three new pieces I've created. My great uncle, who recently came to live with me after my father's death, inspired me to create this series I like to call 'Fear.' Made up of three individual pieces, these illustrate my greatest fears, something I have recently been challenged to own up to and face. The first two are paintings — one called "Cruelty," the other, "Panic." For my last piece, however, I decided to try something new. Using just one color — black — I have attempted to illustrate my fear of death. I call this last piece 'Buried' and I hope it challenges your perceptions of terror in the same way it challenged mine. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you... "Fear!"

SOUND [POLITE APPLAUSE, SOME OOH'S AND AHH'S]

SOUND [TRANSITION MUSIC TO ILLUSTRATE THE PASSING OF TIME]

1. CHARLOTTE: Chris! It's going well, don't you think? How do you feel?
2. CHRIS: I feel wonderful!
3. CHARLOTTE: Wonderful! I'm so proud of you!
4. CHRIS: (*narrating*) I was proud of me, too. Not only were people enjoying my artwork, but no one, not one person, had any inkling of my secret. I'd even almost managed to convince myself the previous evening hadn't happened. I felt remarkably at ease.
5. BILLY: Chris! Do you have a moment? I'd like for you to meet Thomas Bartlett and Virginia Shaw, from The Grant Gallery in Hartford.
6. CHRIS: How do you do?
7. VIRGINIA: I must say this is quite the show. I'm especially intrigued by your set on fear.
8. THOMAS: I love the brush strokes in "Panic" and your use of splattering in "Cruelty." But what really gets me is your lack of color in 'Buried' and the effectiveness it has. What gave you the inspiration for that piece in particular?
9. CHRIS: My father has recently passed away and my great Uncle, who is severely disfigured and near-death moved into my apartment. My mind has been so caught up in these circumstances that it's been difficult for my art not to be affected.
10. THOMAS: I see.
11. VIRGINIA: I suppose I ought to mention that our museum is currently in the process of handing out some rather sizable commissions, and we are very impressed by your work here.
12. CHRIS: Well, thank you. I appreciate that.
13. VIRGINIA: Here's my card. Thomas and I would love to set up a meeting with you in the next few days while we're still in the city. Give us a call tomorrow and let's set something up.

1. CHRIS: Will do!
2. THOMAS: Very nice to meet you, Chris.
3. CHRIS: You as well, enjoy your evening!
4. CHRIS: *(narrating)* I continued to have conversations like this for the next hour. People loved my work. I was getting offers right and left. I felt cheerily confident, my manner convincing everyone of my virtuousness. I had gotten away with it... or at least, very nearly. If I could make it through another few minutes, I would be free for good.
- [PAUSE]
- But after a while, I felt myself start to get hot. I loosened my tie and unbuttoned my collar. A headache sprung up surprisingly fast. I found myself looking for a place to sit down just as my ears began to ring. I tried to focus on the room and all of the people in it, but the more effort I made, the sicker I felt. My gaze rested on the painting of the eye, and I felt my stomach turn. Something was not right.
5. CHARLOTTE: Chris, are you feeling all right? You don't look well.
6. CHRIS: *(distracted)* Hmm? I'm... fine.
- SOUND [DURING THE REST OF THE DRAMA, THE HEARTBEAT GROWS IN VOLUME UNTIL IT CONSUMES THE AUDIENCE AT THE END]
7. CHRIS: *(narrating)* I was *not* fine. The ringing in my ears had become almost unbearable. I winced and tried to stand, but found that I couldn't. Suddenly, I had the feeling someone was watching me. I looked up and connected again with the painting of Uncle Ed's eye. I gasped for breath as the ringing turned into a dull, quick noise, similar to the ticking of an old alarm clock inside a table drawer. I forced myself to rise.
8. CHARLOTTE: Maybe you should sit back down.
9. CHRIS: I'm fine. Do... you hear that?
10. CHARLOTTE: Hear what?

1. CHRIS: That... thudding. You can't hear it?
2. CHARLOTTE: Chris, what are you talking about?
3. CHRIS: (*narrating*) But I didn't answer her. Instead, I found myself moving across the gallery to the spot where the eye painting sat on the easel. The noise grew louder and louder as I approached. I looked around wildly at the guests. Could they not hear? The sound was deafening!
4. CHRIS: (*asking random individuals, panicked*) Sir, do you hear that noise? I'm sorry, ma'am, but can you hear that?

SOUND

[THE INDIVIDUALS ANSWER IN SHORT, NONVERBAL RESPONSES. DURING THE FOLLOWING, THERE ARE NONVERBAL REACTION FROM GUESTS THAT ECHO CHRIS'S ACTIONS]

5. CHRIS: (*narrating*) I was babbling like a lunatic now. Could no one hear the thuds? They were loud, almost thunderous, and came evenly spread apart, almost like... almost like a... I spun around and stared at the painting again. The great, cruel eye leered at me from the canvas, as if it were aware of my situation. Even in death, Edward was taunting me, forcing my hand, refusing to give up and die. In an act of desperation, I grabbed the painting off the wall, and smashed it against the floor with a deafening crash.
6. CHARLOTE: CHRIS!
7. BILLY: What is going on over here! Chris?!
8. CHRIS: (*throughout the rest, narration begins to fuse with spoken dialogue*) They all knew! There was no hiding it anymore. The noise was incredible — they all must have heard it by now. They were mocking me, poking fun at the agony, the terror I was experiencing. My chest was closing up and I found the words escape my mouth, unable to hold them any longer... I ADMIT IT! IT WAS ME, I ADMIT IT!
10. BILLY: Admit what, Chris?!
11. CHRIS: Viciously, I bent down and began tearing up the wooden planks. HE'S HERE! PLEASE STOP! The plastic felt cool to my sweaty palms. I pulled the body out of the floor. There was a scream, or several, upon the realization of the figure. I began tearing away the

plastic. I ADMIT IT! LOCK ME AWAY IF THAT'S WHAT IT TAKES, BUT PLEASE JUST MAKE IT STOP!

1. BILLY: Make what stop! I don't understand!

2. CHRIS: I pulled the remainder of the wrapping away from the face and saw it. The eye. Open and gleaming, its stare burrowing its way into my mind again. I screamed as the sound overwhelmed me. THE BEATING – IT'S UNBEARABLE! CAN'T YOU HEAR IT? IT'S THE BEATING OF HIS HIDEOUS HEART!

SOUND [THE BEATING REACHES A MANIC CLIMAX AND THEN SUDDENLY CEASES]

[END OF PLAY]