

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER

Written by  
Ronald L. Ecker

Based on the Story by  
Edgar Allan Poe

Murder, madness, and burial alive on England's Salisbury Plain.

Copyright 2002 by Ronald L. Ecker  
All Rights Reserved

hobrad at outlook dot com  
ecker1221 at aol dot com

FADE IN:

EXT. SALISBURY PLAIN - DAY

Threatening clouds hang low over the vast green plain, with a distant rumble of THUNDER.

SUPERIMPOSE: "SALISBURY PLAIN, WILTSHIRE, ENGLAND, 1837."

Handsome gentleman TIM PRIDGEN, 40, with baggage behind his saddle, brings his ambling horse to a halt. He seems puzzled as he looks off at a mansion before him in the distance.

The mansion, standing off to itself, with a few knarled dead trees in front, looks sinister and neglected, a foreboding house of gloom on the green Wiltshire plain.

EXT. HOUSE OF USHER - DAY

Tim looks as puzzled as before by the mansion's appearance as he arrives on his walking horse.

A marshy, black-looking pond stands in front. On the pond's stagnant, glass-like surface the two-story house casts its eery reflection.

The servant JANKIN, 35, with a curious frown, approaches Tim from a corner of the house. Jankin wears a hunting knife.

TIM

Have I found the House of Usher?

JANKIN

You have, sir.

Tim again looks over the bleak facade of the once-splendid mansion, its dark windows like vacant eyes. He dismounts.

TIM

I'm Timothy Pridgen.

Tim removes his baggage from the horse, while Jankin holds the reins. Tim notes Jankin's unwelcoming stare.

TIM

You weren't told to expect anyone?

JANKIN

Only a body, sir.

TIM

A body?

JANKIN

I've been told to expect a body.  
 (then)  
 I wouldn't stay here, sir, if I  
 were you.

TIM

Why not?

Jankin just stares for a moment.

JANKIN

My name is Jankin. I'll take your  
 horse to the stable. Rap on the  
 door, and I assume that Giddings  
 will hear you.

Tim watches Jankin turn to go with the horse.

EXT. FRONT DOOR - DAY

Tim with his baggage approaches the heavy front door.

His arrival has apparently been observed, as the door opens,  
 slightly CREAKING, before he gets there to knock.

The butler GIDDINGS, 63, who looks rather frail and troubled,  
 stands inside.

TIM

You must be Giddings. I believe  
 I'm expected. Timothy Pridgen.

Giddings's look is more of dread than of welcome, as he steps  
 back for Tim to come in.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Tim looks over the mansion's shadowy, musty-looking interior,  
 as Giddings closes the door.

GIDDINGS

Shall I carry your things, sir?

Tim notes that Giddings is not too robust.

TIM

I'm all right, Giddings. Thank  
 you.

GIDDINGS

I will show you upstairs, sir.

Tim follows Giddings through the dark entrance hall to a staircase.

Tim notes somber tapestries, old furniture, and worn carpet. An air of irredeemable gloom pervades the mansion.

They proceed up the stairs, Giddings with a hand on the banister.

TIM

How is Roderick? Is he here at the moment?

GIDDINGS

He is taking his usual afternoon nap. Best not to disturb him.

INT. SECOND-FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Giddings and Tim turn west at the top of the stairs. The hallway they enter is dark, lit at the moment only by a window at the far end.

TIM

I haven't seen Roderick since --

Tim slows to a stop, looking ahead with wonderment.

The black silhouette of a woman stands eerily between Tim and the light of the far window.

The woman moves slowly toward Tim. Her features now come into view as she stops before him. She is MADELINE USHER, 30, dark-haired and beautiful, but pale.

She stares wide-eyed at Tim as if with a mixture of surprise and resentment.

It's not Tim she sees. She sees FERRIS ATKINSON, 35, a suave, handsome charmer.

FERRIS

Hello.

Madeline turns and goes quickly back through the shadows into her quarters on the right, closing the door behind her.

Tim looks puzzled. Giddings looks curious too, but also seems used to odd behavior from Madeline.

GIDDINGS

Come along, sir.

Again following Giddings, Tim looks at Madeline's closed door as they pass.

INT. MADELINE'S QUARTERS - DAY

Madeline stares off into space, again with apparent mixed emotions.

MADELINE

(whispers)

Ferris, how could you dare come back?

INT. TIM'S QUARTERS - DAY

Tim looks around at the rather dreary quarters as he follows Giddings in.

TIM

Who was the lady we saw?

GIDDINGS

That was Madeline, sir. Master Roderick's sister.

Tim sets down his luggage.

GIDDINGS

Take your time and freshen up, Mister Pridgen. Then feel free to browse in the library, where Master Roderick will meet you, downstairs.

Giddings starts to go.

TIM

Giddings, I was met by a servant outside. Jankin. He said he's expecting a body.

Giddings looks surprised.

GIDDINGS

Why, that's strange. I know nothing about a body, sir. I shall have to inquire.

Giddings again starts to go.

TIM

Giddings, if I may ask...

Tim walks over to him.

TIM

Is it true that Roderick's father  
went mad here? That was the story  
in London.

GIDDINGS

Well, he did decline mentally, sir,  
the last years that he lived.

TIM

What about Roderick's mother?

GIDDINGS

She killed herself too.

Giddings leaves.

EXT. PLAIN - DAY (NEAR SUNSET)

The diffused sun looks enlarged, just above the horizon.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY (NEAR SUNSET)

Tim, in a change of clothes, stands at one of the bookshelves.  
He removes a book from the shelf with interest.

The book is "Der Scheintod," by Cristoph Wilhelm Hufeland.  
The date shown is 1808. Tim frowns at the German text.

Reshelving the book, Tim looks intrigued by another book  
title. He takes the book from the shelf.

The book is "The Uncertainty of the Signs of Death," by Jean-  
Jacques Bruhier. Tim opens it for a look.

RODERICK

Timothy.

Tim turns to look as RODERICK USHER, 45, has entered.

TIM

Roderick --

Quickly reshelving the book, Tim goes over to Roderick. They  
greet each other warmly.

RODERICK

Thank you so much for coming.

Tim can't hide his surprise at Roderick's appearance.  
Roderick looks aged beyond his years, his skin pale, his hair  
white and somewhat unkempt.

TIM

I could hardly deny an old friend making such an appeal. It was so good to hear from you. But your letter, Roderick, it...

RODERICK

You were the best friend I had in London. I felt closer to you than to Ferris.

TIM

We were a threesome, eh? Almost more than London could handle. I might not have lasted much longer if I hadn't got married.

RODERICK

Yes, well...

Something seems to sadden Roderick.

RODERICK

I found someone too.

An awkward pause.

RODERICK

Let's go have some wine.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The house looks dark and sinister.

INT. FIRST-FLOOR DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

Gloomy, the furniture old and worn.

Roderick gazes off morosely, Tim with a look of concern, as they sit with their wine.

RODERICK

Five years, and I'm still not over her death, in that horrible way.

(sighs remorsefully)

If only I had been there, if I'd not gone to Bedford, I could have taken Elizabeth out of London, and she wouldn't have died.

TIM

You can't blame yourself. The outbreak happened so quickly. Who could have known?

A pause, Tim noting how Roderick stares off. Tim tries to lighten things up,

TIM

I haven't seen Ferris since he went back to Bedford to stay. Have you?

Roderick shows no reaction. Giddings appears at the door.

GIDDINGS

Dinner is served, sir.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Dreary like the rest of the house.

Tim and Roderick are present as Madeline enters. She is accompanied by SPERRY, 52, a gentleman with a cagey and rather dissipated look.

RODERICK

My sister Madeline. This is Tim Pridgen, a dear friend and writer whom I invited from London.

Madeline smiles at Tim knowingly, apparently masking her earlier resentment.

It's again Ferris whom she sees. He smiles at her.

FERRIS

We almost met before.

She stops smiling, as if wondering why Ferris (still Tim, of course, to all but Madeline) would say that. All of her reactions will strike Tim as odd.

RODERICK

(to Tim)

This is Doctor Sperry...

SPERRY

(shakes hands with Tim)

How do you do, Mister Pridgen?

RODERICK

Our resident physician.

SPERRY

(to Tim)

All of my patients are Ushers.

TIM

Pleased to meet you.

As Roderick and Sperry sit down, Tim holds her chair for Madeline.

TIM

Allow me.

MADELINE

Thank you.

Glasses of wine have already been poured. Sperry is quick to pick up his glass. Tim sits down.

MADELINE

Have you been to Salisbury Plain before, ... Mister Atkinson?

On "Atkinson," Sperry chokes on his wine and coughs. He clears his throat.

SPERRY

Sorry. Went down the wrong way.

RODERICK

The name is Pridgen.

TIM

I have been to Stonehenge once, years ago.

Giddings and ALISON, 35, the house's rather plain but earthy-looking cook, serve food.

Sperry cuts a lascivious eye at Alison, who pays no attention.

TIM

Roderick, I didn't get your answer before. Have you seen Ferris Atkinson lately?

Roderick looks caught off guard. Before he can answer,

MADELINE

Yes, he was here -- and not long ago -- for a visit.

Madeline looks coyly at Tim, as if going along with a pretense that he is not Ferris Atkinson.

RODERICK

Ferris came here uninvited. And sometimes Madeline gets confused, about names, and visitors.

MADELINE

(loudly)

I do nothing of the sort. You are  
the one who is addled, from your  
years of debauchery.

Roderick has closed his eyes with a frown, as if the sound of  
the loud retort somehow pains him.

RODERICK

"Years of debauchery."

(to Tim)

Were we that bad, old friend?

Tim smiles, again trying to lighten things up.

TIM

I don't know, Roderick. Looking  
back, it's all a bit of a fog.

MADELINE

Don't feel you're to blame, Ferris,  
for my brother's mental decline.  
He blames himself, for everything.

An awkward pause, then,

TIM

Do you do any writing, Roderick?

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

In the dreary room Roderick recites an original poem,  
accompanying himself with soft strokes on a mandolin.

Tim, Madeline, and Sperry sit listening. Madeline knits with  
needle and yarn.

RODERICK

"In kindred tides our souls awake  
and weep/ Of love and light born  
to the starless tomb/ Life is a  
downward plunge and death is deep/  
In night is born a flame that  
cannot keep."

Roderick strums a concluding note.

MADELINE

Your poetry is depressing, Roderick.

Roderick sets aside the mandolin.

RODERICK

Perhaps we should have you read from that volume of nonsense verses, though I'm sure you know them by heart.

MADELINE

Why, that would be more entertaining. Shall I fetch it?

RODERICK

No.

Giddings refills the men's glasses with sherry, Madeline silently declining.

RODERICK

Tim, what news do you bring us from London?

TIM

Well, most of the talk is of Her Majesty, our new Queen Victoria, and the fact that royalty is not quite what it was, given the Reform Bill.

RODERICK

Indeed times have changed, with reform and this age of mechanization. Some of us older families have sort of been left to the past.

Giddings starts to go.

RODERICK

Oh, Giddings, there's that odor again in the hallway. Can't you smell it?

GIDDINGS

No, sir.

RODERICK

No matter. You must go find the source.

GIDDINGS

I will, sir.

As Giddings leaves, Madeline giggles.

MADELINE

Sorry. It reminds me of a nonsense  
verse from the book. Let's see.  
"A foolish old fellow from Wales/  
Said 'An odor of coal-gas  
prevails'/ He then struck a light/  
And later that night/ Was collected  
in seventeen pails."

Madeline has a good laugh.

TIM

Go tell Giddings not to strike a  
light.

RODERICK

I have great concern for miasma.

TIM

You have asthma?

RODERICK

No. The miasma. Vapor, stale air.

SPERRY

(to Tim)

The cause of cholera and other  
diseases transmitted by air.

TIM

Oh, yes, of course. Are they still  
sure that air is the cause of  
cholera?

SPERRY

We can be sure, sir, of nothing.

RODERICK

Fresh air is our only defense.  
Though my sister may think it's a  
joke.

MADELINE

I see, brother, that I have  
offended you, with my verse about  
the Welshman in pails.

Madeline gathers her knitting and rises.

MADELINE

Perhaps I had best retire. I'm  
sure that you and... your old  
friend, have much to discuss.

Tim courteously rises. Sperry rises too.

SPERRY

Yes, I also shall excuse myself, so you two fellows can talk.

MADELINE

(to Sperry)

Perhaps we can sniff for that odor on the way down the passage.

TIM

Don't strike a light.

Madeline, her amusement seeming to vanish, looks rather coldly at Tim, which again strikes him as odd.

She turns and walks toward the door. Sperry follows her.

SPERRY

Good night, gentlemen.

Madeline stops near the door and looks back at Tim. Sperry stops beside her.

MADELINE

(to Tim)

May I speak with you a moment?

Tim walks over to her, Sperry leaving. Roderick grimly glances toward them.

Madeline whispers to Tim,

MADELINE

What are you here for?

It's Ferris she sees looking back at her. He smiles slightly. Is it a mocking smile?

FERRIS

I came to see Roderick.

Tim looks curious about her question and the resentful way she looks at him.

MADELINE

That is all?

TIM

Yes. But I'm certainly glad that you're here so I may see you as well.

Madeline glares at him for a moment as if insulted. She turns and leaves.

Tim watches her wonderingly, then walks back to his chair.

TIM

I didn't know, Roderick, you have such a beautiful sister. But she does seem to have me confused for some reason with --

RODERICK

She was never in London. But I'm sure I must have mentioned her.

TIM

(sits down)  
Yes, you mentioned her.

RODERICK

What did she say to you?

TIM

She asked me why I am here.  
(then)  
Roderick, don't you find it odd that she --

RODERICK

(with aggravation)  
Yes, it is odd.  
(sighs)  
She likes to play games, Tim. She likes nonsense verses and odd games. It can be rather trying.  
(then)  
We must spend some time in the library tomorrow. How did you find the collection?

Tim stares at Roderick, who fidgets, his eyes avoiding Tim's.

TIM

Quite impressive.

Tim picks up his glass of sherry.

TIM

What is der Scheintod?

Roderick, Tim notes, looks stunned by the question.

TIM

It's the title of one of your books. I believe it is German.

Roderick forces a nervous smile.

RODERICK

Oh, yes, the book. I don't know the meaning. Someone gave that book to my father. I don't read German either.

Tim sips, his eyes on Roderick.

TIM

Roderick, I know we're old friends, but... Why exactly did you need me to come here?

RODERICK

Well, I thought that my letter explained that.

Roderick rises and nervously moves about.

TIM

You spoke of your "sickness of heart," your "oppression," which you hoped that a visit might help to assuage. If we're to talk about it, I need to know why you --

RODERICK

We needn't talk about it at all. There are things I must deal with alone -- as I shall. But I must have some moments of grace, of the way things once were.

Roderick's nervousness seems to increase as he paces.

RODERICK

You are my link to the past. I asked you here for your company, to talk about books, art, your writing. About things that make life worth living... before it is done.

Roderick sits down, but still seems restless. Tim looks concerned, then tries to be cheerful,

TIM  
 And what did Ferris have to say?  
 Is he doing any writing, or --

RODERICK  
 (angrily)  
 I would rather not talk about  
 Ferris.

Rising again, Roderick leans forward as if faint, grabbing the arm of his chair to keep from falling.

Rising quickly, Tim moves to Roderick's aid.

RODERICK  
 I am sorry, Tim, I...

TIM  
 It's all right. What is wrong?

RODERICK  
 Nothing, I -- I have not slept well  
 of late.

TIM  
 Let me help you upstairs.

They move toward the door, Tim with a hand on Roderick's arm.

RODERICK  
 Yes, I could use a good rest.

INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Tim and Roderick reach the staircase, from the direction of the east hallway, in the dimly lit entrance hall.

RODERICK  
 What?

TIM  
 I didn't say anything.

RODERICK  
 I'll be all right now, Tim.

TIM  
 Are you sure?

RODERICK  
 Yes. Why don't you browse a bit  
 more in the library? Find a good  
 read. I will see you in the  
 morning. Good night.

TIM

Good night.

Roderick walks up the steps, a hand on the banister. He turns east at the top of the stairs, with a glance back at Tim, who watches him till he's gone out of view.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

A gray morning. The House of Usher stands like a cancer on green Salisbury Plain.

EXT. BEHIND HOUSE - DAY

Strolling, Tim looks over the bushes and small trees, all dead, of what was once a garden.

He walks toward the stable, which looks a bit rundown, to the left and rear of the dead garden.

Almost to the stable door, Tim is surprised to see it open and Jankin step out.

Jankin looks surprised to see Tim.

TIM

Good morning.

Jankin closes the door.

JANKIN

I have fed your horse, sir.

Starting toward the house, Jankin stops by Tim.

JANKIN

Best not to poke around the stable, sir. It's not in the best condition.

Jankin walks toward the servants' entrance, midway along the back of the house. He glances back at Tim.

Tim looks at the stable. He turns to watch Jankin move off. Then he sees something else, at the house's west upper floor.

Madeline stands at the dark window of her quarters. She's looking at Tim. He stares with fascination. She's like a lovely apparition.

Madeline blows him a kiss, but seemingly with no affection, as if it were more like a kiss of death.

She turns and moves off.

He gazes at the dark vacant window.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

There are three butcher knives and other utensils by a bowl on a table.

A woman's hand picks up one of the knives.

The well-dressed woman, face unseen, stealthily holds the knife low and moves off.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Roderick stares into space as if catatonic, to Tim's unease. They sit at the table, Tim with a book.

GIDDINGS

I have brought you some tea.

Giddings sets down a cup for Roderick, who seems unaware of his presence, and one for Tim, who sets aside his book.

TIM

Thank you, Giddings.

Giddings leaves. Tim studies abstracted Roderick.

TIM

I've been curious about something  
Jankin told me when I arrived  
yesterday.

Roderick seems not to hear,

RODERICK

The time of the Ushers has all but  
passed. The family and this house  
are one. The two have finally  
merged. We last Ushers are trapped  
here -- as man is trapped, in this  
bit of cosmic space.

TIM

Nonsense, Roderick. You could  
leave here whenever you wish.  
What is stopping you?  
(no response)  
Shall we ride somewhere tomorrow?

Gazing off, Roderick shows no reaction for a moment.

RODERICK

I must stay indoors nowadays. My eyes are overly sensitive to bright light. I must also protect my hearing.

TIM

What is wrong with it?

RODERICK

Hypersensitivity. Any loud noise -- lightning, a shout, a barking dog -- seems like a pistol shot, close by the ear. I have a heightened sense of sound, of smell, of colors.

MADELINE

May I go, then?

Madeline has entered. Tim politely rises as she steps to the table, Roderick ignoring her.

TIM

Why not?

(looks at Roderick)

Shall I have the pleasure of riding somewhere with your sister?

Roderick glances at Madeline.

RODERICK

No. She has a weak constitution of late, and needn't be horseback riding.

MADELINE

But I feel fine, brother. I --

She stops as Roderick gives her a hard, scolding look.

Staring at him, Madeline seems to fill with bitter hatred.

MADELINE

May you rot in hell, Roderick Usher.

She turns and heads for the door. Tim starts after her.

TIM

Madeline...

RODERICK

I am sorry, Tim.

Tim stops and looks back.

RODERICK  
You have to understand. She mustn't  
leave the house.

Tim goes after Madeline.

INT. STAIRCASE - DAY

Angry Madeline, reaching the bottom of the staircase from the east, starts up the steps.

TIM  
Madeline...

Madeline, on the third or fourth step, stops and turns as Tim comes to the bottom of the stairs.

TIM  
I'm sorry, I...

MADELINE  
You have nothing to apologize for.

Tim is now Ferris.

FERRIS  
I don't want to be the source of  
some family discord.

MADELINE  
You are not. He resents me, as you  
know. He sees in me the life he  
denies for himself.

TIM  
How should I know that?

She smiles seductively.

MADELINE  
Come see me tonight, Ferris.

She turns away.

Tim looks baffled as he watches her proceed up the stairs.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Returning, Tim finds no Roderick. Tim sighs, seemingly unsure what to do.

EXT. IN FRONT OF HOUSE - DAY

Tim stands by the dark pond. He thoughtfully looks off at the plain as he smokes a cigar.

Jankin comes riding on a horse with saddlebags from the direction of the stable.

Tim motions for him to stop as Jankin is headed toward the plain.

Jankin stops his horse beside Tim.

TIM

May I ask you a question?

Jankin stares at Tim without expression.

TIM

A gentleman named Ferris Atkinson was here -- I gather a few days ago. Did anything happen, of an unusual nature, that you are aware of?

JANKIN

What goes on in that house, sir, is none of my business. I am only a servant.

They stare at each other, Tim smoking his cigar.

TIM

You warned me not to stay here. What was the reason?

JANKIN

I have to go, sir. An errand for Doctor Sperry.

Tim watches Jankin ride off toward the plain. He then looks up at the window of Roderick's quarters on the east upper floor.

Tim walks toward the house.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The cook Alison frowns upon finding a butcher knife missing, apparently the one she wants. She picks up another one.

She hums as she cuts food while she stands at the table.

From behind her a MAN, face unseen, suddenly covers Alison's mouth with one hand. Holding her tightly against him, he grabs the hand holding the knife with his other hand.

It's Sperry, forcing Alison's hand with the knife to the table, where Alison drops the knife.

Sperry lets go of her hand and fondles her breast. He uncovers her mouth so Alison can speak.

ALISON

You bastard! Why do you do that?  
Scared the wits out of me.

She turns to him.

SPERRY

I like scaring you.

He kisses and caresses her, as she puts her welcoming arms around him. They have clearly been here before.

ALISON

It's a good thing me husband has  
gone Wilton way.

SPERRY

I'm the party who sent him. We're  
fresh out of sherry.

They caress and kiss.

SPERRY

You know that medicine you gave me  
last time? It wore off so quick  
I'm going to need it on a regular  
basis.

ALISON

And you've got the cure, Lord  
knows, for what ails me.

SPERRY

That husband of yours is no good?

ALISON

In bed? Jankin is like a fish out  
of water. He just lies there  
flapping around.

SPERRY

What kind of fish am I, Alison?

She feels him.

ALISON

You're one of them swordfishes,  
you are.

INT. RODERICK'S QUARTERS - DAY

Roderick lies napping on a couch, a book on the floor beside it. His sleep becomes restless.

BEGIN NIGHTMARE SEQUENCE

EXT. BEHIND HOUSE - GARDEN - NIGHT

WIND BLOWS the dark greenery as Roderick enters the moonlit garden (not dead as seen earlier) as if looking for someone.

RODERICK

Elizabeth?

Roderick stops suddenly, startled at the sight of 8-year-old CHARLES USHER, standing before him in the shadows.

Charles stares up coldly at Roderick, who looks frightened.

RODERICK

Charles... Charles, I didn't mean  
to hurt you. You know that I  
didn't. I --

From somewhere in the garden comes an amplified, ominous whisper on the wind,

ELIZABETH (O.S.)

Roderick...

Roderick looks fearfully toward the sound.

RODERICK

Is that you, Elizabeth?

He looks again toward Charles. The boy is gone.

ELIZABETH (O.S.)

Yes, Roderick. It's me.

Roderick moves nervously through the windswept garden toward the sound.

RODERICK

Where are you?

ELIZABETH (O.S.)

Over here.

He moves toward the amplified, whispering voice.

He suddenly comes face-to-face with Madeline, evilly smiling and slightly decayed, her white gown fluttering in the wind.

RODERICK

Madeline --

MADELINE

Do you know that Elizabeth's dead?

Madeline turns and walks back into the darkness, the wind blowing her gown.

RODERICK

Yes. Yes, she died of cholera.

She glances back and keeps going. Roderick calls out,

RODERICK

Why do you ask?... Madeline?

He goes after her in the darkness, then stops, startled to find Charles again standing in front of him.

As Charles stares up at Roderick, Charles's eyes roll back in his head, and blood streams out of one nostril.

END NIGHTMARE SEQUENCE

INT. RODERICK'S QUARTERS - DAY

Roderick awakes with a start on the couch.

RODERICK

No!

Tim has just entered.

TIM

Roderick...?

Roderick glances self-consciously at Tim.

RODERICK

I had a bad dream.

Rising, Roderick brushes his hair with a hand. He moves toward a window.

Tim looks down at the book on the floor.

TIM  
Perhaps you're reading the wrong  
kind of book.

Tim picks up the book. It is apparently nothing remarkable.

From the window, Roderick looks down toward the pond in front of the house.

He seems transfixed by what he sees.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. BY THE POND - DAY

A MAN -- trim, well-dressed -- stands by the pond, as if gazing at the stagnant water, his back to the mansion.

The man slowly turns, enough to look up toward Roderick. It is Ferris, with cold disdain in his eyes.

Roderick turns away, looking frightened as he goes to a chair and sits down.

Tim has watched Roderick. Tim walks over to the window and looks out.

RODERICK  
Is he still there?

Tim looks over at Roderick, then looks out the window again. There is no one by the pond.

TIM  
Who?

Roderick sits staring into space with fearful eyes.

Tim regards him with puzzlement.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Clouds partially hide the moon.

RODERICK (V.O.)  
"Man is only a reed, but he is a  
thinking reed..."

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Roderick sits reading aloud from the book "Pascal."

Tim half-listens, engrossed in a book of his own, other books on the table between them.

RODERICK

"Though the universe crush him, man is nobler than that which destroys him. For he knows he is dying, but the universe knows nothing."

TIM

Roderick, have you read this book? It's "The Uncertainty of the Signs of Death." In one case, an anatomist wanted to know the cause of death when the wife of a Spanish nobleman died. With the family's consent, he took a knife and cut her open, and...

(reads)

"To the horror of all present, the heart was still beating."

Tim looks at Roderick for his reaction. Roderick turns a page in "Pascal" as if not having heard.

Tim closes his book. He rises and returns it to the shelf.

TIM

Aren't you concerned about Madeline?

Roderick looks at Tim, who still faces the shelves.

RODERICK

What do you mean?

Tim turns from the books.

TIM

We haven't seen her all night. Giddings said she wasn't feeling well.

RODERICK

She didn't join us for dinner because she is sulking, that's all.

TIM

Yes, she did get rather upset. But I wondered: Why did you say she's not well enough to ride? She looks well to me -- I mean physically. She's pale but she --

RODERICK

She seems of an increasingly delicate nature.

TIM

She thinks I am Ferris. And she seems to have some resentment toward him.

RODERICK

If she does, I don't know the answer to that.

TIM

Well the answer isn't good, whatever it is.

Tim watches Roderick calmly read.

TIM

Aren't you concerned? It could be this place. Does she ever get out? A trip to London, perhaps, for a stay. And to see a doctor. Has Doctor Sperry done anything for her?

Roderick, but not Tim, hears,

A DISEMBODIED VOICE

He wants to take her away. Roderick, do you hear what he's saying?

Tim stares at him as Roderick listens with an abstracted look.

TIM

You need to get out too. Out of this house for a while.

DISEMBODIED VOICE

He wants to take her away from us.

TIM

Roderick, do you hear what I'm saying?

RODERICK

She must not leave this estate. It is out of the question.

TIM

Why?

RODERICK

(angrily)  
It is not your concern.

Tim becomes angry too,

TIM

Then please excuse the fact that I am concerned. But that doesn't seem to matter.

Tim seems to wrestle with a decision, then makes it,

TIM

I'll be leaving tomorrow. I dropped a lot of work at the press in order to come here. And I don't seem to be making much difference. But I'll tell you this: In Amesbury or London I'm going to see what I can do to help Madeline. Anything that lies within my power.

Tim starts toward the door.

RODERICK

Tim...

Tim stops and turns.

RODERICK

Please forgive me. I do appreciate you coming here. It is just that there are some things... that are best left alone.

TIM

And some things cannot be left alone, Roderick.

RODERICK

Please don't leave tomorrow. I... I will let Madeline go with you for a ride, if the weather permits. I must stay out of the sun, with my eyes.

TIM

She is now well enough to ride? She can leave the estate?

RODERICK

Well, she can ride in the carriage. I shall have Jankin drive you.

Roderick opens another book, as if to end the discussion.

Tim stares at him, then sighs. As Tim turns to go, Roderick hears,

DISEMBODIED VOICE  
Roderick, why let Madeline go with  
him?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. OUTSIDE THE LIBRARY DOOR - NIGHT

Entering the east hallway from the library, Tim stops as he hears,

RODERICK  
I'm afraid he may leave and do what  
he threatens.

Tim eavesdrops -- hearing, of course, only Roderick's part of the conversation.

DISEMBODIED VOICE  
What if she tells him?

RODERICK  
She can't. How could she tell him?

DISEMBODIED VOICE  
She thinks he is Ferris. What if --

RODERICK  
She doesn't even know why she  
thinks he is Ferris.

Agitated, Roderick returns to his book.

RODERICK  
I will hear no more of it.

After a moment, Tim wonderingly proceeds on his way.

INT. SECOND-FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Tim walks west from the stairs on the way to his quarters. A wall lamp lights the dark hallway.

Tim stops by the closed door of Madeline's quarters. He steps closer to the door.

He seems unsure about whether to knock.

INT. MADELINE'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Madeline in a nightgown stands at a mirror, gazing at herself in the candlelight. She softly, sensuously rubs her bare neck.

She suddenly notices a shadow in the hallway lamp light beneath the door.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. SECOND-FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Tim stands at Madeline's door, still unsure what to do.

Madeline puts the stolen butcher knife under the pillow of her bed. She moves toward the door.

Tim lifts his hand as if to knock, Madeline waiting on the other side of the door.

But Tim doesn't knock. As if resisting temptation, he sighs and proceeds toward his quarters.

Madeline steps back from the door, to look for the shadow beneath it. It's gone.

Tim opens the door to his quarters. He looks back toward Madeline's. He sees her come out of her quarters, just far enough to beckon him with a gesture.

She's careful not to speak too loudly,

MADELINE

I must see you. Please.

Tim gazes at her. Madeline goes back in her quarters, leaving the door open.

Tim closes his door. He walks, with a look of misgiving, toward Madeline's.

INT. MADELINE'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Tim walks in through the open door. He looks around for Madeline in the candlelight.

He turns to see her close the door, behind which she was standing.

Leaning back against the door in her nightgown, she gazes sensuously at the man standing before her.

It's Ferris, whose expression shows none of Tim's concern or confusion.

She walks over to Tim. Their eyes lock for a moment, then she hungrily embraces and kisses him.

Tim is conflicted, clearly wanting her but trying to resist his desire, as she clings to him.

TIM

No, we can't do this.

MADELINE

Make love to me.

Madeline leads him to the side of the bed, pulling him by the hand as he reluctantly follows.

She sits down on the edge of the bed, and coaxes him to sit down beside her. He sits down, she embraces him, and they fall together onto the bed, Madeline's head on the pillow.

They passionately kiss and embrace.

She moves her hand stealthily under her back, as if to reach up under the pillow, Tim over her as they kiss.

MADELINE

I prayed that you would come back, and take me away this time. Are you going to do that, Ferris? Tell me now, yes or no.

TIM

I am not Ferris. I am Timothy Pridgen, with a wife and child.

MADELINE

Don't you want me?

He tears himself away, getting up from the bed.

TIM

Yes, I want you. But what makes you think I am Ferris?

Sitting up, Madeline stares at him. He glances anxiously toward the door.

TIM

I can't stay here. We'll talk tomorrow. We'll be going for a ride in the carriage. We'll get out somewhere and talk.

He walks toward the door.

MADELINE  
Don't go, Ferris.

Tim stops, as if in a quandary. Madeline, leaning on one hand where she sits on the bed, now holds the butcher knife in the other, held behind her hip.

MADELINE  
Come lie with me.

He slowly walks back toward her. She tightens her grip on the knife.

He stops, as he only wants to reason with her.

TIM  
I mustn't stay here. I am not --

He doesn't finish, as if it's futile to say it again.

TIM  
I will see you tomorrow.

She watches darkly as he turns and leaves, closing the door behind him.

EXT. SALISBURY PLAIN - DAY

The weather is fair as an open horse-drawn carriage, with three people aboard, moves away from the bleak House of Usher.

EXT. CARRIAGE - MOVING - DAY

Jankin drives, his passengers Tim and Madeline, both solemn.

Tim looks with concern at Madeline. She gazes straight ahead.

INT. HOUSE (NORTHWEST FIRST FLOOR) - CHAPEL - DAY

Roderick kneels in sad meditation on a prayer kneeler, facing a crucifix in the lamplit chancel.

After a moment, Roderick sees his distinguished-looking father EDWARD USHER, 65, stand grimly before him in the chancel.

EDWARD  
I pray, son, this will not be your  
fate.

Edward puts the muzzle of a flintlock pistol to his temple.

RODERICK

No, Father, no --

Edward FIRES the pistol. Blood spatters on the chancel floor.

Roderick gasps, burying his face in his hands, as he kneels alone in the chapel.

EXT. RIVERBANK - DAY

Tim and Madeline stroll by a river on the plain, while Jankin waits at the carriage. Madeline holds a flower.

MADELINE

Where do I begin about Roderick?  
He blames himself for his wife  
Elizabeth's death. He feels guilty  
too about Charles.

TIM

Charles?

Madeline tosses the flower onto the water. She watches it.

MADELINE

Our brother, before I was born.  
Charles and Roderick were playing.  
It got rough, I suppose, and  
Charles hit his head. I was told  
he died from a hemorrhage, or a  
broken neck, and that Roderick  
cried for days.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Jankin, waiting with the carriage, watches a horse-drawn wagon go by. TWO CARTERS are aboard. The wagon carries a wooden coffin.

EXT. RIVERBANK - DAY

Madeline gazes at the water, Tim regarding her, as they stand by the river.

TIM

Why have you stayed at that house?  
Is there nowhere else you can go?

MADELINE

We're the last of the Ushers. He's my older brother, and... Something happened.

TIM

What happened? Tell me.

MADELINE

(seems vaguely confused)  
I don't know.

TIM

Something to do with Ferris?

Madeline gives him a hard, resentful look, as if Tim has dared to deny who he is.

TIM

Madeline, I want to do something for you, help you to -- to escape from that house, for one thing. I'd like to help Roderick, but --

Her expression changes from resentful to hopeful,

MADELINE

You will take me with you, then, Ferris?

He sighs with frustration.

TIM

I don't mean it the way you do. And how could I take you away, against Roderick's will, without at least knowing what happened, why no one will speak of it, and why you see Ferris now. You see him now, don't you?

MADELINE

(spitefully)  
Yes. I see him because I'm a fool, a moonraker. That's what they call folks from Wiltshire. Only we aren't the fools, so we're proud to be moonrakers.

Jankin joins them from the carriage.

MADELINE

(playfully)

Why don't you tell him, Jankin?  
Tell this poor man who he is.

Jankin gives her a look, looks at Tim, then nods toward the darkening sky.

JANKIN

I think we better start back, sir.  
I don't like the looks of those  
clouds. And remember that body I  
told you about? I think it just  
went by.

MADELINE

(cheerily)

There's plenty of room at the house  
for it.

Madeline moves off toward the carriage. Watching, Tim and Jankin glance at each other.

TIM

If I were you, Jankin, I wouldn't  
stay there either.

Tim moves off after Madeline. Jankin grins with amusement.

INT. HOUSE - RODERICK'S QUARTERS - DAY

Candlelit, daylight shut out by the drapes. Roderick sits softly playing the mandolin as he gazes off into space.

Giddings steps in at the door.

GIDDINGS

A wagon is approaching the house,  
sir. Two men aboard.

Roderick sits motionless for a moment.

RODERICK

When they arrive, send them to me.  
And find Doctor Sperry.

Giddings goes. Roderick slowly sets aside the mandolin and rises.

Roderick walks over to a portrait on the wall. Its bright colors in the candlelight contrast with the chamber's dark frayed drapes and old faded furniture.

The image in the portrait is that of an attractive woman in her 30s, slightly smiling.

Roderick gazes forlornly at the image. OVERLAP SOUND:

TIM (V.O.)

What do you know about the body?

EXT. CARRIAGE - MOVING - DAY

As Tim waits for an answer, Madeline gazes off as if not hearing or not caring to answer.

TIM

I'm guessing it's Elizabeth's.

Jankin half-turns his head, listening as he drives under overcast sky.

MADELINE

Yes. He wants her to join all the others in the Usher family vault.

TIM

After all this time. I wonder if there'll be some sort of service.

MADELINE

Let the dead rebury the dead.

TIM

Is Roderick dead?

MADELINE

As far as I'm concerned, yes.

INT. HOUSE - RODERICK'S QUARTERS - DAY

The two humble Carters stand before Roderick. They look spooked as he stares at them out of the shadows.

RODERICK

When the body was removed from the crypt in London, was anything out of the ordinary noticed?

CARTER #1

You mean inside the crypt, sir?

RODERICK

No. Inside the coffin. Did anyone open the coffin?

CARTER #2

Not as far as we know, sir. We  
were just hired to transport it.

INT. CHAPEL - DAY

Giddings opens a trapdoor in the wooden floor of the chapel aisle, while the Carters wait, carrying Elizabeth's coffin between them. Roderick, Tim, and Sperry stand by.

INT. STAIRWAY TO VAULT - DAY

With a lit lamp Giddings leads the way down from the chapel, the Carters toting the coffin down the steps. Roderick, Tim, and Sperry follow.

INT. VAULT - DAY

Total darkness. The door opens from the anteroom, and Giddings enters with the lamp.

The Carters bring in the coffin. Roderick, Tim, and Sperry follow.

The Carters set the coffin on a stone bier. On two other biers are coffins with the nameplates "Margaret Usher, 1772-1830" and "Edward Usher, 1767-1832."

A fourth bier is unused. To the rear is the entrance to a dark inner vault with the coffins of the other Ushers.

The Carters return to the anteroom, from which they watch the proceedings through the open door.

Roderick produces a handkerchief, which he will hold intermittently to his nose.

RODERICK

I hate close spaces.

Roderick and Sperry step to the side of Elizabeth's coffin. Tim steps to its foot.

SPERRY

Are you sure you wish me to unscrew  
the lid, sir?

Tim looks surprised.

RODERICK

Yes. I don't wish to look. You  
open it, to see. I just need peace  
of mind. To know she wasn't buried  
too hastily.

LATER

Sperry finishes unscrewing the lid on Elizabeth's coffin.

Giddings stands by with the lamp. Roderick with his handkerchief stands a few feet away, near Tim, who looks like he'd rather not be there.

The two Carters watch slack-jawed from the anteroom.

Sperry looks at Roderick, who nods for Sperry to proceed.

Steeling himself, Sperry slides open the lid -- and a twisted hand reaches out of the coffin.

Tim, Roderick, and Giddings react with horror. The Carters turn and bolt up the steps for the chapel.

As Roderick steps to the coffin, Sperry starts trying to stuff the rigid, emaciated hand back in, where the lid had held it down.

SPERRY

An effect of death by cholera, sir.  
It is not uncommon. A form of  
rigor mortis.

Tim steps closer to look.

Tim and Roderick see, in the light of Giddings's lamp, that the eyes of mummified ELIZABETH USHER (the woman seen in the portrait) are open.

RODERICK

She was not buried with her eyes open.

Sperry doggedly pushes down on the hand and arm.

SPERRY

The eyelids could have rotted away,  
sir.

Roderick, handkerchief pressed to his nose, turns to get out of the vault.

Tim watches as Sperry keeps pushing down. There is the loud SNAP of a breaking bone.

INT. RODERICK'S QUARTERS - DAY

Roderick weeps, while Elizabeth's slightly smiling image in the portrait seems to watch.

EXT. SALISBURY PLAIN - NIGHT

Lightning flashes over the dark lonely plain. Far rumbles of THUNDER.

INT. HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Roderick, Madeline, Sperry and Tim finish dining in silence.

After a moment, Roderick, looking sad and distracted, rises and leaves the room.

The others look at each other, then,

MADELINE

I think I'll retire to my quarters  
and read some nonsense verses, till  
time to drift off in slumber.

Madeline rises. The two men politely rise too. With a glance at Tim she leaves.

SPERRY

Well.

Tim watches Sperry pick up his wine glass as if for a last sip.

TIM

Roderick isn't well. Nor is  
Madeline. As I'm sure you're  
aware.

Sperry takes his sip and says nothing.

TIM

Don't you think we should do  
something for the last two  
remaining Ushers?

Sperry sets down the glass.

SPERRY

I do what I can for them. Which  
I admit may not be much. But  
whatever their problems, here,  
within these old family walls,  
they bother no one else. Good  
night, Mister Pridgen.

Sperry starts to go.

TIM  
What happened when Ferris Atkinson  
was here?

Sperry stops without looking back.

TIM  
Roderick won't discuss it.

Sperry looks back at Tim.

SPERRY  
Well, then, it shan't be discussed.

Sperry leaves.

INT. MADELINE'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Serene Madeline, in a nightgown, takes out a red robe. She rubs a hand nostalgically over it. It THUNDERS outside.

INT. TIM'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Tim looks troubled about things as he takes off his shirt. More THUNDER.

INT. MADELINE'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Madeline, looking sinister in flashes of lightning from the window, slips into the red robe, wearing nothing underneath.

INT. TIM'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Shirtless Tim moves restlessly from the window, with its view of lightning flashes, to the bed.

INT. MADELINE'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Madeline takes the butcher knife from under her bed's pillow. She turns toward the door with it. THUNDER rumbles.

INT. TIM'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Tim lies down, still wearing his trousers, to think. A lamp still burns.

INT. MADELINE'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

About to open her door, Madeline stops with apparent uncertainty, knife in hand.

After a moment she smiles self-assuredly. She looks down at the knife as if she's foolish to take it.

She steps over and leaves the knife by her knitting, then moves desirously toward the door.

INT. TIM'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Tim lies thinking as before.

The door latch turns. He sees the door open, and red-robed Madeline steps in, closing the door behind her.

Tim watches, transfixed, as she walks slowly to the bed, lightning flashing outside with THUNDER.

INT. RODERICK'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Roderick, in nightclothes, seems almost asleep when he hears the voice.

DISEMBODIED VOICE

Roderick, she has gone to him. Do you hear me? Madeline has gone to his bed.

INT. TIM'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Tim, though clearly desiring her, tries to resist her as Madeline, with her robe open, kisses and caresses him on the bed.

TIM

Madeline, don't do this. I --

MADELINE

Take me with you, please, like you promised. Away from this house... and from Roderick. I know he still wants me.

TIM

(frowns)  
Wants you?

MADELINE

But I told him next time I would kill him first. So now he resents me all the more. Resents me because I still have a love of life. Oh Ferris --

TIM

Are you saying he - ?

RODERICK

What is going on here?

Tim and Madeline look over at Roderick, standing in a robe halfway between the bed and the open door.

Tim and Madeline rise from the bed, Madeline closing her robe.

RODERICK

Go back to your quarters.

Moving toward the door, Madeline stops beside Roderick.

MADELINE

I came here tonight on my own. So don't try to blame Ferris. But this time you can't stop us. This time, if he leaves, I go with him.

She exits. Tim and Roderick stare at each other. THUNDER rumbles outside.

TIM

Why does she think I am Ferris?

RODERICK

Because she's delusional.

TIM

I know she's delusional, but --

RODERICK

I had no way of knowing she would think that. And I thought I could trust you, for just a few days, under the same roof as my sister.

TIM

You think I -- ?

(sigh of frustration)

What can I say that will make any difference?

RODERICK

Nothing. You must leave this house tomorrow.

Roderick turns and heads for the door.

TIM

You're sick too, Roderick. I'll say it now.

Roderick stops and looks back. His expression is hateful in the lamp light.

## RODERICK

Am I? A family tradition in the Usher male line. I needn't be reminded of the curse upon this house.

Roderick leaves.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

It rains now, with THUNDER and lightning.

INT. MADELINE'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Madeline, nude and self-aroused, sits propped up in bed, her hands caressing her body. Candles burn.

Madeline hears three soft KNOCKS at the door.

Covering herself, Madeline watches as a folded piece of white paper is slipped in under the door.

Rising, Madeline goes over and picks up the paper. She unfolds it and reads the handwritten message.

It reads, "Sweet Madeline, meet me where we made love before. Ferris."

Madeline hurries to the red robe. Laying the note down near her knitting and the butcher knife, she puts on the robe.

INT. WEST HALLWAY (SECOND FLOOR) - NIGHT

Madeline slips out of her quarters.

Looking both ways in the dark, Madeline proceeds stealthily toward the stairs.

INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Madeline quickly makes her way down the dark staircase, lightning flashing from a front window.

She heads through the darkness toward the rear of the house.

INT. WEST REAR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Dark but for lightning flashing at a window at the end of the passage.

Madeline steps to a closed door. She pauses with excitement before reaching for the handle.

INT. SPARE GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

It's dark as Madeline quietly enters. She closes the door behind her.

In lightning flashes from the window, she sees what is apparently Ferris, lying sprawled, motionless, still clothed, on the bed.

She moves toward the bed in the dark.

MADELINE

Ferris, I knew you would want me.

She frowns, as if she smells something bad.

Moving closer in the lightning, she looks down at a ghastly sight on the bed.

It's Ferris dead, partially decomposed, his clothing wet and muddy, an apparent bullet hole in his forehead.

Madeline screams.

INT. TIM'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Tim, lying awake, still wearing his trousers, bolts upright as it STORMS. A lamp still burns. Did he hear a distant scream?

Getting up, he grabs his shirt as he heads for the door.

INT. WEST HALLWAY (SECOND FLOOR) - NIGHT

Emerging from his quarters, Tim quickly looks both ways in the dark as he puts on his shirt. He heads for Madeline's quarters. He knocks on the door and calls,

TIM

Madeline?

He opens the door.

INT. MADELINE'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Entering, Tim looks around in the lightning-illuminated room. Madeline is not in her bed. He calls again,

TIM

Madeline?

He sees the note where Madeline left it. As he picks up the note, he sees the butcher knife by the knitting.

He reads the note. He seems confused as he looks again at the knife. Keeping the note, he heads for the door.

INT. TIM'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Tim grabs the lit lamp in his bedroom and heads back out with it.

INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT

At the staircase landing, Tim encounters Giddings in a robe, a burning lamp in hand.

TIM

Did you hear someone scream?

GIDDINGS

I thought I did, sir. Somewhere downstairs. Is Madeline not in her room?

TIM

No.

GIDDINGS

I will fetch Master Roderick.

TIM

Where would she go to meet Ferris?

GIDDINGS

Ferris?

TIM

Yes! Ferris!

GIDDINGS

He isn't here, sir.

Exasperated, Tim hurries down the dark stairs with his lamp, lightning flashing at the windows.

INT. DRAWING ROOM (EAST HALLWAY) - NIGHT

Tim comes in, finds no one, and quickly turns to go.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Tim hurries through toward the rear of the house.

INT. REAR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Entering with his lamp, Tim looks both ways in the dark.

Ahead, a short adjoining hallway leads to a closed door.

INT. SERVANTS' ENTRANCE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Tim goes to the door and opens it. He is met by WIND and rain. It's the servants' entrance. He closes the door.

Turning, he enters an open door to his left.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Tim sees no one in the light of his lamp. He's see an open doorway to an adjoining room.

INT. SERVANTS' QUARTERS - NIGHT

Looking in with his lamp, Tim sees Alison lying alone, half asleep and apparently drunk, a wine jug by the bed.

She sits up and squints toward the light.

ALISON

Who is it?

TIM

Tim Pridgen. Excuse me. Did you hear someone scream?

ALISON

(as if miserable)

Tsch. I'm the one who ought to be screaming.

There's a door that leads to the hallway. Tim goes over and opens it.

TIM

But you didn't hear anything?

ALISON

No. But something woke me up.

INT. STAIRWAY - NIGHT

Roderick, donning a robe, and Giddings are on their way down the staircase, Giddings lighting their way with his lamp.

INT. WEST REAR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Tim with his lamp walks west past the servants' entrance hallway.

He stops at the closed door of the spare guest room. He listens at the door, then opens it.

INT. SPARE GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

Tim enters. Lightning flashes from the window, revealing Madeline, lying unconscious on the floor by the empty bed.

Tim rushes to her.

TIM

Madeline...

Setting aside his lamp, Tim lifts Madeline onto the bed. Roderick and Giddings enter.

TIM

Where's Doctor Sperry?

Just as Giddings turns to go look for him, Sperry enters in his robe and goes quickly to Madeline.

TIM

The bed's wet. Is that mud?

Roderick holds a handkerchief to his nose.

RODERICK

Something has been here. I can smell it.

TIM

I smell it too.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The STORM continues.

INT. WEST HALLWAY (SECOND FLOOR) - NIGHT

Worried Tim sits waiting on a hallway bench near Madeline's closed door.

Tim rises as the door opens and Roderick, looking haggard, steps out of the quarters.

RODERICK

There is nothing more you can do.  
Go and try to rest.

TIM

How is she?

RODERICK

Doctor Sperry is attending her.  
We'll know more in the morning.

TIM

May I --

RODERICK

Please do not argue!

There is a peal of THUNDER outside, Roderick covers his ears.

RODERICK

I can't bear any more on this  
night. You can't help her now.  
I trust Doctor Sperry to do all  
he can.

Tim watches in frustration as Roderick goes into Madeline's quarters and closes the door.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

It continues to STORM.

INT. TIM'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Tim puts out his lamp, as if ready to try to sleep.

As he starts to unbutton his shirt, the window sashes are blown open by the WIND. Flashes of lightning.

Stepping to the window to close it, Tim takes a look out at the STORM.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. BEHIND HOUSE - NIGHT

From the dark window, as lightning flashes, Tim notices a man with a shovel appear from behind the stable.

Tim steps back into the shadows, to watch without being seen, as the rain-soaked man enters the stable.

The man comes back out without the shovel, and heads toward the house in the WIND and rain.

As the man comes closer, Tim sees in the lightning that it's Jankin, walking out of sight below the window.

Tim looks wonderingly off at the stable.

INT. WEST HALLWAY (SECOND FLOOR) - NIGHT

Looking curious, Tim steps out of his quarters. In the darkness, he sees faint light coming from the staircase.

He moves past Madeline's closed door toward the stairs.

INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT

From the top of the stairs, Tim sees a man from the back, sitting on one of the bottom steps, a burning lamp set beside him. The man seems to be in some distress.

Tim walks down the stairs to the man.

It is Giddings, still robed, taking deep breaths, a hand to his chest.

Tim sits down beside him on the step.

TIM  
Giddings, what's wrong?

GIDDINGS  
I have a chest pain, sir, which  
will pass... as it always has  
before.

After a moment, Giddings picks up the lamp and rises. Tim rises too.

TIM  
How is Madeline?

GIDDINGS  
I don't know, sir.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Tim watches Giddings start slowly through the darkness with his lamp toward the rear of the house.

TIM  
Is there something else wrong,  
Giddings?

Giddings stops and looks back at Tim.

GIDDINGS  
No, sir. I couldn't sleep, so  
I am going to check provisions.  
Jankin will be going for supplies  
soon to Amesbury.

Giddings starts to go.

TIM  
Giddings...

Giddings stops and turns. Tim walks over to him. Both of their faces are eerily shadowed in the light from the lamp Giddings holds.

TIM

Who would want Madeline to think Ferris is here?

GIDDINGS

If I may say so, sir, she thinks that you're Mister Atkinson.

TIM

I know, Giddings. But who would want her to keep thinking that?

GIDDINGS

Why would anyone, sir?

Tim takes out the note to Madeline that he found in her quarters and hands it to Giddings.

TIM

Whose handwriting would you say that is?

Giddings looks at the note in the lamp light.

TIM

The truth, Giddings.

GIDDINGS

I don't know, sir, but... The way the name is signed, with that flourish. It does look familiar.

TIM

Who would sign it that way?

GIDDINGS

Ferris Atkinson, sir. When he was here, sir, he gave me a letter to post, and... I read it.

Giddings hands the note back to Tim. Giddings turns and proceeds on his way through the dark.

In the fading light from Giddings' lamp, Tim looks confounded.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

A mist-shrouded morning, still wet from the rain.

INT. TIM'S QUARTERS - DAY

Tim, still in his shirt and trousers, sleeps restlessly as if having a bad dream.

INT. VAULT - DAY (NIGHTMARE)

The coffin lid slides open, and Elizabeth, with a decayed look of hatred, reaches out her twisted hand.

INT. TIM'S QUARTERS - DAY

Tim bolts up awake.

He looks around as if getting his wits about him. Then he looks concerned.

He gets up and heads for the door.

INT. WEST HALLWAY (SECOND FLOOR) - DAY

Tim walks from the door of his quarters to the open door of Madeline's.

INT. MADELINE'S QUARTERS - DAY

Tim walks in. Madeline lies as if in death, hands folded, on her bed. She wears a white gown.

Roderick sits slumped in a chair near the bed. Sperry sits off to the side.

Tim frowns. He glances anxiously at Sperry.

TIM

Roderick, is she dead?

Roderick morosely nods "yes." Tim looks incredulous and crushed.

TIM

But what did she die of?

Sperry listens without expression.

RODERICK

It must have been her heart... She was so frail of late -- though she may not have looked it.

Tim walks to the side of the bed. He looks down at serenely still Madeline as if he can't believe it.

INT. CHAPEL - DAY

Madeline lies in an open wooden coffin on a bier. She still wears the white gown.

Roderick, Tim, Sperry, and Giddings kneel at prayer kneelers.

Roderick looks solemn, Sperry stoical, Giddings sad. Tim seems to be the most hurt.

Respectfully present in the back of the room are Jankin and Alison. Jankin has a haunted look.

LATER

Tim and Roderick step to the coffin, one at each end, and pick up the wooden lid propped behind the bier.

They slowly place the lid over Madeline.

INT. VAULT - DAY

As Giddings waits with a lamp, Tim and Jankin bring Madeline's coffin through the door from the anteroom.

They are followed by Roderick and Sperry. Alison with a candle enters last.

Tim and Jankin set the coffin on the fourth bier. Roderick has his handkerchief to fend off miasma.

All stand silently for a moment, gazing at Madeline's coffin. Then Roderick turns to leave the vault. Sperry and Alison follow, then Tim, who looks spiritually tortured.

LATER

Jankin, in a nervous sweat, screws the coffin lid down tight, while Giddings looks on with the lamp.

When Jankin is finished, he turns, looks at Giddings, and leaves the vault.

As Giddings is leaving, he lingers at the door to look sadly back at the coffin.

He closes the door, leaving the vault in total darkness.

INT. TIM'S QUARTERS - DAY

A morose Tim stands propped by his window, gazing off toward the stable.

He watches Jankin leave the stable on an empty horse-drawn wagon, unhurriedly heading for the plain.

Tim stares at the stable. It looks almost sinister under overcast sky.

GIDDINGS (O.S.)

Excuse me, sir.

Tim turns to see Giddings at the door.

GIDDINGS

Roderick wishes to see you in the library.

Tim, who still wears the clothes from the service minus the coat, moves listlessly to pick up the coat.

Giddings sympathetically walks a few steps toward him.

GIDDINGS

You're taking this hard, aren't you, sir?

Tim glances at Giddings as he puts on the coat.

TIM

I wonder if she might still be alive...

Giddings looks with alarm at Tim, who, pausing, doesn't notice the reaction.

TIM

... if I hadn't come here. Sowing discord while thinking someday I might be of assistance.

Giddings seems relieved by Tim's meaning.

GIDDINGS

You bear no blame, sir. She saw or experienced something that...

TIM

What do you think it was?

Giddings's eyes avoid Tim's.

GIDDINGS

I have no idea, sir.

Giddings turns as if to leave.

TIM  
Giddings, remember that note I  
showed you? Signed "Ferris"?

GIDDINGS  
Yes, sir.

TIM  
Could it have been an old note, and  
Madeline kept it? Or did someone  
else write it?

GIDDINGS  
It could have been an old note,  
sir. That's the best explanation.

Tim looks far from convinced.

TIM  
But, Giddings, there was something  
on that bed.

GIDDINGS  
There may have been, sir. But then  
I didn't see anything.

Giddings turns and walks out.

After a moment, Tim walks back to the window. He gazes out  
at that damnable stable.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Tim enters just as Roderick, Sperry, and Giddings sit down  
at the table. Roderick has a document before him.

Tim walks to the table but remains standing, hands clasped  
behind his back.

RODERICK  
I have asked you gentlemen here  
for the signing of my last will and  
testament. You and Giddings, Tim,  
are the two required witnesses.  
(looks over will)  
I am leaving to Doctor Sperry the  
House of Usher, as he has  
previously been informed.

Tim shows veiled surprise by cutting his eyes at poker-faced  
Sperry.

RODERICK

He has been a loyal and caring physician to the last of the Ushers. I wish him to remain here, rewarded for his service, should anything happen to me. Then the house itself will not simply go to the Crown -- or die with the Ushers.

Roderick signs the will.

RODERICK

You will both sign, please.

Tim walks over to Roderick's side, Giddings rising.

Sperry's eyes seem almost to glitter with gold as he watches Tim sign the will.

EXT. STABLE - DAY

Tim walks toward the stable, with a nervous glance back toward the mansion.

INT. STABLE - DAY

Creepily dark and rundown.

Tim slips in, closing the door behind him. The only light in the closed building is through a window and a crack in the roof.

Walking slowly through the shadows, Tim sees his horse in a stall. He gives the horse a pat.

Walking further in the dim light, he sees a second horse in a stall on the other side of the stable.

He looks at the other stalls along that side as he keeps moving. All appear empty in the dark.

He is suddenly startled by SOUND and movement beside him. He turns in fright and looks.

It's another horse, trying to nuzzle him from its stall.

He gives the horse a look. Then his eyes roam the stable again. The carriage sits in the rear part of the stable.

Moving back toward the entrance, he calmly stops as something catches his eye.

It's a shovel, propped up by the wall, in dim light through the roof crack.

He walks over and picks up the shovel. He holds it blade up, to examine the blade for anything out of the ordinary.

After a moment, Tim looks upward, at the sound of RAIN on the roof.

EXT. STABLE - DAY

It rains as Tim, without the shovel, walks toward the stable's rear corner. He glances back toward the house.

EXT. BEHIND STABLE - DAY

Tim rounds the corner. He looks around at the wet ground.

He sees a grave-sized patch of what appears to be recently turned soil.

He stares at the soil in the rain.

EXT. SKY - NIGHT

There is a full moon behind a few streaks of clouds. The rain is over.

OVERLAP SOUND OF DIGGING.

EXT. BEHIND STABLE - NIGHT

Tim digs with the shovel, the soil muddy from the rain. A lit lamp sits nearby, a cloth lying beside it.

He uncovers something in the dark shallow hole.

Kneeling down, he brushes away soil with the cloth. He picks up the lamp, and looks at what he's found in the lamp light.

It is Ferris's decomposing face.

Tim rocks on his knees with emotion.

TIM

Oh God.

INT. HOUSE - DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

Sperry shrewdly watches Roderick, in seeming despair, as they sit drinking sherry.

Roderick finishes his glass and sets it down. Sperry sets down his half-full glass and rises.

SPERRY

This decanter is all but dry. But there is plenty of sherry. I will fetch us some more.

Sperry picks up the almost empty decanter. He walks toward the door.

RODERICK

(half-whispers)

You needn't do it for me.

Sperry pauses at the door and looks back.

RODERICK

I don't want any more.

Sperry proceeds out anyway.

Roderick leans back his head. He closes his eyes.

RODERICK

(whispers)

"Life is a downward plunge and death is deep."

INT. EAST HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sperry, walking with the decanter in hand, comes to a stop by a wall lamp. He looks ahead with concern.

Out of the shadows, from the direction of the entrance hall, comes Tim, looking grim, a bit sweaty as if straight from his grave digging.

Tim stops by Sperry and looks at him. Without a word Tim moves on.

Concerned, Sperry looks off after Tim for a moment. Then, proceeding down the hallway, Sperry encounters Giddings. Sperry hands him the decanter.

SPERRY

We need some more sherry.

GIDDINGS

Yes, sir.

Giddings turns and moves off. Sperry turns, to look off again after Tim.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

Roderick sits with eyes closed. He opens them as he becomes aware of Tim standing before him.

Tim holds the Ferris note to Madeline in Roderick's face. Roderick takes it.

RODERICK

What is this?

Tim steps away. Not seeing the decanter anywhere, he picks up the glass left by Sperry and takes a sip.

TIM

It's a note, from dearly departed Ferris, to Madeline. It's why Madeline went to that spare guest room in back. Where she was scared to death, as someone hoped, given her -- what did you call it, "weak constitution of late"? But how on Earth could you know it would work?

Tim sits down, setting aside the glass, though he appears too agitated to sit still.

TIM

Did Madeline have a history of heart problems? Anyway, if it didn't work, you could call what she saw, oh, just another delusion.

RODERICK

What are you talking about?

TIM

(accusingly)

She hated you, didn't she? Did you know she had a butcher knife in her room? For what? Do you know?

(rises to pace)

I'm telling you this, Roderick, just so you'll know that I know. I don't know what to do now, old friend. It's too late to help Madeline. How could I even try to help you, as you refuse to leave this tomb of a house?

Tim sits down again, fidgety.

TIM

But then I suppose you are better  
off here than in some institution.  
Wouldn't you say? So tell me,  
where is there justice?

(sits forward, looks hard  
at Roderick)

Why did you kill Ferris? Was he  
going to take her away?

RODERICK

I did not kill him. And he could  
not have written this note.

Tim springs up again.

TIM

Of course not. He'd have trouble  
nowadays even signing his name.  
But someone may remember how he  
signed it.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Sperry listens outside the drawing-room door.

TIM (O.S.)

If you didn't kill him, who did?

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

Tim paces in front of Roderick.

RODERICK

Are you suggesting that someone  
wrote this note, and --

TIM

(loudly)  
-- had Jankin dig up the body,  
for Madeline to find in bed, then  
Jankin reburied it.

Roderick covers his ears from Tim's loudness.

TIM

Who killed him?

Roderick, ears covered, doesn't answer. Tim speaks louder,

TIM

Who --

RODERICK  
Madeline killed him!

TIM  
Madeline?

RODERICK  
Yes.

TIM  
The knife...

RODERICK  
(bitterly)  
I'm sure she had thought to leave  
with him, for a nice Bedford  
wedding. But it was clear, by her  
killing him, he had gotten what he  
wanted. He had seduced her, and  
was leaving alone.

BEGIN FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

INT. MADELINE'S QUARTERS - DAY

Madeline sits weeping alone.

RODERICK (V.O.)  
She was devastated, wrathful,  
humiliated.

INT. FRONT DOOR - DAY

Giddings goes out the front door carrying baggage. Outside  
Jankin holds the reins of Ferris's saddled horse.

Dapper Ferris, set to leave, turns at the door to look back.

RODERICK (V.O.)  
There he was, set to go out the  
door.

With fright he sees Madeline, hatred on her face, her eyes  
red from crying, aim a flintlock pistol at his face.

RODERICK (V.O.)  
And she shot him.

Madeline FIRES the pistol, blasting a hole in Ferris's  
forehead.

END OF FLASHBACK SEQUENCE

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

Roderick, as if having heard the shot, again covers his ears.

Tim looks shocked by what he's been told.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

As Sperry listens outside the drawing room, Giddings arrives with the refilled decanter. Sperry gestures for him not to enter. Giddings listens too.

RODERICK

Then she had no memory of doing it.  
It was completely erased from her  
mind. She thought he had simply  
walked out. We buried the body to  
protect her.

Roderick looks at the note.

RODERICK

Sperry... Sperry must have written  
this note.

TIM

Sperry?

Sperry whispers something to Giddings, who quickly leaves with the sherry.

TIM

Yes. To hasten the inheritance you  
promised him.

RODERICK

I needed him here, in case Madeline  
became cataleptic again.

TIM

In case what?

RODERICK

But that was the sign -- der  
Scheintod -- false death. The  
house told me it was time, to  
protect her no longer, but lay her  
to rest...

Tim looks stunned as he stares at Roderick.

RODERICK  
 ... and do away with myself, to end  
 our wretched line.

TIM  
 What are you saying?

Roderick stares into space.

RODERICK  
 It happened once before. The night  
 our poor sad mother, soon after our  
 father's death, went up to the roof  
 of the house.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The black figure of a woman stands at the roof edge,  
 silhouetted against the moonlit sky.

Madeline, at 23, stands musingly by the pond. She looks up  
 at the moon, and her eyes are quickly drawn to the roof.

RODERICK (V.O.)  
 Madeline chanced to be outside...  
 and saw her jump.

The dark figure leaps from the roof. Madeline screams.

INT. DRAWING ROOM - NIGHT

Tim and Roderick as before.

RODERICK  
 I heard the poor girl scream. And  
 for a while... we thought she was  
 dead.

Tim slowly rises, staring at Roderick.

TIM  
 She wasn't dead this time either,  
 was she?

Tim grabs Roderick by the lapels.

TIM  
 You entombed her alive!

Roderick cringes from Tim's loud words. Tim yanks him up out  
 of the chair.

TIM

That's what the shock of seeing Ferris was for?

RODERICK

I know nothing about that.

Roderick looks pleadingly at Tim, still gripping Roderick's lapels.

RODERICK

I have kept Madeline here to protect her, from herself and the world. Now I'm too near the end of myself. I couldn't take the chance of leaving her here alone.

Tim anxiously lets go of Roderick.

TIM

It may not be too late to save her. She may still be alive in that vault. Let's get down there. Now.

RODERICK

Best leave her be. If she hasn't died yet, to be entombed will have driven her totally mad.

TIM

It's a fine time to think about that!

Tim grabs Roderick by the collar.

TIM

You're coming with me, to the vault, to --

SPERRY (O.S.)

No, he is not.

Tim, still holding on to Roderick, turns to see Sperry, aiming a double-barreled flintlock pistol at him.

Behind Sperry stands a worried-looking Giddings.

TIM

Everyone is against her?

Tim shoves Roderick hard backward, sending him falling into his chair.

Tim turns to face Sperry. The doctor aims the pistol more threateningly.

SPERRY

I believe it is time, sir, that you left this house. You have worn out your welcome.

(leadingly, to Roderick)  
Or shall we kill him, sir?

RODERICK

(rises)

Why, no, there's no reason to do such a thing. We -- we have done nothing wrong.

Sperry and Tim both look at Roderick as if he's delusional, as he indeed seems to be.

TIM

"Nothing wrong"? With your sister left alive in that vault?

RODERICK

She is dead, Tim, don't worry. And she killed Ferris. We only buried him.

(to Sperry)

Yes, he should leave now. See him off for me, will you? If you hurry along, Tim, you can get to the Amesbury inn before midnight. I do thank you for coming to visit.

INT. STABLE - NIGHT

Giddings enters with a burning lamp, followed by Tim with his baggage, and Sperry, covering Tim with the pistol.

Tim stops and waits, Sperry staying behind him, pistol aimed.

SPERRY

Stand still and don't turn around. Get his horse, Giddings, and then help him saddle it.

GIDDINGS

Yes, sir.

Giddings sets the lamp on a ledge behind Tim, then heads for the horse's stall. Tim sets down his baggage.

SPERRY

I thank you for coming, Mister  
Pridgen, to the House of Usher.

Behind Tim, Sperry quietly picks up a club-sized carriage shaft propped by a broken carriage wheel.

SPERRY

Poor Roderick, so lonely...

Tim looks at his own shadow before him, produced by the lamp behind him.

SPERRY

I thought he was madder than ever,  
inviting you here.

Tim sees Sperry's shadow move slowly closer behind his own.

SPERRY

But when Madeline thought you were  
Atkinson, it gave me a brilliant  
idea...

Sperry, with the gun in one hand, raises the shaft high with the other like a club, Tim seeing the action in shadow.

SPERRY

... for a bizarre rendezvous.

Tim turns and lunges at Sperry, knocking him backward to the floor, Tim landing on top of him, Sperry dropping the shaft.

Tim tries to wrest the gun from Sperry, while Giddings looks on with alarm.

Sperry, holding onto the gun, with Tim still on top of him, tries to hit Tim. Tim slugs Sperry in the jaw.

Dazed, Sperry loses his grip and Tim takes the pistol. Tim aims it in Sperry's face.

Giddings has grabbed up the shovel to wield like a club -- but holds off now, as if unsure what to do.

Tim gets to his feet, the pistol in hand.

Looking down at Sperry, Tim barely glances at Giddings, as if confident that Giddings is with him.

TIM

Giddings, whose side are you on?

Tim barely gets the words out before Giddings knocks him out from behind with the shovel.

SPERRY  
Good work, Giddings.

GIDDINGS  
Are you all right, sir?

Sperry gets woozily to his feet, Giddings picking up the gun.

SPERRY  
He gave me a good one.

Giddings hands the pistol to Sperry. Giddings looks down at unconscious Tim.

GIDDINGS  
He won't be riding for a while.  
Shall I saddle the horse, sir, and  
wait till --

SPERRY  
You can saddle the horse, but the  
only place Pridgen is going is a  
hole in the ground.

GIDDINGS  
Excuse me, sir?

SPERRY  
Did you think I would let him ride  
off, you half-wit, to cause me some  
trouble? We'll turn his horse  
loose on Salisbury Plain, like we  
did Mister Atkinson's horse. And  
no one will know what became of  
him.

GIDDINGS  
But Master Roderick said let him go.

SPERRY  
Master Roderick is crazy, or  
haven't you heard? I imagine, by  
morning, he'll be dead as well, and  
by his own hand. You do as I say  
and your place in this house is  
assured.

GIDDINGS  
(with misgiving)  
Thank you, sir.

Sperry looks a bit worried as he looks down at Tim.

SPERRY

I don't want to shoot this one now,  
lest Roderick hear it. He can hear  
a flea fart, and then smell it too.

GIDDINGS

Then don't shoot him, sir. Best to  
kill him tomorrow, after Roderick  
is dead as you say.

SPERRY

Why wait till tomorrow? We'll kill  
him soon as Roderick's dead. Or we  
can bury him alive right now.

GIDDINGS

Bury him alive, sir?

SPERRY

But I'm not digging the hole. And  
Jankin isn't back yet. That leaves  
you, Giddings.

Giddings shakes his head and waves a hand negatively.

GIDDINGS

No, sir. My heart isn't up to  
this, sir. Best have Jankin dig  
it tomorrow.

Sperry looks disgusted.

SPERRY

All right, Giddings, let's tie him  
up, then. Get some rope.

Giddings goes for the rope.

SPERRY

Execution at dawn, that's the way.  
It'll give Pridgen time to get  
right with his Maker -- if he  
believes in such things.

INT. CHAPEL - NIGHT

Two lamps burn in the chancel. All is still.

The trapdoor is closed in the floor of the aisle.

INT. STABLE - NIGHT

In a stall, Giddings ties unconscious Tim's feet with a piece of rope. Tim's hands are already tied behind his back, and his mouth is gagged.

Sperry stands watching, holding the pistol and lamp.

GIDDINGS

Madeline, sir -- If the girl's still alive, don't you think we should go let her out?

SPERRY

Let her out? It was I put her in, you fool.

Tim wakes up, grimacing from the pain in his head. But Sperry and Giddings don't know he's awake, as his face is away from them.

GIDDINGS

She was such a sweet girl. Crazy, of course, but sweet.

Giddings, through tying, gets to his feet.

SPERRY

She's dead by now, Giddings, don't worry. She'd have used up the air in that coffin.

GIDDINGS

But her breathing, sir, was so imperceptible. She wouldn't use that much air.

SPERRY

She will use it, Giddings.

Sperry hands the lamp to Giddings, and puts the pistol under his own belt.

SPERRY

If you thought she was crazy before, alive and awake in that box she'd go stark raving mad. Like Roderick said, best leave her be. And that house shall be mine. There'll be no more talk of it dying.

INT. RODERICK'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Roderick sits down heavily in a chair.

He looks in despair at the portrait, on the wall facing him, of the slightly smiling Elizabeth.

RODERICK

Shall I do it now, Elizabeth? Is there any point now in waiting?

After a moment, he hears something. It is a slow, regular, loud HEARTBEAT. He looks fearful as he listens.

DISEMBODIED VOICE

It's Madeline's heart, Roderick. Can you hear it?

INT. STABLE - NIGHT

Alone in the dark, bound Tim crawls and rolls his way halfway out of the stall.

He sees the shovel propped by the wall in moonlight through the roof crack.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Alison, in a plain nightgown, looks tired as she pours a cup of wine from a jug.

She blows out a candle and walks toward the open door that leads to the candlelit servants' quarters.

INT. STABLE - NIGHT

Bound Tim crawls to the propped shovel. He sits up.

Tim presses his upper back to the shovel's long handle to hold it steady. He tries to cut or loosen the rope on his wrists by rubbing it on the head of the shovel blade.

INT. SERVANTS' QUARTERS - NIGHT

Alison sits on the edge of the bed and sips. She sets her cup on a table where a candle burns by the bed.

She's about to lie down when the door from the hallway opens and Sperry walks in, the pistol stuck in his belt.

Alison frowns as if not glad to see him. Sperry closes the door and walks toward the bed.

ALISON

What are you doing here? There'll be nothing tonight, so get out.

SPERRY

You don't know to whom you are speaking. Did you lock the servants' entrance?

ALISON

Jankin locks it when he leaves. And he ain't coming home and catching you and me in this bed.

He smiles at Alison as she rises and picks up the cup.

SPERRY

This place is now mine. I'll be deciding who comes and who goes. Want to stay here, Alison?

ALISON

What do you mean yours?

Sperry grabs her arm as she starts toward the door to the kitchen.

SPERRY

I've earned what I'm getting. More than earned. Burying bodies dead or alive --

ALISON

Let go of me arm.

SPERRY

-- Master Roderick hearing his voices. It's the mad fool talking to himself.

ALISON

You're the mad one. Turn loose of me.

Sperry slaps her, then throws her down hard on the bed, her cup falling to the floor.

She looks at him fearfully as he steps closer, staring.

SPERRY

This place is mine, and you will stay here at my pleasure.

INT. CHAPEL - NIGHT

Giddings unhurriedly opens the trapdoor in the floor of the lamplit chapel. He looks scared but duty-bound.

INT. STABLE - NIGHT

Tim still tries to cut the rope on his wrists using the head of the shovel blade.

INT. CHAPEL - NIGHT

Giddings, a lit lamp in hand, starts down the steps to the vault anteroom beneath the trapdoor.

INT. SERVANTS' QUARTERS - NIGHT

In the candlelight, Sperry is on top of Alison on the bed, his trousers down below his knees.

EXT. PLAIN - NIGHT

In the moonlight Jankin, swigging from a flask, leisurely drives his wagon with its load of supplies toward the house, some two hundred yards away.

INT. VAULT - NIGHT

Giddings, standing with lamp in hand at the door, stares at Madeline's coffin as if afraid to proceed.

INT. RODERICK'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Rocking his upper body in his stationary chair, Roderick puts his hands over his ears as the HEART BEATS.

RODERICK

No... No. Don't let me hear it.  
Please stop beating.

DISEMBODIED VOICE

It can't stop, Roderick. She's  
alive.

INT. VAULT - NIGHT

Giddings moves reluctantly toward Madeline's coffin on its bier.

INT. RODERICK'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

The HEART BEATS. Roderick quickly steps over to a nice pistol case and opens it.

He removes a double-barreled flintlock pistol.

He paraphrases Psalm 22,

RODERICK

"I cry, and there is none to help."

INT. VAULT - NIGHT

Giddings, still eyeing Madeline's coffin with fear, carefully places the lamp on the top of Elizabeth's coffin.

INT. STABLE - NIGHT

As Tim still rubs the rope on his wrists on the shovel blade, the rope loosens.

INT. RODERICK'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Roderick, still hearing the HEARTBEAT, sets the pistol on a table by his chair. He sits down. He again puts his hands over his ears.

INT. VAULT - NIGHT

Giddings starts unscrewing the lid on Madeline's coffin.

INT. RODERICK'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

The HEART BEATS. Roderick, gazing off, rocks his upper body as before in the chair.

As if to block out the heartbeat, he recites from the Wisdom of Solomon,

RODERICK

"The days of the ungodly are as  
chaff before the wind... like  
remembrance of a visitor..."

INT. VAULT - NIGHT

Giddings continues unscrewing the coffin lid with effort.

RODERICK (V.O.)

"... who stays but for a day."

EXT. BEHIND HOUSE - NIGHT

Jankin descends from the wagon, parked in front of the servants' entrance, midway along the back of the house.

He walks forward half-drunkenly to talk to the horse.

JANKIN

I'll tuck you in at the stable,  
Bayard. These supplies can wait  
till tomorrow.

The horse neighs and jerks its head as if seeing something. Jankin turns to look.

Half-staggering out of the night, from the direction of the stable, is a man holding the back of his head. Is it Ferris?

Jankin backs against the horse and whimpers in terror.

He now sees that it's Tim, who gestures toward the house.

TIM  
Is that door locked?

JANKIN  
Yes.

TIM  
Unlock it and let me in.

Jankin frowns, still breathing heavily from his fright.

JANKIN  
What were you doing at the stable?

TIM  
Afraid I might find something?  
Damn you, let me in!

INT. VAULT - NIGHT

Giddings labors at unscrewing the coffin lid.

The lid is now separated enough that a thin ray of light from the lamp can enter the coffin.

INT. COFFIN - NIGHT

In the light through the crack, Madeline wakes up. Her eyes widen.

INT. VAULT - NIGHT

Madeline (O.S.) SCREAMS, scaring Giddings out of his wits. He moves backward as she BEATS on the still partially screwed lid. She SNARLS like a crazed animal.

Giddings grabs his lamp and hurries for the door.

MADELINE (O.S.)  
(filtered; pounding on  
lid)  
Let me out of here, you bastards!

INT. RODERICK'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Rocking as before, Roderick covers his ears from what he hears -- the amplified sound of Madeline (O.S.) BEATING on the coffin lid, as if right there in his quarters.

INT. STAIRWAY FROM VAULT - NIGHT

Giddings, showing chest pain, half-stumbles up the anteroom steps with his lamp. The POUNDING continues below.

EXT. SERVANTS' ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Jankin hesitates to unlock the door with his key. He turns to Tim, waiting right behind him.

JANKIN

I'll not let you in till I've  
talked to Doctor -- till I've  
talked to Master Roderick.

TIM

Let me in or give me that key.

Jankin reaches for his hunting knife. Tim knocks him down with a fist to the jaw, Jankin dropping the key.

In the darkness Tim looks in unconscious Jankin's hand for the key, then looks desperately around on the ground.

INT. RODERICK'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Roderick hears the AMPLIFIED POUNDING from below.

DISEMBODIED VOICE

She is going to come after you,  
Roderick. She is going to kill you  
as soon as she's out of that  
coffin.

INT. WEST REAR HALLWAY (FIRST FLOOR) - NIGHT

Giddings, breathing heavily, his lamp in one hand, clutching his chest with the other, hurries weakly out of the chapel. He half-staggers eastward.

GIDDINGS

Master Roderick!

He stops and bends over with chest pain. He leans gasping against the wall, then slides to the floor, in agony.

INT. RODERICK'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Roderick sits breathing heavily, hands pressed over his ears, the AMPLIFIED POUNDING incessant.

Now he reacts as if he can see the pounding's source.

INT. VAULT - NIGHT

Total darkness without Giddings' lamp. But a circular area of light -- as if Roderick's mind's eye -- opens up, showing the coffin lid SPLINTERING from the POUNDING.

The LID BURSTS OPEN in pieces.

INT. RODERICK'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Roderick flinches from the sound.

INT. WEST REAR HALLWAY (FIRST FLOOR) - NIGHT

Giddings, lamp in hand, struggles to his feet despite his chest pain.

INT. CHAPEL - NIGHT

As lamps burn in the chancel, the trapdoor in the aisle opens slightly, and from beneath it Madeline's hand, the knuckles bloodied from the pounding, grasps the floor edge.

Suddenly the trapdoor is heaved up with such force that it SLAMS OPEN on the floor.

INT. WEST REAR HALLWAY (FIRST FLOOR) - NIGHT

Giddings, staggering with his lamp, falls over a hallway bench and tumbles to the floor, smashing the lamp globe.

The lamp catches the carpet on fire.

Giddings lies dead, eyes open.

White-gowned Madeline, face unseen, hurries past the flames, which quickly spread by the wood floor, carpet, and tapestry.

EXT. SERVANTS' ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Tim puts the found key in the door lock as Jankin groggily sits up holding his jaw.

INT. SERVANTS' QUARTERS - NIGHT

Sperry and Alison pant as he thrusts on top of her.

INT. WEST REAR HALLWAY (FIRST FLOOR) - NIGHT

Heading for the chapel, Tim is barely able to rush past the fire, in which Giddings's body, to Tim's horror, is being consumed.

INT. CHAPEL - NIGHT

Hurrying in to the trapdoor, Tim is surprised to find it open. He grabs a lit lamp from the chancel. He descends into the trapdoor.

Glow from the fire can be seen outside the chapel door.

INT. SERVANTS' QUARTERS - NIGHT

Rubbing his jaw, Jankin walks in from the kitchen. He stops, stunned, catching Sperry and Alison in the act.

Sperry tries to jump up from the bed to go for his pistol on the table.

ALISON

Oh God --

Jankin goes after the pistol too. Sperry, tripped up by his lowered trousers, falls to the floor.

ALISON

Jankin, wait! O dear God.

INT. VAULT - NIGHT

In the light from his lamp, Tim finds Madeline's coffin busted open and empty.

INT. SERVANTS' QUARTERS - NIGHT

Sperry rises to his knees on the floor. Jankin, trembling with rage, aims the pistol at him. Alison cries in the bed.

ALISON

No...

SPERRY

Jankin, don't shoot me. You can stay here and work as long as --

JANKIN

"Stay here"? And keep doing your dirty work for you, after this, you bloody -- ?

Cringing, Sperry turns his face away from the aimed pistol.

Jankin FIRES.

INT. CHAPEL - NIGHT

Tim with his lamp comes up through the trapdoor. There is now raging fire in the chapel with no way out.

He heads back down for the vault.

INT. SERVANTS' QUARTERS - NIGHT

Jankin aims the two-shot pistol at Alison, cringing on the bed as she pleads.

Sperry moans on the floor where he lies, head bleeding.

ALISON

Jankin, he was raping me. I told him to get out, I --

JANKIN

You're lying, you whore. I told you to keep it, for me own sweet tooth.

Jankin FIRES.

Sperry, bleeding from his head wound and nose, struggles to get up from the floor.

Jankin tosses the pistol onto the bed, where Alison, shot in the forehead, lies dead. He draws his hunting knife and walks over to Sperry.

Jankin grabs the half-risen Sperry by the hair of his head and slits his throat.

INT. INNER VAULT - NIGHT

Tim, looking for any way out, moves desperately with his lamp through the inner vault, lined with old Usher coffins.

INT. RODERICK'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Roderick sits leaning forward, his head in his hands, in despair.

He hears a WOMAN LAUGH in calm derision. He looks at Elizabeth's portrait on the wall. Her image is alive and laughing at him.

Roderick springs angrily to his feet as Elizabeth in the portrait keeps laughing.

RODERICK  
 Leave me alone! Have I not  
 suffered enough?

ELIZABETH  
 Giddings went down to the vault,  
 Roderick.

RODERICK  
 You're lying!

He rushes to another chair and grabs it up.

ELIZABETH  
 It's true.

He prepares to heave the chair at the live, grinning  
 portrait.

RODERICK  
 You hate me for letting you die!

ELIZABETH  
 He went down to let Madeline out.

With all his strength Roderick smashes the chair into the  
 portrait, which CRASHES to the floor.

INT. SERVANTS' QUARTERS - NIGHT

Jankin is over dead Alison on the bed. Sperry lies dead on  
 the floor, the hunting knife beside him, in a pool of blood.

JANKIN  
 The last man to screw you, Alison,  
 won't be that bastard. The last  
 man to screw you is me.

INT. KITCHEN - DOOR FROM SERVANTS' ENTRANCE HALLWAY - NIGHT

The eery silhouette of Madeline stands in the open doorway,  
 behind her a faint glow from the fire in the house.

INT. RODERICK'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Roderick, looking abstracted, sits slowly rocking his upper  
 body, pistol in hand.

RODERICK  
 Madeline, I know why you hate me.  
 For that one night -- in this  
 lonely house...

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Madeline, at 28, returns a book to a bookshelf. Turning, she finds Roderick, 43, standing before her in the lamp light. She lets him take her in his arms.

RODERICK (V.O.)  
That one night I surrendered...

LATER

Roderick makes love to Madeline on a couch.

RODERICK (V.O.)  
... to the deadly sin of lust.

INT. SERVANTS' QUARTERS - NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT)

Jankin humps dead Alison. He notices smoke and a dim glow through the door from the kitchen, but it seems hardly to faze him.

JANKIN  
The bloody house is on fire.

He looks down as he humps. He doesn't notice the brief passing of a shadow, as of someone sneaking in from the kitchen, in the glow at the doorway.

INT. INNER VAULT - NIGHT

Standing on some steps at the end of the vault, Tim strains to lift the heavy, long-unused cover of an apparent ground-level entrance. His lamp is set nearby.

INT. SERVANTS' QUARTERS - NIGHT

Jankin humps. From the dark behind him, Madeline's bloody, raw-beaten hands grip him tightly around the neck, choking him.

Madeline looks wild-eyed, insane, her white gown smudged with blood from her hands.

MADELINE  
(whispers hissingly)  
It was you put the screws in the coffin, wasn't it, Jankin? You knew I wasn't dead.

Jankin struggles in vain, Madeline's grip unrelenting.

As smoke builds above, Madeline releases her grip on Jankin's neck. He falls dead or unconscious on top of Alison.

Madeline picks up Jankin's bloody hunting knife that lies on the floor by Sperry's body.

INT. RODERICK'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Roderick, pistol in hand, a look of concern and fear on his face, opens the door. He sees the light from the fire and smoke in the hallway.

As he backs away,

RODERICK  
Fire... Yes.

He sits down heavily in his chair.

RODERICK  
Let this house die in flames.

He looks at the pistol in his hand.

EXT. BEHIND HOUSE - NIGHT

Tim forces open the ground-entrance cover and scrambles up out of the inner vault.

He's close enough to feel the heat as the west section of the house is on fire. The panicky horse left by Jankin takes off with the wagon.

Tim looks quickly at the stable. There is no sign of fire there.

He hurries toward the servants' entrance.

INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Evil-looking Madeline ascends the stairs, the knife down at her side. There is rising fire and smoke by the staircase.

INT. REAR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Tim hurries in from the servants' entrance.

There is fire and smoke in the west hallway and in the entrance hall ahead of him.

He quickly takes out a handkerchief to cover his nose.

INT. RODERICK'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Roderick, staring at the floor, sits with the muzzle of the pistol held to his temple.

He looks up in sudden fright.

Ferris, horrid, decomposed, with sightless eyes, stands menacingly before him.

Beside Ferris stands smiling, 8-year-old Charles.

CHARLES

Ferris wants to do something to  
you, Roderick.

RODERICK

No!

Roderick FIRES the pistol at Ferris.

Roderick now fearfully sees something else, the apparitions vanished.

Madeline stands silhouetted in the doorway against the approaching fire, her hands down at her sides.

RODERICK

Madeline...

As Madeline moves toward him, Roderick, rising, again puts the muzzle of the two-shot pistol to his temple.

MADELINE

Roderick, no... Don't kill  
yourself.

Roderick hesitates, lowering the pistol, as Madeline moves closer with a wild-eyed smile. There is smoke in the air above them.

RODERICK

Oh Madeline --

Madeline lifts high the hunting knife in her hand.

MADELINE

Let me kill you, Roderick.

She stabs him, Roderick dropping the pistol and falling over furniture to the floor, Madeline staying right with him, stabbing him again.

Tim, nose covered with his handkerchief, hurriedly arrives at the door and looks in, the light from the fire bright behind him.

Madeline stabs bleeding Roderick again as he lies on the floor, more high smoke in the room now.

Straddling him, Madeline again raises the knife, Roderick looking up at her forlornly. Tim rushes toward her.

TIM  
Madeline, no!

RODERICK  
(to Madeline)  
May I have your forgiveness?

Madeline stabs Roderick in the heart.

Tim grabs her and pulls her up as she extracts the knife. She drops it as Tim grips her.

Tim looks down with anguish at dead Roderick. Then he glances toward the fire at the door. He leads Madeline toward the window, but she struggles as if crazed.

MADELINE  
No!

TIM  
The window is the only way out!

MADELINE  
(fighting him)  
The roof! We have to get to the roof!

TIM  
Madeline --

MADELINE  
My mother is there! We have to get her down!

Getting her to the window as she struggles, he knocks her out with a fist.

Holding her up, he struggles to open the sashes. All behind them is now in flames.

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE - NIGHT

Tim lowers unconscious Madeline from the window, as far as he can, by her wrist. Smoke comes from the window.

TIM  
I'm going to let go now.

Tim lets her drop. As she sprawls upon landing, still unconscious, her forehead hits the ground.

Tim crawls out the window, hangs by his hands from the sill, then lets go. Sprawling as he lands by Madeline, he gets up with a sprained ankle.

In pain, Tim half-carries, half-draggs Madeline toward the pond, to get further away from the raging fire, now engulfing the house.

Sitting on the ground, with Madeline unconscious in his arms, Tim watches as roof and floor beams COLLAPSE in flames within the house's stone walls.

Madeline comes to. Tim gently brushes her hair back from a scrape on her forehead.

TIM

Are you all right, Madeline?

Madeline seems bewildered. She looks at the fire. She struggles, trying to get up, Tim restraining her.

TIM

Madeline --

MADELINE

(desperately)

What about Roderick?

TIM

It's too late. He's gone.

Madeline stops fighting. As Tim still holds her, she stares with wild eyes at the fire. She looks at Tim, her eyes full of fear.

MADELINE

What's going to happen to me?  
Where will I go?

TIM

Someplace safe, where you can get well.

MADELINE

Where is that?

Tim looks at the fire. He holds Madeline comfotingly.

TIM

Far away from the House of Usher.

EXT. SALISBURY PLAIN - NIGHT

The mansion stands dying in flames on the night-shrouded plain.

INT. HOUSE OF USHER - DAY

Madeline wanders, searching, through the burnt ruins of the house's west section. The roof and upper flooring are gone. There is gray sky above.

She picks up some small item and puts it in a sack.

She looks weird with her unkempt hair, scraped forehead, a cheek smudged with soot, and insane-looking eyes. She wears a blanket that hides the blood smudges on her gown.

EXT. IN FRONT OF HOUSE - DAY

Tim sits on the step of the carriage. The two Usher horses are hitched in front, Tim's horse tied to the back.

With his injured leg stretched out, Tim looks tired, worried, and in need of a change of clothes.

Standing before him are Wiltshire's CONSTABLE, 47, and the Constable's ASSISTANT, 25. Both men wear overcoats and derby hats.

A few men stand about, their horses and wagons nearby, to look at the ruins.

CONSTABLE

Have you any idea what started the fire, Mister Pridgen?

TIM

No... It may have started in the kitchen. The cook and her husband both drank a lot.

CONSTABLE

But it doesn't make sense.

Tim looks up at the Constable as if wondering what he means.

CONSTABLE

Roderick Usher, the cook and her husband, the butler, the doctor -- How could none have managed to escape the burning house?

TIM

I can only surmise. Giddings had a bad heart. The doctor also drank a lot. He and the cook and her husband, they may have all been drunk.

CONSTABLE

And Roderick? Like the others, burnt to a crisp. Two of the bodies are virtually fused together. One on top of the other.

They exchange looks as if sharing identical thoughts.

ASSISTANT

Smoke must have overcome them.

While he speaks to the Constable, Tim watches the Assistant turn and walk toward the front entrance.

TIM

I think Roderick... may have shot or stabbed himself to death.

CONSTABLE

(gestures toward house)  
Both a knife and pistol were found near the charred corpse which I assume to be Roderick.

TIM

(watches Assistant)  
I'm afraid he was mentally ill. He may even have set the fire.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Madeline sees something in the burnt ruins at her feet and looks closer. She picks up her charred book of nonsense verses.

She opens the book. The scorched middle pages are still readable. Engrossed, she suddenly looks up, startled by someone who steps to her side.

It's the Assistant. He smiles sympathetically with a glance at the book she holds.

ASSISTANT

What is it?

MADELINE

My nonsense verses.

He stops smiling as he notes her red, raw-beaten knuckles.

ASSISTANT

Have you any idea how the fire  
started, Madam?

She gives it a fleeting thought, then concentrates on her book.

MADELINE

It started while I was asleep.

ASSISTANT

And how did you get out?

She looks at him earnestly, as if reliving it,

MADELINE

Oh, I pounded and pounded, and --  
(shows them)  
Look at my hands.

ASSISTANT

Yes. You had to beat on a door,  
did you?

TIM

Madeline!

They look over at Tim, who has entered the ruins despite his bad ankle. He gestures toward the overcast sky.

TIM

Let's try to make Amesbury before  
the storm hits.

Madeline looks at the Assistant. She searches his eyes.

MADELINE

(urgent whisper)  
Where do you think he will take me?

The Assistant stares at her.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Madeline sits in the back of the carriage. Looking numb, she is wrapped in the blanket, her half-filled sack beside her.

In the driver's seat Tim turns the carriage and drives it away toward the plain.

The Constable and Assistant watch.

ASSISTANT

What do you think, Constable?

CONSTABLE

Apparently there was a tragic convergence of drunkenness, heart failure, smoke inhalation, and congenital madness.

ASSISTANT

There's something peculiar about that girl.

CONSTABLE

Well, look what the poor thing has been through. She's lucky she's not to be buried.

EXT. CARRIAGE - MOVING - DAY

Driving across the lonely plain, Tim notes the darkened sky. There is a rumble of THUNDER.

Behind him, Madeline slowly opens her sack. From among a few other, indistinct items, she takes out her charred book. She opens it and reads a few lines.

She puts the book aside. Then from the sack she slowly takes out her butcher knife, blackened from the fire. She regards it for a moment.

Madeline looks at his back as Tim drives.

MADELINE

Am I going to an asylum?

Tim looks concerned by the question.

MADELINE

Is that what you meant by some place where I can get well?

TIM

We'll see what needs to be done, Madeline. Don't worry.

To Madeline, Tim looks more like Ferris from behind.

She gazes at Tim/Ferris's back. She puts the knife back in the sack as if only to hide it.

MADELINE

Are you going to take me away, Ferris? Or put me away?

Tim seems anguished, doesn't look back, as if not knowing what to say.

MADELINE

Prove that you are going to take care of me, Ferris. Make love to me. Now. Stop the carriage and make love to me.

She watches him as the driver stops the carriage. He looks back at her.

It is Ferris. She gazes at him, her eyes wild with desire.

A MOMENT LATER

Down from the driver's seat, Ferris climbs into the carriage and gets atop Madeline.

He lifts her skirt as she hungrily embraces him.

Now Tim on the driver's seat looks back at Madeline, still seated in the halted carriage, her sexual fantasy vanished.

TIM

I can't do that, Madeline.

MADELINE

Why not?

TIM

Because you are not thinking right. You think I am Ferris. You're asking me to exploit what you think. But I am going to help you, Madeline, to think right again. Don't worry.

He starts driving the carriage again.

She stares hatefully at Tim/Ferris's back.

She slowly takes the knife out of the sack.

MADELINE

(under her breath)

So. You are going to put me away.

She rises and moves up behind him.

MADELINE

What do you think about this?

She stabs him in the back.

EXT. SALISBURY PLAIN - DAY

THUNDER and steady rain.

The mounted, wet Constable and Assistant rein their horses to a halt as they look at something ahead.

It's the carriage, sitting on the plain with no apparent passenger, the horses still with it.

The two men ride to the carriage.

They see Tim lying motionless in front of the driver's seat.

The Assistant dismounts and hurries to Tim, the Constable watching.

There is a profuse amount of blood in and around the seat.

ASSISTANT

Good Lord. His throat has been  
slit, sir. He's dead.

The Constable looks around as if for any sign of Madeline.

LATER

Rounding a line of shrubs, the Constable and Assistant halt their horses.

They see Madeline wandering aimlessly about in the rain.

Her dark hair is soaked and straggly down her face, giving her a ghoulish appearance. The knife is still in her hand. The blanket is gone, her nightgown is stained with blood.

She seems to be having some delightful thought.

She sees the two men ride toward her. As she walks forward,

MADELINE

It's finished!

The men halt their horses.

She stops before them, an insane smile on her face.

MADELINE

I've written a nonsense verse.  
Want to hear it?

They stare at her as she recites it haltingly, having to remember the words as she speaks,

MADELINE

"There was a young fellow named  
Tim/ So handsome the girls swooned  
for him/ But the name that was  
true/ Only Madeline knew/ And she  
kept the secret with them."

She laughs maniacally.

Her mirth vanishes as she watches the two men dismount.

They walk slowly toward her.

CONSTABLE

Drop the knife.

She moves backward with a look of defiance as they continue toward her in the rain.

MADELINE

What are you going to do with me?

They continue to advance, Madeline moving backward.

ASSISTANT

Drop the knife, lady.

She stops, her face distorted with fear and rage.

The men stop, staring as she raises the knife shoulder high.

MADELINE

Ferris! Why didn't you take me  
away like you promised?

She stabs herself in the gut.

The men rush to her as she sinks to the ground.

They kneel over her in the rain as she appears to be dead.

RODERICK (V.O.)

I am sorry, Tim...

EXT. HOUSE OF USHER - DAY

Rain and THUNDER. The house stands in blackened ruins with its burnt-out vacant eyes.

RODERICK (V.O.)  
You have to understand. She  
mustn't leave the house.

FADE OUT.

THE END