

# UNDER THE FLOORBOARDS

An Adaptation of Edgar Allen Poe's The Tell-Tale Heart

By Dana Hall

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**Synopsis:** Under the Floorboards is an adaptation of Edgar Allen Poe's Tell-Tale Heart with a twist! We enter the narrator's mind, as she seeks deliverance from 'the eye' that has dominated and abused its privilege for far too long.

**Cast:**

3 female or non-binary persons

**Characters:**

*Note: The role of the narrator is divided into three parts. The parts should be depicted as parts of the same person. The narrator is female and/or non-binary.*

**Narrator 1:** ID- The ID is the primitive and instinctive component of personality.

Presentation: Primitive tatters and/or sexual in nature.

***NOTE: Narrator 1:** Will also present as a police officer in the retelling of the story. It should still be clear it is a part of self.*

**Narrator 2:** EGO- The ego works by reason. It is the mediator between the chaos of ID and the hyper-morality of SUPEREGO.

Presentation: Regular, everyday attire

***NOTE: Narrator 2:** Will also present as a police officer in the retelling of the story. It should still be clear it is a part of self.*

**Narrator 3:** SUPEREGO- It strives for perfection and believes it's the ultimate morality, almost narcissistic.

Presentation: Pristine & proper

\*The parts are divided to help with staging as they are major shifts in the plot. This show is meant for your own artistic interpretation and welcomes creative and symbolic changes.

**At Rise: NARRATOR 1, 2, & 3 appear together on the stage but do not acknowledge each other unless stated in stage directions. They wear the same color of clothing or have the same accessories but in 3 different styles.**

**PART 1: Introduction.**

**NARRATOR 1:** They'll tell you I'm crazy-

**NARRATOR 2:** That I've lost my mind-

**NARRATOR 3:** That what I have to say is psychotic-

**NARRATOR 2:** But it's not.

**NARRATOR 3:** The truth takes many forms.

**NARRATOR 1:** I'm awake.

**SPX:** *We hear the heart beating at first faint but it grows with intensity.*

**NARRATOR 3:** I know what's right and what's wrong. My mind has never been more clear.

**NARRATOR 1:** It's *their* contagion that has contaminated me. It's *their* sickness that must be stopped/

**NARRATOR 3:** I've done what was necessary to cleanse myself.

**NARRATOR 2:** It makes perfect sense-

**NARRATOR 1:** Wait. *(pause)* Do you hear that? Listen?...

*All three parts look for the sound of the heart before they all settle on*

*the same location in the floor.*

**PART II: Explanation.**

**NARRATOR 1:** The urge was building-

**NARRATOR 2:** *It* would follow me - trace my every move-

**NARRATOR 1:** My body was not my own and *it* had to end.

**NARRATOR 3:** You want an account of what happened? *(beat)* Ok. I'll tell you in perfect detail so you'll see I'm not insane/

**SPX:** *Cut heartbeat.*

**NARRATOR 1:** It's insidious gaze-

**NARRATOR 2:** A predatory lens-

**NARRATOR 1:** It reduced me to nothingness in a single glance- *(Beat)*

**NARRATOR 1,2,3 in unison:** The eye.

**NARRATOR 2:** What would happen if it was shut- forever?

**NARRATOR 3:** No more control/

**NARRATOR 1:** I would have freedom of my mind and body/

**NARRATOR 2:** I could live.

**NARRATOR 1, 2, 3:** I had no choice.

**NARRATOR 3:** If you had the strength you'd done the same.

*Exit NARRATOR 2 & NARRATOR 3*

**PART III: Murder.**

**NARRATOR 1:** I used what was at my disposal- disarming him with pleasantries, batting my eyes, taking careful account of my hips as I walked- I was a damsel in distress. I knew he would take the bait- what an ironic way to go. He assumed that I was

no threat; he let his guard down. We became so close, it wasn't long before he gave me a key to his place.

I know what you think- I must hate this man to plot as I have. But that isn't the case- I didn't hate *him*, *it was* what was attached to him—the eye. I could no longer bear it. It followed me throughout my life, starting as a little girl. It told me lies- that I was inferior- I needed to be submissive and quiet. Then as my body developed the lies were more insidious- I was told I was responsible for men's reactions and advances. To 'cover-up or the consequences were mine.' It didn't just infect *me*- there's not one single female that doesn't know the poison I speak of- clutch your purse closer, carry your keys as weapons; we are trained to recognize that -gaze. (*maniacal laughing*) Yet- he didn't see me coming.

**NARRATOR 1 is joined by 2 & 3  
downstage on their lines.  
SPX: Heartbeat returns; it can be  
louder and softer at times.**

**NARRATOR 2:** With him out of the way, I could settle the score. Surely, you've heard the saying an eye for an eye?

**NARRATOR 1:** As he slept I crept in beside his bed. I was so close I could feel him breathe and see his chest rise and fall.

**NARRATOR 2:** He must have sensed my presence because he jolted awake.

**NARRATOR 1:** My heart beat wildly as did his.

**NARRATOR 2:** A single streak of light from the window illuminated the eye/

**NARRATOR 1:** My body came online. My vision, my sense of hearing were like a lioness on the hunt/

**NARRATOR 3:** I scarcely even dared to breathe in those moments as I plastered myself to the wall/

**NARRATOR 2:** I was so close the black of the pupil, like obsidian, taunted me/

**NARRATOR 3:** I hid in the shadows until the right moment/

**NARRATOR 2:** A false sense of security washed over him as a neighbor's car door

slammed. He must've told himself, *that* was the culprit- the reason he couldn't sleep.

**NARRATOR 1:** As he laid back down the rage inside me erupted - How dare he underestimate me!

**NARRATOR 2:** I leap on top of him/

**NARRATOR 3:** He went to scream/

**NARRATOR 1:** For a moment I could tell he recognized me.

**NARRATOR 3:** It was now or never. Me or him.

**NARRATOR 2:** He was strong but/

**NARRATOR 1:** the knife plunged into just the right spot

**The next lines are overlapping.**

**NARRATOR 2:** Over and/

**NARRATOR 1:** Over and/

**NARRATOR 3:** (*laughs*) over.

**NARRATOR 1:** Full of adrenaline his heart beats wildly/

**NARRATOR 3:** pushing more blood out from his wounds.

**NARRATOR 2:** All I could hear was the heart *still* beating...

**All 3 NARRATORS cover their ears on NARRATOR 1's line.  
SPX: Heartbeat should be loud.**

**NARRATOR 1:** It was pounding in my head/

**The next line is delivered in unison/overlapping holding their ears.**

**NARRATOR 1,2,3:** Get Out/get out

**NARRATOR 1:** Did it stop?