**The Raven**

[First published in 1845]

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| horizontal space | Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered weak and weary, Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore, While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping, As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door. `'Tis some visitor,' I muttered, `tapping at my chamber door - Only this, and nothing more.'  Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December, And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor. Eagerly I wished the morrow; - vainly I had sought to borrow From my books surcease of sorrow - sorrow for the lost Lenore - For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels named Lenore - Nameless here for evermore.  And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain Thrilled me - filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before; So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating `'Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door - Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door; - This it is, and nothing more,'  Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer, `Sir,' said I, `or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore; But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping, And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door, That I scarce was sure I heard you' - here I opened wide the door; - Darkness there, and nothing more.  Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing, Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before; But the silence was unbroken, and the darkness gave no token, And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, `Lenore!' This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, `Lenore!' Merely this and nothing more.  Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning, Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before. `Surely,' said I, `surely that is something at my window lattice; Let me see then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore - Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore; - 'Tis the wind and nothing more!'  Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter, In there stepped a stately raven of the saintly days of yore. Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he; But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door - Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door - Perched, and sat, and nothing more.  Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling, By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore, `Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou,' I said, `art sure no craven. Ghastly grim and ancient raven wandering from the nightly shore - Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!' Quoth the raven, `Nevermore.'  Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly, Though its answer little meaning - little relevancy bore; For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door - Bird or beast above the sculptured bust above his chamber door, With such name as `Nevermore.'  But the raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only, That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour. Nothing further then he uttered - not a feather then he fluttered - Till I scarcely more than muttered `Other friends have flown before - On the morrow he will leave me, as my hopes have flown before.' Then the bird said, `Nevermore.'  Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken, `Doubtless,' said I, `what it utters is its only stock and store, Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful disaster Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore - Till the dirges of his hope that melancholy burden bore Of "Never-nevermore."'  But the raven still beguiling all my sad soul into smiling, Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird and bust and door; Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore - What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore Meant in croaking `Nevermore.'  This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core; This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamp-light gloated o'er, But whose velvet violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o'er, *She* shall press, ah, nevermore!  Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer Swung by Seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor. `Wretch,' I cried, `thy God hath lent thee - by these angels he has sent thee Respite - respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore! Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe, and forget this lost Lenore!' Quoth the raven, `Nevermore.'  `Prophet!' said I, `thing of evil! - prophet still, if bird or devil! - Whether tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore, Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted - On this home by horror haunted - tell me truly, I implore - Is there - *is* there balm in Gilead? - tell me - tell me, I implore!' Quoth the raven, `Nevermore.'  `Prophet!' said I, `thing of evil! - prophet still, if bird or devil! By that Heaven that bends above us - by that God we both adore - Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn, It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels named Lenore - Clasp a rare and radiant maiden, whom the angels named Lenore?' Quoth the raven, `Nevermore.'  `Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!' I shrieked upstarting - `Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore! Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken! Leave my loneliness unbroken! - quit the bust above my door! Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!' Quoth the raven, `Nevermore.'  And the raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door; And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming, And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor; And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor Shall be lifted - nevermore! |