



ALENA KUZMOVÁ

TERRIFYING TALES

by Edgar Allan Poe

HRŮZOSTRAŠNÉ POVÍDKY

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Hrůzostrašné povídky

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*Povídky z díla E. A. Poa vybrala a zpracovala jako
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Předmluva

Edgar Allan Poe (19. 1. 1809 – 7. 10. 1849) byl americký romantický básník, prozaik, literární teoretik a esejista. Byl autorem fantastických a mystických příběhů a zakladatelem detektivního žánru. Od dětství byl ovlivněn četbou romantických autorů své doby a zabýval se také přírodními vědami a mysticismem, jež následně používal při psaní svých děl. Dokázal mistrovsky zachytit stav osoby, která příběh vypráví, a zanechat ve čtenáři psychologicky promyšlený dojem strachu či hnusu, často i humoru a překvapení. Jeho tvorba byla inspirací pro pozdější autory A. C. Doylea, J. Verna, F. Dostojevského, Ch. Baudelaira, H. P. Lovecrafta, ale ovlivnila i některé dnešní spisovatele, například J. K. Rowlingovou. Mnohá z Poeových děl byla zdramatizována, zfilmována či převedena do komiksové podoby.

Osobní život spisovatele nebyl právě šťastný. Byl poznamenáný jeho prudkou a divokou povahou, sklonem k pití alkoholu a užívání drog a z toho plynoucími finančními problémy a depresemi. Zemřel předčasně ve věku čtyřiceti let.

Kniha *Terrifying Tales* by Edgar Allan Poe / Hrůzostrašné povídky Edgara Allana Poa obsahuje pět povídek z široké autorovy sbírky, převyprávěných ve zjednodušené angličtině a doplněných českým překladem. Takto zpracované povídky poslouží středně pokročilým studentům k procvičení jejich znalostí anglického jazyka. V závěru knihy najdete stručné poznámky k důležitým gramatickým

jevům s příklady a můžete si ověřit své znalosti gramatiky i slovní zásoby pomocí souhrnného gramatického testu s klíčem.

Milí studenti, věřím, že vás malá ukázka z díla mistra amerického hororu zaujme a po přečtení a prostudování celé knihy získáte cenný pocit osvěžených znalostí anglického jazyka.

Vaše
Alena Kuzmová

The Tell-Tale Heart

Nervous, really nervous. I was very nervous and I am. But why do you say that I am mad? The disease made my senses acute, it did not destroy them. Especially my sense of hearing was very good. I could hear all voices in heaven and on earth. I even heard the voices in hell. Why, then, am I mad? Listen how intelligently I can tell you the whole story.

I cannot say how I first got the idea; but once I had it, this idea was churning in my brain day and night. There was no reason for this idea. There was no passion. I loved the old man. He had never done anything wrong to me, he had never told me a bad word. I did not lust for his gold. I think it was his eye. Yes, it was this! It looked like a vulture's eye – a pale blue eye, with a film over it. When this eye looked at me, it made my blood run cold. And so gradually I was overcome with the intention to kill the old man and get rid of that eye forever.

Well, now you think that I am mad. But madmen are useless. You should have seen me how carefully and intelligently I did everything; and how hypocritical I became. I had never been kinder to the old man than during the week before I killed him. Every night, about midnight, I opened his door slowly, very, very lightly. I opened it just enough for my head. First I put in a lantern all closed, so blacked out that no light came out. And then I put in my head. You would have laughed to see how carefully I did it. Slowly, very, very slowly so that

I would not wake him. It took me an hour to put my head into his room. Ha, ha! Could a madman be so careful? When my head was in his room, I opened the lantern carefully, oh, so carefully. Only one thin ray of light fell on his vulture eye.

I did this same thing for seven nights, but each night his eye was closed. Therefore I could not do my work since it was not the old man himself but his evil eye that bothered me. Every morning at daybreak, I walked into his room bravely asking him if he had slept well. I entered into conversation with him and talked to him in a friendly way. So you certainly understand that the old man would have had to be very wise to suspect me that every night, just at twelve, I was looking at him while he was sleeping.

The eighth night I was more careful than usual when I opened the door. A clock's minute hand moves more quickly than my hand moved. I had never valued my strength and ingeniousness as much as that night. I could hardly hold back the feelings of joy and self-satisfaction. I laughed quietly and perhaps the old man heard me because he moved. You probably think that I stood back – but no. There was dark in his room and I knew he could not see me. And so I kept pushing the door.

I had my head in and was about to open the lantern when my finger slipped on the tin valve and the old man jumped up. “Who’s here?” he shouted.

I did not move and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle and I did not hear him lie down again. He kept sitting on

the bed and listening. Just like me when I listened to the woodworms in the wall night after night.

Then I heard him groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not a groan of sadness or pain. Oh no! It came from a horrible feeling at the bottom of his soul. I knew that feeling well. I had the same feeling every night just around midnight. I felt sorry for the old man but I had to laugh too. His fear was growing bigger. He tried to convince himself that the noise came from his imagination. He said to himself, "It's just the wind, it's only a mouse running across the floor." He tried to encourage himself, but he found it all in vain. It was in vain because Death's shadow, which had been hovering around him for a few days, had already covered the old man. And it was Death's invisible shadow that made him feel my presence in the room.

After I had waited for a long time, I decided to open the lantern a little. I opened it – you cannot imagine how carefully. At last a single ray of light, like the thread of a spider, shot out from the lantern and straight onto the vulture eye.

The eye was open – wide, wide open – and as I looked at it, I became furious. I saw it perfectly. It was pale blue with the disgusting film over it that made my bones cold. I could see nothing else of the old man's face or body since I had, by instinct, directed the light on that horrible spot.

Have I told you that what you wrongly think to be madness is just my immense acuteness of senses? I suddenly heard a low, deep sound. It was like the sound of a clock wrapped in fabric. I knew that sound

well too. It was the beating of the old man's heart. It made me even more furious just like the beating of a drum that stimulates a soldier's courage.

But I was still silent and I hardly breathed. I wondered how long I could hold the ray of light on the eye. And the beating of the heart increased. It became quicker and quicker, and louder and louder. It grew louder, I say, louder every moment. Do you understand? I have told you I am nervous, and I really am. That strange noise in that night hour made me terrified. The beating grew louder, louder! I thought his heart would explode. And then I thought, "What if the neighbours hear it?" It was the old man's moment. With a shout, I opened up the lantern completely and burst into the room. He screamed once, only once. In an instant I pulled him to the floor and turned the heavy bed over him. Then I smiled happily because I had done my work. However, the heart continued to beat for many minutes under the mattress. But this did not bother me; I knew the noise could not be heard through the wall.

Finally, it stopped. The old man was dead. I removed the bed and started to examine the body. Yes, he was dead, utterly dead. I placed my hand on his heart and was holding it there for three minutes. There was no more beating. He was stone dead. His eye would not trouble me any more.

If you still think that I am mad, listen how carefully I got rid of the body. The night was ending and so I worked quickly but quietly. First I cut off the head, the arms and the legs. Then I removed three boards from the floor and placed the pieces of the body into the opening.

Finally, I put back the boards so carefully that no human eye – not even his – could have noticed anything suspicious. There was no blood to clean because I had been very careful. A tub had caught all the blood. Ha, ha, ha!

When I finished my work, it was four o'clock and it was still dark like at midnight. And just as the bell of the clock rang four times, someone knocked at the door. I went to open it without any fear or worry. Since now I had nothing to be afraid of. Three men came in and they introduced themselves politely. They were three policemen. A neighbour had heard someone's scream and had thought something terrible had happened, so he called the police.

I smiled because I had nothing to fear and I told the men to come in. "It was my own scream," I explained. "I screamed because of a bad dream." I told them that the old man was away in the country. I showed the visitors round the whole house and in the end I took them to the old man's room. I showed them his gold. In my keen self-assurance I brought some chairs into the room and told the policemen to sit down and have a rest for a moment. Enthused with my own invincibility, I put my chair over the spot where the body of the victim lay.

The policemen were satisfied. I had convinced them. I behaved very safely. They were sitting and I was answering their questions happily. But in a few moments, I felt I was getting pale and I wished them to leave. My head started to ache and I heard some ringing in my ears. But they kept on sitting and talking. The ringing became more distinct. I tried to talk more and more to eliminate the feeling.

However, it was not abating, on the contrary, it shaped up till I realized that the noise was not only in my ears.

Undoubtedly I became very pale, but I talked louder and louder. The sound, however, increased. What could I do? It was a low sound, very much like a clock wrapped in fabric. I could hardly breathe, but the policemen did not hear the sound. I talked more quickly, I talked more loudly, but the noise increased. Oh God! What could I do? I shouted, I raved, I cursed! I moved the chair I was sitting on and banged it against the floor. The noise, however, drowned out all of that and it kept increasing. It was louder, louder, louder! And the men continued to talk and laugh.

Didn't they hear? Oh God! No, no! They heard! They suspected! They knew! They were making fun of my horror! This I thought and this I think. But anything was better than this agony, than their making fun of me! I could not bear their hypocritical smiles any longer. I felt I had to scream or die! And now again! Listen! Louder, louder, louder!

"Villains!" I screamed, "do not pretend any more! I admit what I did! Pull up the boards! Here! Here is the beating of his cursed heart!"