

Peter Hammill, Act Four

(The following morning)

MADELINE That must be Montresor...
Good morning! Oh, how lovely to see you -
since Roderick told me you were coming
I have been so excited.

Now you are here, all will be well once more.
I was not here last night to greet you,
you must think me ill-mannered,
but sadly I am not enjoying the good health I used to...

MONTRESOR Yes.
Madeline, I must confess it's hard finding words
that say what I feel...

MADELINE Oh, Montresor, you're being solemn
and it's all quite uncalled for.
I feel quite sure I'm growing stronger
and the doctor agrees with me -
so you see all will be well once more.
Five years ago we were a very different family,
but how things change!
Roderick and I were both living abroad when father died.
We both returned from Florence
to take up Roderick's inheritance.
The House was dark and so full of sadness.
But you know my brother and how sensitive he is.
He lives in the music of his wild melodies.
Now as time went by so his songs grew sadder,
now he never smiled as he played.
Now he sings of death and some things even madder;
shuts himself away, brooding to himself,
come to me at night,
staring at my face 'till I fell afraid.

MADELINE MONTRESOR
When I am better we must all
holiday together
as in the old days. Yes, you know
how much I'd love that
You would be good for us both,
as good for us both as before
You look so much the same!
I must confess that you have changed...
Do you remember? Everything.
The fragile hour,
the silent walk with a friend.

MONTRESOR As we walk so we tread
& MADELINE on the words left unsaid
I can't say them no matter how hard I try
We chatter on, then the moment's gone,
the one for which I've hoped
and I've prayed and I've planned.
Stop the clock's advance!
I need a second chance,
I need that second's glance
when my hand touched you hand.
I'd take you in my arms and say 'I love you'
but it won't come back to me.
It's over now,
it's over now,
it's over now, you see.
If I hadn't been afraid to touch you
would you have been afraid to fall in love with me?
Would it be over?
Would it be over now?
Perhaps it wouldn't be.
And each hour limits choice

in so gentle a voice
'till the hour that we realise no choice remains.
So we await
just one chance to cheat our fate,
but then if we hesitate
we lose the power to act at all.
For once that moment's past
we simply stand aghast
as life rolls to disaster
and we stand and watch it fall.
I'd take you in my arms and say 'I love you'
but I think we both agree.
It's over now,
it's over now, you see.
It's over now,
it's over now, you see.
If I hadn't been afraid to touch you
would you have been afraid to fall in love with me?
Would it be over?
Would it be over now?
Perhaps it wouldn't be.
If I hadn't been afraid to touch you
would you have been afraid to fall in love with me?
Would it be over?
Would it be over now?
The way it seems to be.
(Madeline exits as Usher enters)
USHER MONTRESOR
Yes, she does not know it yet;
Perhaps for the best
so sure she will recover
and so full of life full of life
full of life,
my brave my brave
Madeline Madeline
This House devours her
so take her from this place
preparing the final torment
of its empty space empty space
a silent, empty space silent empty space
without
without
Madeline Madeline
Madeline
This is only a house my friend
USHER Which, by dint of long and undisturbed endurance,
by its mere form and substance,
has obtained an influence, a silent
yet importunate and terrifying hold
which, for centuries,
has moulded the destiny of my family
and now makes of me whatever it is I am.
The House is Usher and Usher is the House:
the two are indivisible.
It was born with us, prospered with us, suffered too.
And it will, in some way, die with us, soon.
I am the last of the Usher,
mine is the last drop of Usher blood,
The last of the Usher!
The House has told me in midnight breathing
from my chamber walls,
the House has told me in the secret murmur
of the stones that none can hear save I.
I am the last of the Usher,
my sister's death shall leave me so;

I am the last of the Usher,
so in Usher's House I will wait alone.
MONTRESOR Roderick, this is nightmare talk.
Come back with me, both of you, while you're yet able
You can't stay here and rot!
USHER There will be no rot!
No rot in Usher!
We have lived with thunder,
and with thunder shall we fall!
MONTRESOR I cannot make you come but hear what I say.
Send Madeline with me to some healthy place.
USHER No rot! No rot in Usher!
We have lived by lightning
and but lightning shall we fall!
No slide into slow decay,
no shrivelling splendour
no gradual ebbing away,
no quiet surrender!
No rot! No rot in Usher!
We have lived as Titans and as Titans we must fall!
USHER MONTRESOR
Don't talk of rot
Stop!
No rot in Usher!
Stop!
Roderick, try and calm yourself
Just tell me why I should! this cannot do you good.
These thoughts...
No!
are folly.
No!
Everything I've tried to I have tried to help you
tell you, you've misunderstood I've done everything I could.
Come, why should we fight
this way
we have enough troubles.
What was it we used to say? What was it we used to say?
A problem shared is doubled! A problem shared is doubled!
Ushers do not flee! Ushers do not flee!
Montresors stand firm! Montresors stand firm!
So we stand together, So we stand together,
stand together stand together
By dint of long
and undisturbed endurance...
we could defeat the House,
my friend.
VOICES OF We shall not
THE HOUSE let him go!
We shall not let him go!
End of Act Four