

Listen To Me

Barbara Sims

LISTEN TO ME. You *must* listen to me. The body they found upstairs—the old man's body—I killed him. Yes, *I* killed him, but you must believe me it was an accident, a mistake. Now, please listen to me.. There is so little time left, and I must tell you everything, and you must believe me.

The old man—I thought he was someone else standing there behind the curtain—someone I *intended* to kill. I am not a murderer by nature, you know. My father said, "Avenge me!", and I had to kill. Yes, yes. Of course, my father is dead. Fool! Do you think me mad? He *is* dead, but the corpse does not rest. You understand? He walks sometimes, and he speaks to me in a voice piteous to hear. He cries, "I am wronged. Avenge me!" And he knows that only I am able to hear him, so it is I who must avenge him.

Listen to me! Do not stare in such a fashion, as if you are afraid. I was not a murderer until the ghost walked. My soul was at peace until I heard my father shriek, "Avenge me!" You understand what it is to have those words tear at the roots of your soul? I see you do not. No matter.

The old man—God forgive me that sin! And his daughter. She was mad, you know. Quite mad there at the end. Poor child. Her soul will never be at peace either. It will float forever, swim and float and eddy in the pool, never to know rest.

My father's ghost! What a vein of blood he has let! I wonder, will he rest now, or will he walk and speak even when I am gone and there is no one left to hear him?

I see that you are yet afraid. Be at peace, friend. All violence is gone from me. When there is nothing of me but bone and skull and horrid remembrance, what will they write of this family who turned upon themselves as ravenous beasts?

You have listened, and it is done. Go pray for me. Go pray for the soul of Hamlet, late Prince of Denmark.