THE HOMOLITERAL RAVEN

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On one midnight, cold and dreary, while I, fainting, weak and weary,
Pondered many a quaint and ancient volume of forgotten lore,
While I studied, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
Noise of some one gently rapping, rapping at the chamber door.
"Oh, some visitor," I whispered, "rapping at the chamber door,
Only one, and nothing more."

Oh, this night I, tired, remember, during winter's bleak December,
When each separate burning ember wrought its ghost on oaken floor.
Longing oft for bright tomorrow, grimly did I strive to borrow
From my tomes relief of sorrow -- sorrow for one lost Lenore,
For one rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore --
Nameless here for evermore.

How the silken, soft, uncertain rustling through each purple curtain
Thrilled me -- made me dream fantastic terrors never felt before;
Now, to still the fearful beating -- heart inflamed -- I tried repeating,
"Tis some visitor entreating entrance at the chamber door --
Some late visitor entreating entrance at the chamber door --
Importuning, nothing more.

Presently my mood got stronger: hesitating then no longer,
"Sir," I cried, "or Mistress, truly your forgiveness I implore;
Late this evening, dozing, napping,
I ignored your quiet tapping --
So you almost failed in warning --
"opening the chamber door,
Darkness reigned, and nothing more.

Long into that darkness peering, I, transfixed, stood wond'ring, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams that mortal never tried to tell before;
But the silence, never broken, kept its secret, showed no token;
One short word alone was spoken -- this, the whispered word "Lenore!"
First I whispered, echo answered, and that answer sighed "Lenore!"
Only once and nevermore.

Now into the chamber turning, soul aflame, inside now burning,
Once again I did detect it, tapping, tapping like before.
Worried, I, with hands a-flutter, whispered "It's inside the gutter,
Or, perhaps, atop the shutter -- this enigma I'll explore;
Let this heart be quiet sooner, and enigma I'll explore --
Blowing wind, and nothing more."
Opening the chamber shutter, wings I viewed outside a-flutter;
Inward marched a stately Raven, from some sainted age before.
Not the least obeisance made he; ne'er one moment stopped and stayed he;
Seeking pose of noble lady, sat atop the chamber door --
   Perched atop the sculptured Pallas, just atop the chamber door --
   Perched and sat, and nothing more.

Then, this swarthy bird beguiling dull sad fancy into smiling
Through his stern and grave decorum, through the countenance he wore,
"Though thy crest be black and shaven," said I, lightly, "thou, no craven,
Ghastly, gaunt and ancient Raven, wandering from yon nightly shore:
Tell me clear your lordly title, at the night's Plutonian shore!"
   Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

Oh, so strange! Though this ungainly fowl no doubt had discoursed plainly,
Its brief answer little meaning, little relevancy bore;
Together we will join, agreeing that a normal human being
Scarce with seeing bird above the chamber door --
   Bird or brute above the chamber door --
   Bearing name like "Nevermore."

Oh, that Raven, resting lonely on an ancient bust, spoke only
One short word, with heartfelt feeling -- deeply did his soul outpour.
Nothing farther then he uttered, not one feather then he fluttered,
Till I vainly turned and muttered, "Other friends have fled before;
Ere morn comes this bird will leave me; hopes like these have fled before."
Then it uttered, "Nevermore."

Startled at the stillness broken by reply adeptly spoken,
"Doubless," said I, "it must utter this sole word and nothing more,
Learned from some despondent master whom unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore,
Miserable owner who this melancholy burden bore,
Crying 'Never -- nevermore!'"

Then the Raven yet beguiling dull sad fancy into smiling,
Straight I lifted cushioned chair, confronting bird above the door;
Down into the cushions sinking, I initiated linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird from yore --
   Oh, this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt and ominous bird from yore --
   Meant in croaking "Nevermore."

Silently I tried some guessing, not one syllable expressing
Toward yon fowl, whose fiery eyes illumed, impaled my bosom's core;
Speculating, I, divining, thought with head at rest, reclining
On soft cushions' wine-red lining which the lamplight gloated over --
   Wine-red lining trimmed with velvet that the lamplight gloated over --
   She shall press them nevermore!

Then the atmosphere grew denser, perfumed from Jove's unseen censer,
Borne by cherubim whose foot-falls tinkled o'er the shadowed floor.
"Wretch," cried I, "kind Christ hath lent thee; with these angels He hath sent thee
Respite, surcease, sweet nepenthe, drowning memories of Lenore! Raise and drink this sweet nepenthe, and efface the dead Lenore!"

Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" cried I, "wizard evil! prophet yet, ye bird-like devil! Whether Tempter sent thee, whether tempest tossed thee here ashore, Desolate yet still undaunted, in this desert place enchanted -- In this home with horror haunted -- tell me simply, I implore: Will balm be manifest in Gilead? -- tell me simply, I implore!"

Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" cried I, "wizard evil! prophet yet ye bird-like devil! Under Heaven over-bending, by yon God whom we adore, Tell this soul, so sorrow-laden, that within the distant Aiden, It will clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore: Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore!"

Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Let this phrase denote our parting, bird-like fiend!" I shrieked, upstarting,

Go, recoil into the tempest at the night's Plutonian shore! Drop no pinion -- drop no token of those lies pronounced and spoken, Give me quietude unbroken! quit the bust above yon door! Stop thy hellish torture, Raven! take thyself through yonder door!

Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

And that Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting Just atop the sculptured Pallas, just atop the chamber door; Now those eyes are darkly gleaming, like the devil when he's dreaming, Yellow lamp-light through him streaming casts his silhouette on floor; Soul distraught, I view in ruins shattered hopes on shadowed floor, Hopes rekindled -- nevermore!

In this adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's famous poem, "The Raven", each consecutive pair of words contains at least one letter in common. This is a much weaker literary constraint than the acrostic one developed by Howard Bergerson in "The Automynogrammatical Raven" in the November 1975 Word Ways; consequently, it was possible to retain Poe's original rhyme-scheme and meter while accurately reproducing his story. Writing "The Raven" so that each consecutive pair of words has no common letter is a considerably more difficult task; this will be featured in a later issue.