

Chapter 1 : Ambrose Bierce - Wikipedia

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The hour was near nine in the evening; the room was dimly lighted by a single candle. Although the weather was warm, the two windows, contrary to the custom which gives the dead plenty of air, were closed and the blinds drawn down. The furniture of the room consisted of but three pieces--an arm-chair, a small reading-stand supporting the candle, and a long kitchen table, supporting the body of the man. All these, as also the corpse, seemed to have been recently brought in, for an observer, had there been one, would have seen that all were free from dust, whereas everything else in the room was pretty thickly coated with it, and there were cobwebs in the angles of the walls. Under the sheet the outlines of the body could be traced, even the features, these having that unnaturally sharp definition which seems to belong to faces of the dead, but is really characteristic of those only that have been wasted by disease. From the silence of the room one would rightly have inferred that it was not in the front of the house, facing a street. It really faced nothing but a high breast of rock, the rear of the building being set into a hill. As a neighboring church clock was striking nine with an indolence which seemed to imply such an indifference to the flight of time that one could hardly help wondering why it took the trouble to strike at all, the single door of the room was opened and a man entered, advancing toward the body. As he did so the door closed, apparently of its own volition; there was a grating, as of a key turned with difficulty, and the snap of the lock bolt as it shot into its socket. A sound of retiring footsteps in the passage outside ensued, and the man was to all appearance a prisoner. Advancing to the table, he stood a moment looking down at the body; then with a slight shrug of the shoulders walked over to one of the windows and hoisted the blind. The darkness outside was absolute, the panes were covered with dust, but by wiping this away he could see that the window was fortified with strong iron bars crossing it within a few inches of the glass and imbedded in the masonry on each side. He examined the other window. It was the same. He manifested no great curiosity in the matter, did not even so much as raise the sash. If he was a prisoner he was apparently a tractable one. Having completed his examination of the room, he seated himself in the arm-chair, took a book from his pocket, drew the stand with its candle alongside and began to read. The man was young--not more than thirty--dark in complexion, smooth-shaven, with brown hair. His face was thin and high-nosed, with a broad forehead and a "firmness" of the chin and jaw which is said by those having it to denote resolution. The eyes were gray and steadfast, not moving except with definitive purpose. They were now for the greater part of the time fixed upon his book, but he occasionally withdrew them and turned them to the body on the table, not, apparently, from any dismal fascination which under such circumstances it might be supposed to exercise upon even a courageous person, nor with a conscious rebellion against the contrary influence which might dominate a timid one. He looked at it as if in his reading he had come upon something recalling him to a sense of his surroundings. Clearly this watcher by the dead was discharging his trust with intelligence and composure, as became him. After reading for perhaps a half-hour he seemed to come to the end of a chapter and quietly laid away the book. He then rose and taking the reading-stand from the floor carried it into a corner of the room near one of the windows, lifted the candle from it and returned to the empty fireplace before which he had been sitting. A moment later he walked over to the body on the table, lifted the sheet and turned it back from the head, exposing a mass of dark hair and a thin face-cloth, beneath which the features showed with even sharper definition than before. Shading his eyes by interposing his free hand between them and the candle, he stood looking at his motionless companion with a serious and tranquil regard. Satisfied with his inspection, he pulled the sheet over the face again and returning to the chair, took some matches off the candlestick, put them in the side pocket of his sack-coat and sat down. He then lifted the candle from its socket and looked at it critically, as if calculating how long it would last. It was barely two inches long; in another hour he would be in darkness. He replaced it in the candlestick and blew it out. It was late in the evening, almost midnight, indeed, and there had been no lack of punch. The gravest of the three, Dr. Helberson, was the host--it was in his rooms they sat. He was about thirty years of age; the others were even

younger; all were physicians. Helberson, "is hereditary and incurable. One needs no more be ashamed of it than of the fact that he inherits, for example, an incapacity for mathematics, or a tendency to lie. The tendency to lie is one thing; lying is another. I am myself not conscious of it. Physicians and soldiers are of course more nearly free from it than others. Let us have in all the assassin classes. I have no money to back him, but he will back himself with loads of it. As for fear--I dare say he thinks it some cutaneous disorder, or possibly a particular kind of religious heresy. The outcome of this crazy conversation we have seen. III In extinguishing his meagre allowance of candle Mr. He may have thought, too, or half thought, that the darkness would be no worse at one time than another, and if the situation became insupportable it would be better to have a means of relief, or even release. At any rate it was wise to have a little reserve of light, even if only to enable him to look at his watch. No sooner had he blown out the candle and set it on the floor at his side than he settled himself comfortably in the arm-chair, leaned back and closed his eyes, hoping and expecting to sleep. In this he was disappointed; he had never in his life felt less sleepy, and in a few minutes he gave up the attempt. But what could he do? He could not go groping about in absolute darkness at the risk of bruising himself--at the risk, too, of blundering against the table and rudely disturbing the dead. We all recognize their right to lie at rest, with immunity from all that is harsh and violent. Jarette almost succeeded in making himself believe that considerations of this kind restrained him from risking the collision and fixed him to the chair. While thinking of this matter he fancied that he heard a faint sound in the direction of the table--what kind of sound he could hardly have explained. He did not turn his head. Why should he--in the darkness? But he listened--why should he not? And listening he grew giddy and grasped the arms of the chair for support. There was a strange ringing in his ears; his head seemed bursting; his chest was oppressed by the constriction of his clothing. He wondered why it was so, and whether these were symptoms of fear. Then, with a long and strong expiration, his chest appeared to collapse, and with the great gasp with which he refilled his exhausted lungs the vertigo left him and he knew that so intently had he listened that he had held his breath almost to suffocation. The revelation was vexatious; he arose, pushed away the chair with his foot and strode to the centre of the room. But one does not stride far in darkness; he began to grope, and finding the wall followed it to an angle, turned, followed it past the two windows and there in another corner came into violent contact with the reading-stand, overturning it. It made a clatter that startled him. Having recovered that, he lighted it and instantly turned his eyes to the table, where, naturally, nothing had undergone any change. The reading-stand lay unobserved upon the floor: It did not yield and this seemed to afford him a certain satisfaction; indeed, he secured it more firmly by a bolt which he had not before observed. Returning to his chair, he looked at his watch; it was half-past nine. With a start of surprise he held the watch at his ear. It had not stopped. The candle was now visibly shorter. He again extinguished it, placing it on the floor at his side as before. Jarette was not at his ease; he was distinctly dissatisfied with his surroundings, and with himself for being so. The more Jarette condemned himself, the more reason he gave himself for condemnation; the greater the number of variations which he played upon the simple theme of the harmlessness of the dead, the more insupportable grew the discord of his emotions. Jarette heard behind him a light, soft sound of footfalls, deliberate, regular, successively nearer! IV Just before daybreak the next morning Dr. There was a silence for a few moments. If your friend had not irritated me by the contemptuous manner in which he treated my doubt of his endurance--a purely physical quality--and by the cool incivility of his suggestion that the corpse be that of a physician, I should not have gone on with it. If anything should happen we are ruined, as I fear we deserve to be. Mancher, then, had been as good as his promise; he was the "corpse. A mistake in that might make matters worse instead of better. Jarette in accordance with the terms of the mad wager. As they neared it they met a man running. Arrived at the house, they saw several persons entering in haste and excitement. In some of the dwellings near by and across the way the chamber windows were thrown up, showing a protrusion of heads. All heads were asking questions, none heeding the questions of the others. A few of the windows with closed blinds were illuminated; the inmates of those rooms were dressing to come down. Exactly opposite the door of the house that they sought a street lamp threw a yellow, insufficient light upon the scene, seeming to say that it could disclose a good deal more if it wished. Helberson, calmly; "there may be need of one. The door was open; the street lamp opposite lighted the passage into which it opened. It was full of men. Some had ascended the stairs at the farther end,

and, denied admittance above, waited for better fortune. All were talking, none listening. Suddenly, on the upper landing there was a great commotion; a man had sprung out of a door and was breaking away from those endeavoring to detain him. Down through the mass of affrighted idlers he came, pushing them aside, flattening them against the wall on one side, or compelling them to cling to the rail on the other, clutching them by the throat, striking them savagely, thrusting them back down the stairs and walking over the fallen. His clothing was in disorder, he was without a hat. His eyes, wild and restless, had in them something more terrifying than his apparently superhuman strength. His face, smooth-shaven, was bloodless, his hair frost-white. As the crowd at the foot of the stairs, having more freedom, fell away to let him pass Harper sprang forward.

Chapter 2 : A Bivouac of the Dead by Ambrose Bierce

A Watcher By The Dead. I In an upper room of an unoccupied dwelling in that part of San Francisco known as North Beach lay the body of a man under a sheet.

At a point where the valley road intersects the old Staunton and Parkersburg turnpike, a famous thoroughfare in its day, is a post office in a farm house. This place had its battle--what was called a battle in the "green and salad days" of the great rebellion. There was a great cannonading, which killed about a dozen on each side; then, finding the place too strong for assault, the Federals called the affair a reconnaissance in force, and burying their dead withdrew to the more comfortable place whence they had come. Those dead now lie in a beautiful national cemetery at Grafton, duly registered, so far as identified, and companioned by other Federal dead gathered from the several camps and battlefields of West Virginia. The fallen soldier the word "hero" appears to be a later invention has such humble honors as it is possible to give. His part in all the pomp that fills The circuit of the Summer hills Is that his grave is green. True, more than a half of the green graves in the Grafton cemetery are marked "Unknown," and sometimes it occurs that one thinks of the contradiction involved in "honoring the memory" of him of whom no memory remains to honor; but the attempt seems to do no great harm to the living, even to the logical. A few hundred yards to the rear of the old Confederate earthworks is a wooded hill. Years ago it was not wooded. Here, among the trees and in the undergrowth, are rows of shallow depressions, discoverable by removing the accumulated forest leaves. From some of them may be taken and reverently replaced small thin slabs of the split stone of the country, with rude and reticent inscriptions by comrades. I found only one with a date, only one with full names of man and regiment. The entire number found was eight. In these forgotten graves rest the Confederate dead--between eighty and one hundred, as nearly as can be made out. Some fell in the "battle;" the majority died of disease. Two, only two, have apparently been disinterred for reburial at their homes. Men living within a mile have never heard of it. Yet other men must be still living who assisted to lay these Southern soldiers where they are, and could identify some of the graves. Is there a man, North or South, who would begrudge the expense of giving to these fallen brothers the tribute of green graves? One would rather not think so. True, there are several hundreds of such places still discoverable in the track of the great war. All the stronger is the dumb demand--the silent plea of these fallen brothers to what is "likeliest God within the soul. They did not live through the period of honorable strife into the period of vilification--did not pass from the iron age to the brazen--from the era of the sword to that of the tongue and pen. Among them is no member of the Southern Historical Society. Their valor was not the fury of the non-combatant; they have no voice in the thunder of the civilians and the shouting. Not by them are impaired the dignity and infinite pathos of the Lost Cause. Give them, these blameless gentlemen, their rightful part in all the pomp that fills the circuit of the summer hills.

Chapter 3 : "A Watcher by the Dead"

Ambrose Gwinnett Bierce () was an American editorialist, journalist, short story writer, fabulist and satirist. Today, he is best known for his short story, An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge and his satirical lexicon, The Devil's Dictionary.

He participated in the operations in Western Virginia , was present at the Battle of Philippi the first organized land action of the war , and received newspaper attention for his daring rescue, under fire, of a gravely wounded comrade at the Battle of Rich Mountain. Bierce fought at the Battle of Shiloh April , a terrifying experience that became a source for several short stories and the memoir "What I Saw of Shiloh". In April he was commissioned a first lieutenant , and served on the staff of General William Babcock Hazen as a topographical engineer , making maps of likely battlefields. Thomas and Oliver O. Howard , both of whom supported his application for admission to West Point in May General Hazen believed Bierce would graduate from the military academy "with distinction" and William T. Sherman also endorsed the application for admission even though stating he had no personal acquaintance with Bierce. He was discharged from the army in January His military career resumed, however, in mid, when he joined General Hazen as part of an expedition to inspect military outposts across the Great Plains. Ambrose Bierce, by J. They had three children: Day committed suicide after a romantic rejection, [24] [25] and Leigh died of pneumonia related to alcoholism. They divorced in Bierce was an avowed agnostic. Bierce lived and wrote in England from to , contributing to Fun magazine. From to , he traveled to Rockerville and Deadwood in the Dakota Territory , to try his hand as local manager for a New York mining company. When the company failed he returned to San Francisco and resumed his career in journalism. From January 1, until September 11, he was editor of The Wasp magazine, in which he began a column titled "Prattle". He remained associated with Hearst Newspapers until Central Pacific executive Collis P. If, when you are ready to pay, I happen to be out of town, you may hand it over to my friend, the Treasurer of the United States. Bierce returned to California in November. On several occasions his columns stirred up a storm of hostile reaction, which created difficulties for Hearst. Bierce meant his poem to express a national mood of dismay and fear, but after McKinley was shot in , it seemed to foreshadow the crime: Despite a national uproar that ended his ambitions for the presidency and even his membership in the Bohemian Club , Hearst kept employing Bierce. His most popular stories were written in rapid succession between and , in what was characterized as "a tremendous burst of consummate art". His grimly realistic cycle of 25 war stories has been called "the greatest anti-war document in American literature". His Fantastic Fables anticipated the ironic style of grotesquerie that became a more common genre in the 20th century. Described as "howlingly funny", [40] it consists of satirical definitions of English words which lampoon cant and political double-talk. Bierce edited the twelve volumes of The Collected Works of Ambrose Bierce, which were published from to Bierce has been criticized by his contemporaries and later scholars for deliberately pursuing improbability and for his penchant toward "trick endings ". Bierce is among our three greatest writers. Howells is the other two. By December he had passed through Louisiana and Texas , crossing by way of El Paso into Mexico, which was in the throes of revolution. His last known communication with the world was a letter he wrote there to Blanche Partington , a close friend, dated December 26, There was an official investigation by U. Sommerfeld , was contacted by U. Scott and Sommerfeld investigated the disappearance. Bierce was said to have been last seen in the city of Chihuahua in January. Neale concludes that it would have been highly unlikely for Bierce to have gone to Mexico and joined Villa. Therefore, despite an abundance of theories including death by suicide , his ultimate fate remains shrouded in mystery. Legacy, Influence and Popular Culture[edit] Bierce and autograph Bierce has been fictionalized in more than 50 novels, short stories, movies, television shows, stage plays, and comic books. Some works featuring a fictional Ambrose Bierce have received favorable reviews, generated international sales, [56] or earned major awards. Mencken called Bierce "the one genuine wit that These States have ever seen. A silent film version, The Bridge, was made in It aired in on American television as one of the final episodes of the television series The Twilight Zone: In the story line, Hearst struggles to turn a profit despite increased circulation of The San Francisco Examiner. Cornthwaite appears as Sam Chamberlain. Lovecraft

and much of modern horror fiction. He has painful faults of vulgarity and cheapness of imagination. In the novel, Bierce is personally executed by Pancho Villa. John Camden Hotten , Stories, satire, journalism, poetry. Stories, satire, epigrams, journalism. Cobwebs from an Empty Skull as by "Dod Grile". London and New York: Tales of Soldiers and Civilians San Francisco: Steele, ; many subsequent editions, some under the title In the Midst of Life. Western Authors Publishing, Can Such Things Be? Fantastic Fables New York and London: Shapes of Clay San Francisco: Wood [George Sterling], Ashes of the Beacon Volume II: In the Midst of Life: Shapes of Clay Volume V:

Chapter 4 : A Watcher by the Dead by Ambrose Bierce

*A Watcher by the Dead [Ambrose Bierce] on calendrierdelascience.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. Ambrose Gwinnett Bierce (born June 24, , assumed to have died sometime after December 26,) was an American editorialist.*

Included in Tales of Soldiers and Civilians I In an upper room of an unoccupied dwelling in the part of San Francisco known as North Beach lay the body of a man, under a sheet. The hour was near nine in the evening; the room was dimly lighted by a single candle. Although the weather was warm, the two windows, contrary to the custom which gives the dead plenty of air, were closed and the blinds drawn down. The furniture of the room consisted of but three pieces—an arm-chair, a small reading-stand supporting the candle, and a long kitchen table, supporting the body of the man. All these, as also the corpse, seemed to have been recently brought in, for an observer, had there been one, would have seen that all were free from dust, whereas everything else in the room was pretty thickly coated with it, and there were cobwebs in the angles of the walls. This is the exclusive online store established by the replica watches brand in China so far. It also means that Chinese consumers can more conveniently enjoy the replica hermes and craftsmanship of Bucchiatti jewelry. Under the sheet the outlines of the body could be traced, even the features, these having that unnaturally sharp definition which seems to belong to faces of the dead, but is really characteristic of those only that have been wasted by disease. From the silence of the room one would rightly have inferred that it was not in the front of the house, facing a street. It really faced nothing but a high breast of rock, the rear of the building being set into a hill. As a neighboring church clock was striking nine with an indolence which seemed to imply such an indifference to the flight of time that one could hardly help wondering why it took the trouble to strike at all, the single door of the room was opened and a man entered, advancing toward the body. As he did so the door closed, apparently of its own volition; there was a grating, as of a key turned with difficulty, and the snap of the lock bolt as it shot into its socket. A sound of retiring footsteps in the passage outside ensued, and the man was to all appearance a prisoner. Advancing to the table, he stood a moment looking down at the body; then with a slight shrug of the shoulders walked over to one of the windows and hoisted the blind. The darkness outside was absolute, the panes were covered with dust, but by wiping this away he could see that the window was fortified with strong iron bars crossing it within a few inches of the glass and imbedded in the masonry on each side. He examined the other window. It was the same. He manifested no great curiosity in the matter, did not even so much as raise the sash. If he was a prisoner he was apparently a tractable one. Having completed his examination of the room, he seated himself in the arm-chair, took a book from his pocket, drew the stand with its candle alongside and began to read. The man was young—not more than thirty—dark in complexion, smooth-shaven, with brown hair. His face was thin and high-nosed, with a broad forehead and a "firmness" of the chin and jaw which is said by those having it to denote resolution. The eyes were gray and steadfast, not moving except with definitive purpose. They were now for the greater part of the time fixed upon his book, but he occasionally withdrew them and turned them to the body on the table, not, apparently, from any dismal fascination which under such circumstances it might be supposed to exercise upon even a courageous person, nor with a conscious rebellion against the contrary influence which might dominate a timid one. He looked at it as if in his reading he had come upon something recalling him to a sense of his surroundings. Clearly this watcher by the dead was discharging his trust with intelligence and composure, as became him. After reading for perhaps a half-hour he seemed to come to the end of a chapter and quietly laid away the book. He then rose and taking the reading-stand from the floor carried it into a corner of the room near one of the windows, lifted the candle from it and returned to the empty fireplace before which he had been sitting. A moment later he walked over to the body on the table, lifted the sheet and turned it back from the head, exposing a mass of dark hair and a thin face-cloth, beneath which the features showed with even sharper definition than before. Shading his eyes by interposing his free hand between them and the candle, he stood looking at his motionless companion with a serious and tranquil regard. Satisfied with his inspection, he pulled the sheet over the face again and returning to the chair, took some matches off the candlestick, put them in the side pocket of his sack-coat and sat down. He then lifted the

candle from its socket and looked at it critically, as if calculating how long it would last. It was barely two inches long; in another hour he would be in darkness. He replaced it in the candlestick and blew it out. It was late in the evening, almost midnight, indeed, and there had been no lack of punch. The gravest of the three, Dr. Helberson, was the host—it was in his rooms they sat. He was about thirty years of age; the others were even younger; all were physicians. Helberson, "is hereditary and incurable. One needs no more be ashamed of it than of the fact that he inherits, for example, an incapacity for mathematics, or a tendency to lie. The tendency to lie is one thing; lying is another. I am myself not conscious of it. Physicians and soldiers are of course more nearly free from it than others. Let us have in all the assassin classes. I have no money to back him, but he will back himself with loads of it. As for fear—I dare say he thinks it some cutaneous disorder, or possibly a particular kind of religious heresy. The outcome of this crazy conversation we have seen. III In extinguishing his meagre allowance of candle Mr. He may have thought, too, or half thought, that the darkness would be no worse at one time than another, and if the situation became insupportable it would be better to have a means of relief, or even release. At any rate it was wise to have a little reserve of light, even if only to enable him to look at his watch. No sooner had he blown out the candle and set it on the floor at his side than he settled himself comfortably in the arm-chair, leaned back and closed his eyes, hoping and expecting to sleep. In this he was disappointed; he had never in his life felt less sleepy, and in a few minutes he gave up the attempt. But what could he do? 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Then, with a long and strong expiration, his chest appeared to collapse, and with the great gasp with which he refilled his exhausted lungs the vertigo left him and he knew that so intently had he listened that he had held his breath almost to suffocation. The revelation was vexatious; he arose, pushed away the chair with his foot and strode to the centre of the room. But one does not stride far in darkness; he began to grope, and finding the wall followed it to an angle, turned, followed it past the two windows and there in another corner came into violent contact with the reading-stand, overturning it. It made a clatter that startled him. Having recovered that, he lighted it and instantly turned his eyes to the table, where, naturally, nothing had undergone any change. The reading-stand lay unobserved upon the floor: It did not yield and this seemed to afford him a certain satisfaction; indeed, he secured it more firmly by a bolt which he had not before observed. Returning to his chair, he looked at his watch; it was half-past nine. With a start of surprise he held the watch at his ear. It had not stopped. The candle was now visibly shorter. He again extinguished it, placing it on the floor at his side as before. Jarette was not at his ease; he was distinctly dissatisfied with his surroundings, and with himself for being so. The more Jarette condemned himself, the more reason he gave himself for condemnation; the greater the number of variations which he played upon the simple theme of the harmlessness of the dead, the more insupportable grew the discord of his emotions. Jarette heard behind him a light, soft sound of footfalls, deliberate, regular, successively nearer! IV Just before daybreak the next morning Dr. There was a silence for a few moments. If your friend had not irritated me by the contemptuous manner in which he treated my doubt of his endurance—a purely physical quality—and by the cool incivility of his suggestion that the corpse be that of a physician, I should not have gone on with it. If anything should happen we are ruined, as I fear we deserve to be. Mancher, then, had been as good as his promise; he was the "corpse. A mistake in that might make matters worse instead of better. Jarette in accordance with the terms of the mad wager. As they neared it they met a man running. Arrived at the house, they saw several persons entering in haste and excitement. In some of the dwellings near by and across the way the chamber windows were thrown up, showing a protrusion of heads. All heads were asking questions, none heeding the questions of the others. A few of the windows with closed blinds were

illuminated; the inmates of those rooms were dressing to come down. Exactly opposite the door of the house that they sought a street lamp threw a yellow, insufficient light upon the scene, seeming to say that it could disclose a good deal more if it wished. Helberson, calmly; "there may be need of one. The door was open; the street lamp opposite lighted the passage into which it opened. It was full of men. Some had ascended the stairs at the farther end, and, denied admittance above, waited for better fortune. All were talking, none listening. Suddenly, on the upper landing there was a great commotion; a man had sprung out of a door and was breaking away from those endeavoring to detain him. Down through the mass of affrighted idlers he came, pushing them aside, flattening them against the wall on one side, or compelling them to cling to the rail on the other, clutching them by the throat, striking them savagely, thrusting them back down the stairs and walking over the fallen.

A college grad student challenges his professor to prove that he fears the "dead".

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of the fact that he inherits, for example, an incapacity for mathematics, or a tendency to lie. The tendency to lie is one thing; lying is another. I am myself not conscious of it. Physicians and soldiers are, of course, more nearly free from it than others. Let us have in all the assassin classes. As for fear--I dare say he thinks it some cutaneous disorder, or, possibly, a particular kind of religious heresy. The outcome of this crazy conversation we have seen. III In extinguishing his meagre allowance of candle Mr. He may have thought, too, or half-thought, that the darkness would be no worse at one time than another, and if the situation became insupportable, it would be better to have a means of relief, or even release. At any rate, it was wise to have a little reserve of light, even if only to enable him to look at his watch. No sooner had he blown out the candle and set it on the floor at his side than he settled himself comfortably in the arm-chair, leaned back and closed his eyes, hoping and expecting to sleep. In this he was disappointed; he had never in his life felt less sleepy, and in a few minutes he gave up the attempt. But what could he do? He could not go groping about in the absolute darkness at the risk of bruising himself--at the risk, too, of blundering against the table and rudely disturbing the dead. We all recognise their right to lie at rest, with immunity from all that is harsh and violent. Jarette almost succeeded in making himself believe that considerations of that kind restrained him from risking the collision and fixed him to the chair. While thinking of this matter he fancied that he heard a faint sound in the direction of the table--what kind of sound he could hardly have explained. He did not turn his head. Why should he--in the darkness? But he listened--why should he not? And listening he grew giddy and grasped the arms of the chair for support. There was a strange ringing in his ears; his head seemed bursting; his chest was oppressed by the constriction of his clothing. He wondered why it was so, and whether these were symptoms of fear. Suddenly, with a long and strong expiration, his chest appeared to collapse, and with the great gasp with which he refilled his exhausted lungs the vertigo left him, and he knew that so intently had he listened that he had held his breath almost to suffocation. The revelation was vexatious; he arose, pushed away the chair with his foot, and strode to the centre of the room. But one does not stride far in darkness; he began to grope, and, finding the wall, followed it to an angle, turned, followed it past the two windows, and there in another corner came into violent contact with the reading-stand, overturning it. It made a clatter which startled him. Jarette, feeling the floor for the candle. Having recovered that, he lighted it and instantly turned his eyes to the table, where, naturally, nothing had undergone any change. The reading-stand lay unobserved upon the floor; he had forgotten to "put it to rights. It did not yield, and this seemed to afford him a certain satisfaction; indeed, he secured it more firmly by a bolt which he had not before observed. Returning to his chair, he looked at his watch; it was half-past nine. With a start of surprise he held the watch at his ear. It had not stopped. The candle was now visibly shorter. He again extinguished it, placing it on the floor at his side as before. Jarette was not at his ease; he was distinctly dissatisfied with his surroundings, and with himself for being so. The more Jarette condemned himself, the more reason he gave himself for condemnation; the greater the number of variations which he played upon the simple theme of the harmlessness of the dead, the more horrible grew the discord of his emotions. Jarette heard behind him a light, soft sound of footfalls, deliberate, regular, and successively nearer! IV Just before daybreak the next morning Dr. There was a silence for a few moments. If your friend had not irritated me by the contemptuous manner in which he treated my doubt of his endurance--a purely physical quality--and by the cool incivility of his suggestion that the corpse be that of a physician, I should not have gone on with it. If anything should happen, we are ruined, as I fear we deserve to be. Even if the matter should be taking a serious turn--of which I am not at all afraid--Mancher has only to resurrect himself and explain matters. Mancher, then, had been as good as his promise; he was the "corpse. A mistake in that might make matters worse instead of better. Jarette, in accordance with the terms of the mad wager. As they neared it, they met a man running. Arrived at the house, they saw several persons entering in haste and excitement. In some of the dwellings near by and across the way the chamber windows were thrown up, showing a protrusion of heads. All heads were asking questions, none heeding the questions of the others. A few of the windows with closed blinds were illuminated; the inmates of those rooms were dressing to come down. Exactly opposite the door of the house which they sought a street-lamp threw a yellow, insufficient light upon the scene, seeming to say that it could disclose a good deal more if it wished. Helberson calmly; "there may be need of one. The door was open; the street lamp opposite lighted the passage into which it

opened. It was full of people. Some had ascended the stairs at the farther end, and, denied admittance above, waited for better fortune. All were talking, none listening. Suddenly, on the upper landing there was a great commotion; a man had sprung out of a door and was breaking away from those endeavouring to detain him. Down through the mass of affrighted idlers he came, pushing them aside, flattening them against the wall on one side, or compelling them to cling by the rail on the other, clutching them by the throat, striking them savagely, thrusting them back down the stairs, and walking over the fallen. His clothing was in disorder, he was without a hat. His eyes, wild and restless, had in them something more terrifying than his apparently superhuman strength. His face, smooth-shaven, was bloodless, his hair snow white.

*A Horseman In The Sky: A Watcher By The Dead: The Man And The Snake [Ambrose Bierce] on calendrierdelascience.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. This is a reproduction of a book published before*

Contents [show] Chapter I In an upper room of an unoccupied dwelling in that part of San Francisco known as North Beach lay the body of a man under a sheet. The hour was near nine in the evening; the room was dimly lighted by a single candle. Although the weather was warm, the two windows, contrary to the custom which gives the dead plenty of air, were closed and the blinds drawn down. The furniture of the room consisted of but three pieces--an arm-chair, a small reading-stand, supporting the candle, and a long kitchen-table, supporting the body of the man. All these, as also the corpse, would seem to have been recently brought in, for an observer, had there been one, would have seen that all were free from dust, whereas everything else in the room was pretty thickly coated with it, and there were cobwebs in the angles of the walls. Under the sheet the outlines of the body could be traced, even the features, these having that unnaturally sharp definition which seems to belong to faces of the dead, but is really characteristic of those only that have been wasted by disease. From the silence of the room one would rightly have inferred that it was not in the front of the house, facing a street. It really faced nothing but a high breast of rock, the rear of the building being set into a hill. As a neighbouring church clock was striking nine with an indolence which seemed to imply such an indifference to the flight of time that one could hardly help wondering why it took the trouble to strike at all, the single door of the room was opened and a man entered, advancing toward the body. As he did so the door closed, apparently of its own volition; there was a grating, as of a key turned with difficulty and the snap of the lock bolt as it shot into its socket. A sound of retiring footsteps in the passage outside ensued, and the man was, to all appearance, a prisoner. Advancing to the table, he stood a moment looking down at the body; then, with a slight shrug of the shoulders, walked over to one of the windows and hoisted the blind. The darkness outside was absolute, the panes were covered with dust, but, by wiping this away, he could see that the window was fortified with strong iron bars crossing it within a few inches of the glass, and imbedded in the masonry on each side. He examined the other window. It was the same. He manifested no great curiosity in the matter, did not even so much as raise the sash. If he was a prisoner he was apparently a tractable one. Having completed his examination of the room, he seated himself in the arm-chair, took a book from his pocket, drew the stand with its candle alongside and began to read. The man was young--not more than thirty--dark in complexion, smoothed-shaven, with brown hair. His face was thin and high-nosed, with a broad forehead and a "firmness" of the chin and jaw which is said by those having it to denote resolution. The eyes were grey and steadfast, not moving except with definitive purpose. They were now for the greater part of the time fixed upon his book, but he occasionally withdrew them and turned them to the body on the table, not, apparently, from any dismal fascination which, in such circumstances, it might be supposed to exercise upon even a courageous person, nor with a conscious rebellion against the opposite influence which might dominate a timid one. He looked at it as if in his reading he had come upon something recalling him to a sense of his surroundings. Clearly this watcher by the dead was discharging his trust with intelligence and composure, as became him. After reading for perhaps a half-hour he seemed to come to the end of a chapter and quietly laid away the book. He then rose, and, taking the reading-stand from the floor, carried it into a corner of the room near one of the windows, lifted the candle from it, and returned to the empty fireplace before which he had been sitting. A moment later he walked over to the body on the table, lifted the sheet, and turned it back from the head, exposing a mass of dark hair and a thin face-cloth, beneath which the features showed with even sharper definition than before. Shading his eyes by interposing his free hand between them and the candle, he stood looking at his motionless companion with a serious and tranquil regard. Satisfied with his inspection, he pulled the sheet over the face again, and, returning to his chair, took some matches off the candlestick, put them in the side-pocket of his sack coat and sat down. He then lifted the candle from its socket and looked at it critically, as if calculating how long it would last. It was barely two inches long; in another hour he would be in darkness! He replaced it in the candlestick and blew it out. It was late in the evening, almost midnight,

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Chapter 7 : A Watcher by the Dead

A Watcher by the Dead by Ambrose Bierce. I. In an upper room of an unoccupied dwelling in the part of San Francisco known as North Beach lay the body of a man, under a sheet.

Chapter 8 : A Second Century of Creepy Stories by Hugh Walpole

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Chapter 9 : Ambrose Bierce's a Watcher by the Dead () - IMDb

Essays and criticism on Ambrose Bierce, including the works "The Haunted Valley", "A Watcher by the Dead", "The Death of Halpin Frayser", "Stanley Fleming's Hallucination.