

# **The Tell-Tale Meatloaf**

an original screenplay by Debbie Carty and Katie Davis  
based on "The Tell-Tale Heart" by Edgar Allan Poe

6/18/07

Bobby J. Buckley attached as "John"

INT. ATTENDANCE OFFICE - DAY

We see a scruffy, shaking boy with bloodshot eyes sitting in a completely dark room with a single spot light shining on him, this is JOHN.

John fidgets as he speaks to an unseen listener.

JOHN

True! - nervous- very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? The lunch bag had sharpened my senses- not destroyed, not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in Earth. I heard many things in hell. How then, am I mad? Harken! and observe how healthily- how calmly I can tell you the whole story.

Slowly the camera turns and we see that John in speaking to the serious, attentive assistant principal MR. IMBUSCH. Mr. Imbusch raises an eyebrow suspiciously in response to John's impending story.

INT. HALLWAY - PREVIOUS WEEK

John holds hands skipping with a smiling earnest boy clearly dressed by his mother, this is his friend ROB.

JOHN (V.O.)

Rob and I had been friends since fourth grade. Fisher Elementary, the good old days when we traded our Pokemon cards, when we battled our Crazy Bones, when we gave each other wet willys.

We see John lean over and give Rob a wet willy.

JOHN (V.O.)  
Okay, we still do that.

The boys whip out ping pong paddles from their back pockets and begin a light-hearted game of ping pong.

JOHN (V.O.)  
But those were the childhood days, when **everyone's** mother made them a nice delicious homemade lunch with love. Now it was just Rob's mom, the infamous Mrs. Cawley.

Rob smiling at John, casually serves him a nice easy ball. John misses the return.

JOHN  
Ahh man go easy on me, that Buff Chick from lunch is **not** sitting well.

ROB  
Buff chick man? What are you thinkin!? I wouldn't go two feet near that stuff! It's all natural food for me, straight from Mama Cawley's kitchen.

JOHN  
Sorry we don't all have meatloaf everyday for lunch.

ROB  
Delicious, scrumptuous, ketchupy, juicy...

John hits the ping pong ball unnecessarily hard, missing the table altogether. Rob seems oblivious to the fact that the game has intensified.

JOHN  
(annoyed)  
Yeah, we get it. Your mom makes a mean meatloaf. Maybe you'll let me try a piece some day.

ROB  
(laughing)  
I doubt it, man. That stuff is  
sacred.

Rob stops playing and tosses John the ping pong ball.

ROB  
(looking at his watch)  
Alright, I have to go, man. Dance  
Company practice starts in five,  
and this Swan Prince does not  
like to be late. Mom even packed  
me a pre-practice snack.

JOHN  
Meatloaf?

ROB  
You betcha.

Rob grins and piroettes away, leaving John alone at the ping pong  
table.

INT. JOHN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

John tosses and turns in his sleep. We hear his stomach growl.

JOHN (V.O.)  
It is impossible to say how  
first the idea entered my brain;  
but, once conceived, it haunted  
me day and night. Whenever I  
heard about that meatloaf, my  
tastebuds sizzled; and so by  
degrees, I made up my mind to  
take Rob's lunch.

John wakes up suddenly and sits bolt upright, breathing heavily.

INT. CLASSROOM - MORNING

John, dressed in all black sits next to Rob.

ROB  
(laughing)  
Nice get up today bud, gotta  
secret mission today or somethin?

JOHN  
(defensive)  
What? No man, I just like black  
okay?

ROB  
(laughing)  
Okay agent Johnny, chill.

John  
Yeah alright man, I'm gunna go  
hand my paper into guidance alright  
I'll be right back.

ROB  
Oh yeah! I almost forgot, wana  
turn mine in while you're there?

John  
Right... sure man.

John walks out the door with a suspicious smile. As he leaves the room, he crumples the guidance papers and surreptitiously tosses them into the recycling bin.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

John walks down the history hallway and stealthily approaches a locker. Looking left and right, he opens the locker and reaches inside. We see a neatly bagged lunch with a heart-shaped note taped to its front sitting at the top of the locker.

JOHN (V.O.)  
To think that there I was, opening  
the locker, little by little, and  
Rob not even to dream of my secret  
deeds or thoughts.

John walks quickly to his own locker only a few feet away and tosses the lunch inside. As he closes his locker, the heart note

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falls off of the lunch bag and floats to the ground. John, unaware of this, saunters off to class.

MONTAGE-- JOHN GLOATS

JOHN (V.O.)

Never before that day had I felt the extent of my own powers-- of my sagacity. I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph.

-- We see John sitting in math class. As the students around him talk to one another and take notes, John simply stares directly ahead, grinning to himself. He remains blissfully oblivious to the fact that a paper airplane has landed on his desk.

-- John, strutting to his next class, passes a calendar showing the school lunches offered that day. John pauses, backs up to read the menu, and then continues on his way to class, smiling and shaking his head.

-- John is once again seated, now in science class, with a huge smirk on his face. A neighboring student who is snacking on part of his own lunch leans towards John with his lunch bag outstretched, apparently offering John some of the food. John laughs scornfully, peering inside the bag and shaking his head. As he looks back towards the front of the class, the bell rings.

INT. JOHN'S LOCKER

John goes to open his locker, and he notices the pink heart paper for the first time. He bends down curiously to pick it up.

JOHN

(muttering to himself)  
Still getting notes from mommy,  
what is this Rob 7th grade?

INSERT - PAPER HEART NOTE

"Robbie Wobbie,"

BACK TO SCENE

John smirking begins reading the note hearing MRS. CAWLEY'S voice

MRS. CAWLEY (V.O.)  
You did so amazingly at your  
dance recital last night that  
I gave you an extra big squirt  
of ketchup today!

John's smirk fades and he glances around guiltily.

MRS. CAWLEY (V.O.)  
Hope you have a super duper day!  
Hugs and kisses! Love mommy.

Overwhelmed with guilt, John tears up the note and discards it on the ground.

John opens the locker and checks on the lunch bag. He peers inside and takes a sniff. Satisfied that the lunch is still secure, he shuts the locker and heads to class.

INT. CLASSROOM

The bell hasn't rung yet and the class is standing around talking. Rob seems preoccupied looking through his back pack and glancing around. John takes the seat next to him.

JOHN  
(trying to keep his cool)  
Hey Rob.

ROB  
(distracted)  
Ahh nothing much, you?

JOHN  
Umm... nothing? You okay?

ROB  
What? Ohh... yeah, it's just, well  
my lunch man... it's... missing.

John stares back blankly, trying to hide any emotion.

ROB

(uneasily)

Yeah, I know it's not a big deal.  
Happens all the time right? Just...  
well it's never happened to me  
before. I don't know I probably  
left it in my last class, yeah  
thats probably it...

JOHN

Yeah, that's probably it bud, you're  
always forgetting stuff

ROB

(voice cracking)

Yeah, I know, it's just I never  
forget meatloaf. I mean I don't  
know, lunch without a homemade  
sandwich just wouldn't be right...

Tears start welling up in Rob's eyes as he starts loudly whimpering.

A young, tall history teacher who has been standing at the front of the class taking attendance looks over at Rob with an exasperated expression. This is MR. WHITENHALL

MR. WHITENHALL

Rob you alright there son?

A tall long haired boy clad in a vibrant hawaiian shirt perks up from a nearby desk. This is ROB MCCARTHY.

ROB MCCARTHY

Eh, you know, its been kind of a  
hard day, I have a lot of stuff  
going on and--

MR. WHITENHALL

Ahh no, not you Robo Mac, I was  
asking the other Rob-- the one  
curled up in the fetal position.

Rob Cawley, who is indeed sitting in the fetal position, abruptly stands up.



ROB  
(through spurts of tears)  
I need to be excused please. Bathroom.

Before even waiting for a response, Rob bursts out the room whimpering quietly.

WHITENHALL  
(sarcastically)  
Alright sure go right ahead. Anyways class, take out your books, outline time baby!

The class groans.

WHITENHALL  
Ahh buck up! It's exciting stuff we'll be reading about the Treaty of Paris, and how the resultant peace was really the outcome of the meatloaf of major powers.

Startled, John shoots his head up.

JOHN  
Wait what? The meatloaf of who?

The class turns around, giggling and giving John a puzzled look.

WHITENHALL  
Umm... no John? The *meeting* of the major powers. Jeeze, someone's hungry.

JOHN  
(blushing)  
Right, right sorry.

The students begin reading their textbooks and taking notes. John looks down into his book and skims the page, happening upon a painting of a colonial woman.

INSERT - MRS. CAWLEY

We see a picture of a woman who bears a striking resemblance to Rob in a colonial woman's clothes and a wig holding a pan of meatloaf.

BACK TO SCENE

John recoils in horror. He quickly looks back at the picture.

INSERT - REAL PHOTO

We now see a picture of Martha Washington.

BACK TO SCENE

Shocked, John glances around the room to see if any other students have experienced a similar phenomenon. When he recognizes that no one else appears alarmed, John begins reading the text and scribbling furtively in his notebook.

Mr. Whitenhall, walking between the rows of desks, stops next to John and picks up John's notebook.

MR. WHITENHALL

(bemused)

Now, Mr. Myers, I understand the anticipation for lunch. I myself am partial to the Mexicorn. But, unfortunately, writing "Meatloaf" two hundred and fifty times does not an outline make.

INSERT - THE OUTLINE

We see a page notes, set up in outline form, but with every line simply reading "Meatloaf."

BACK TO SCENE

John, deeply confused, stares blankly back at Mr. Whitenhall.

MR. WHITENHALL

Well, I'm going to be collecting these, so you'll need ketchup.

JOHN

(alarmed)

What?

MR. WHITENHALL

Yeah, you'll need to catch up with the rest of the class if you plan to have anything to hand in. Some kids have already finished their outlines.

Mr. Whitenhall taps on John's desk and then continues to make his rounds between the desks.

John, stunned, watches him walk away.

INT. MATH CLASSROOM

John shifts anxiously in his seat, his eyes darting from one student to the next, as the teacher, MS. MILNE, writes on the board.

JOHN (V.O.)

And there they were, the reminders of my terrible deed. I could not have imagined them, for have I not already told you that what you mistake for madness is but over acuteness of the senses. And yet, the dark memory of my sin remained.

Ms. Milne steps away from the board, revealing an algebraic equation.

MS. MILNE

Therefore, if you take the four variables and divide them by their common factor, you are left with  $M+E+A+T$ .

John slumps down in his seat.

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INT. LIBRARY

John sits and studies at a desk, glancing up every few minutes to look at the students seated nearby. He absent-mindedly chews his pencil.

JOHN (V.O.)

No, no, they could not possibly know. There was nothing to wash out— no stain of any kind— no crumbs whatever. I had been too wary for that, ha ha.

A LIBRARIAN approaches the desk, pushing a cart of books.

LIBRARIAN

Well hi there. If you're not busy, we just got some more books in you might want to look at.

The librarian reaches into her book cart and removes three books.

LIBRARIAN

We have *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, *Meeting the Love of Your Life*, and *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair. It's about meat.

John stares back at the librarian with horror.

JOHN

I need to go get a drink of water.

John gets up and walks out of the library

LIBRARIAN

Alrighty, well, you think about those choices.

INT. FRONT LOBBY — CONTINUOUS

John, walking quickly and muttering to himself under his breath, heads towards the water fountains. However, he stops in front of the Nurse's office, distracted by the

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cries he hears coming from within the room. John covertly peers into the open room and sees Rob curled up in a chair in the corner of the room.

Rob, who has clearly been crying and who looks strangely unshaven, scowls at the patient school nurse, MRS. NASH, from the corner of the room.

MRS. NASH

Now, come on Rob, how about a PB and J? I can get you a PB and J.

ROB

(hysterical)

No!! I don't want a PB and J!

MRS. NASH

But it'll be delicious—

ROB

(knocking over box of bandaids)

Lies!!

Shocked at Rob's condition, John quietly backs away from the door and turns as if to head back towards the library.

Suddenly, the door to the main office opens and Mr. Imbusch walks out, whistling cheerily to himself. He sees John and immediately makes a beeline for him.

MR. IMBUSCH

Well hello there, Mr. Myers, how are you? Why might you be out of class? Admiring some of our great student art work?

The pair look up to see multiple abstract paintings that bear an uncanny resemblance to meatloaves.

JOHN

(uneasily)

Oh, I'm fine, Mr. Imbusch, I was just heading off to my, um, locker. And how are you, sir?

MR. IMBUSCH

I'm well, thank you. Its been an eventful day; I'm just loafing around, you know. Why, Mr. Myers, are you sure you're all right?

We see that John has begun to sweat profusely, and he wipes his forehead with his sleeve as he shakes his head and laughs unconvincingly.

JOHN

Oh, yeah, I'm super.

MR. IMBUSCH

Well, alrighty then, you had better head off to your locker if you plan on making it to third lunch on time.

John nods and begins walking quickly towards the art wing.

INT. ART WING - CONTINUOUS

John scurries through the art wing, still sweating a great deal, and looking around himself in terror.

JOHN (V.O.)

I had to check, had to be certain that the lunch was still there, that it had not been found and removed. I could feel myself growing pale. My head ached and I fancied a ringing in my ears.

INT. STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

John rushes up the stairs to the history wing, passing flyers to the upcoming "Math Meat" and a meeting of the "WHS Grill Team".

JOHN (V.O.)

I blocked my ears, but still the ringing continued, gaining definiteness-- until, at length, I found that the noise was not

within my ears.

INT. HISTORY HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Breathless, John arrives at the top of the stairs. We can now hear a soft but distinct beating. John cautiously approaches his locker. As he approaches, the beating becomes louder.

JOHN (V.O.)

It was a low, dull, quick sound— much such a sound as a watch makes when it is smothered at the bottom of a backpack. I had to see the source of this wicked beating.

John violently wrenches open the locker. Inside, we see Rob's lunch bag, throbbing ever so slightly. Taped to the front of the bag is the discarded heart note, which is once again whole.

John's face contorts with horror and rage, and he slams the locker shut. He begins to run through the hallway as the bell for lunch rings.

JOHN (V.O.)

Oh God! What could I do? It was there, taunting me, threatening to divulge my secret!

The halls fill up with students as John reaches the end of the History wing hallway and runs down the flight of stairs to the English wing.

INT. ENGLISH HALLWAY

John emerges into the English wing and pushes his way through swarms of students. He continues to sweat, his eyes darting everywhere. The sound of the beating lunch continues, while the students talk amongst themselves, oblivious to John's terror.

JOHN (V.O.)

The beating grew louder-  
louder- louder! And still the  
students chatted pleasantly,  
and smiled. Was it possible  
they heard not? Almighty-  
God!- no, no! They heard!-  
they suspected, they *knew!*-  
they were making a mockery  
of my horror!- this I thought,  
and this I think.

John reaches the end of the English hallway and begins down  
the staircase to the doors leading outside.

INT. STAIRCASE TO OUTSIDE - CONTINUOUS

John pushes through the students, tripping on a stair and  
then continuing forward with increased speed.

JOHN (V.O.)

But anything was better than  
this agony! Anything was more  
tolerable than this derision!

John reaches the back doors and bursts outside.

EXT. BEHIND THE SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

John runs past students on their way to lunch.

JOHN

I could bear those hypocritical  
smiles no longer! I felt that  
I must scream or die! and now-  
again!-listen! louder! louder!  
*louder!*

INT. CAFETERIA - CONTINUOUS

John throws open the doors to the cafeteria, which is now  
filled with students and teachers, and falls to his knees.

JOHN

(shrieking)

I did it! I admit the deed-  
break open the locker! there,



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there!— it is the beating of  
his mother's meatloaf!

INT. FRONT LOBBY — LATER IN THE DAY

We see Rob McCarthy walking from the library. He pauses in front of the Attendance office and turns to wait for some one to catch up with him.

ROB MCCARTHY  
Come on, man, less eating,  
more walking. I am not  
going to be late for Dance  
Company again. Last time,  
those girls made me wear  
those tights around town.

We see Rob Cawley emerge from the library, happily munching on a sandwich.

ROB  
(through bites)  
Sorry man, but today was  
pretty traumatizing, and  
I have to savor every  
taste of this delicious  
loaf to make up for the  
time lost looking for it.

ROB MCCARTHY  
You finally found your lunch?  
Where was it?

ROB  
I left it in physics. Go  
figure. I was really worried  
for a while there.

ROB MCCARTHY  
I don't blame you. But at  
least you have it now: I  
never found mine today.

The two boys begin to walk away towards the art wing.

ROB  
That stinks.

ROB MCCARTHY

Yeah, kind of, especially since I think my mom wrote me a note today.

ROB

Your mom still writes you notes? Lucky duck.

ROB MCCARTHY

Whatever, it was tuna or something not very good anyways. Hey, do you think someone could have stolen it?

ROB

Eh, unlikely man.

As the boys walk away, we see a shot of the inside of the Attendance office, where John is seated in front of Imbusch, rocking steadily back and forth and laughing with a wild expression.

