TELL TALE HEART

Written by

Brad Harris

Based on the short story "Tell Tale Heart" by Edger Allen Poe

Copyright (c) 2014 This screenplay may not be used or reproduced without the express written permission of the author.
INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

Soldiers sleep in bunks along the interior of the barracks.

Except for one man. This one man stays awake.

PRIVATE JAMES, 25, Shaved head, lays in his bunk awake, writing in a journal.

PRIVATE JAMES (V.O.)
Dear journal, I’m nervous. Have been for a while. Many people would call me mad. But the disease I have has sharpened my sense, not dulled. I can hear things in the heavens and the earth and even in hell.

INT. BARRACKS - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Private James is inside the barracks scrubing the floors with a toothbrush.

PRIVATE JAMES (V.O.)
It’s impossible to tell when the idea first entered my brain. It haunted me day and night. No objection, no passion.

DRILL SERGEANT LEONARD, tall and muscular, had entered.

DRILL SERGEANT LEONARD
Damn it private, you’re doing it all wrong. Go back and do it again!

PRIVATE JAMES (V.O.)
I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. But his eye.

Drill Sergeant Leonard's right eye is a strange sight, it’s has cat like features.

PRIVATE JAMES (V.O.)
He had the eye of a vulture. Pale blue. Whenever it fell on me, my blood ran cold.

DRILL SERGEANT LEONARD
What the hell are you doing staring at me private, you need to get up and start over now!

Private James gets up quickly and goes to the other side of the barracks to start over.
INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

Private James continued to lay in his bunk writing in his journal.

PRIVATE JAMES (V.O.)
So I made up my mind to kill the old man and rid myself of him and that eye forever.

INT. BARRACK’S HALLWAY - NIGHT

Private James slowly creeps along the hallway up to the drill sergeant’s door.

PRIVATE JAMES (V.O.)
At this point, you would think I’m mad, but you should have seen me.
No mad man could have prepared this deed so easily.

Private James slowly opens the door using only a flashlight for light.

DRILL SERGEANT’S ROOM - NIGHT

Private James sneaks the flashlight and his head through the door.

PRIVATE JAMES (V.O.)
For a whole week straight, I looked in on the old man sleeping. Every time, his eye was shut and I couldn’t see the vulture eye.

Drill Sergeant Leonard is sleeping in a cot in the room.

PRIVATE JAMES (V.O.)
But on the eighth night, I had to be a little more cautious so as not to arouse suspicion. I wasn’t feeling quite right about this night.

Private James shut off the flashlight as he crept the rest of his body through the door.

A gust of wind blew through the window.

Private James slowly got closer to the bed. He went to turn on the flashlight but his finger slipped and he dropped the flashlight on the floor.
Drill Sergeant Leonard popped up as Private James dropped.

DRILL SERGEANT LEONARD
Who’s there?

Silence.

PRIVATE JAMES (V.O.)
For an entire hour, I didn’t move.
And for that entire hour, I didn’t hear him lay down. I just stayed silent as I hid under his cot.

Drill Sergeant Leonard finally lays down, but he doesn’t close his eyes at all.

PRIVATE JAMES (V.O.)
I could hear his heart beating like the ever sounding clock on the wall. I could hear the terror in his chest. It was time, I couldn’t wait a minute longer.

Private James turns on his flashlight and pops out from under Drill Sergeant Leonard’s bunk.

Leonard tries to scream but James throws the bunk over Leonard and uses the mesh to silence Leonard’s voice. Private James pulls out a knife and cuts Leonard’s throat through the mesh of the army cot.

James stayed on top of Leonard until he stopped moving. James then removed the cot and put his hand over Leonard’s heart to see if his heart was still beating.

James smiled when he found there was no heartbeat.

PRIVATE JAMES (V.O.)
No heartbeat. He was finally dead and that evil eye would bother me no more.

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

Private James continues to write in his journal.

PRIVATE JAMES (V.O.)
If you still think I’m crazy, you won’t when I tell you how I concealed the body.
INT. DRILL SERGEANT’S ROOM – NIGHT

Private James has an ax and is seen chopping something.

PRIVATE JAMES (V.O.)
I chopped up the body. Head, arms, and legs. I had been careful not to let any blood spill anywhere as I used a tub to catch it all.

Private James pulls some loose boards in the floor up. He then places the tub along with the body parts, under the floor panels and then replaced them.

PRIVATE JAMES (V.O.)
I took up 3 planks in the floor and placed all the evidence there. I then replaced them so slick, no one would ever notice they had been messed with at all.

Suddenly a distant KNOCK was heard.

James went to the window and noticed some military police officers downstairs.

PRIVATE JAMES (V.O.)
I went downstairs to greet the men. What did I have to fear?

INT. BARRACKS – NIGHT

Private James opens the front door to the Barracks.

3 MP officers stand on the other side of the door.

MP OFFICER #1
We got a report from the neighbor about some screams. We need to come in and check it out.

Private James smiles and leads them in.

INT. BARRACK’S HALLWAY – NIGHT

Private James walks down the hallway.

MP OFFICER #1
Where’s the Drill Sergeant on duty?
PRIVATE JAMES
Not sure! I’ve been on fireguard duty and not once did I see him.

Private James leads the officers to the Drill Sergeant’s door.

INT. DRILL SERGEANT’S ROOM - NIGHT

Private James leads the officers into the room and the officers search the room.

Private James continues to notice the rug placed in the middle of the room.

PRIVATE JAMES (V.O.)
I showed them around the entire barracks. When they were satisfied with their search, they desired to question since I was awake.

Private James grabs a chair and places it on top of the rug in the room.

PRIVATE JAMES
You guys want a chair to relax?

The Officer in charge nods as James grabs 3 foldable chairs out of a nearby closet.

James sets up the chairs in front of him. The officers take their seats. MP Officer #1 begins asking the questions while the officer next to him begins to take notes.

MP OFFICER #1
So as I said before, we were dispatched to this location because your neighbor heard a scream.

PRIVATE JAMES
I should have told you earlier. That was me! I had just woken up from a dream and it took me by surprise.

MP OFFICER #1
But you were on fireguard duty.

PRIVATE JAMES
Yes, I fell asleep on duty like an idiot. I was really surprised the drill sergeant didn’t come out here and hem me up for it too.

(MORE)
But as you can see, he isn’t here. Strange huh?

MP OFFICER #1

Indeed.

The officer continued to question Private James, there words can’t be made out anymore.

INT. BARRACKS – NIGHT

Private James smiles as he shows the MP Officers out the door.

PRIVATE JAMES (V.O.)
The MPs were satisfied as they left the barracks that night.

Private James goes to his bunk and begins writing in his journal.

PRIVATE JAMES (V.O.)
But as this night continues on, I can hear a distinct ringing in my ears. One that is agonizingly loud.

Private James grabs his ears. He begins breathing heavily.

Private James gets out of his bunk and starts pacing the floor back and forth really quickly.

PRIVATE JAMES (V.O.)
Was it possible that they suspected something? No they couldn’t have. But something wasn’t right inside of me.

Private James drops to the floor and starts to pound on it.

PRIVATE JAMES (V.O.)
This was agony. Anything would be better than this suffering.

Private James ran to the door and flung it open.

PRIVATE JAMES
I DID IT! Tear up the floor in the Drill Sergeant’s room and there you shall find the body of the man in charge here.
INT. DRILL SERGEANT’S ROOM - NIGHT

The military police tear up the planks in the floor and are completely horrified by what they see.

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

The MPs are handcuffing Private James as they escort the Private out of the door.

INT. WHITE ROOM

Private James is sitting in the corner of the room in an all white straight jacket.

Private James is writing in his journal still.

PRIVATE JAMES

So that’s why I am here writing in this journal. To tell you my story. Do I regret my decision...Maybe! But regardless I’m here. Sincerely Robert B. James.

FADE OUT:

THE END!