

PARANOIA

Written By

Jon David Griffin

Based on the short story "The Tell-Tale Heart"

by

Edgar Allan Poe

120 East Price Street  
Linden NJ 07036  
(908) 956-3623  
jondgriffin3@gmail.com

A BLACK SCREEN

SUPER: "Paranoia"

EXT. THE SKY - NIGHT

Crickets chirp. The moon is full and the stars adorn the sky.

EXT. A HOME IN NEW JERSEY - NIGHT

A coroner's truck is surrounded by police cars.

A surgical-gloved coroner awkwardly escorts a severed arm to the back of said truck.

Then, seconds later, JON BUNDY, a young black male, is handcuffed and led out by an officer toward a police car.

JON (V.O.)

While it was true that I am  
nervous, why was I told I am  
paranoid?

The police officer and Jon stop beside the police car. The police officer puts Jon in the back seat and CLOSES the door as Jon looks out of the window.

Jon looks sad and a tear forms in his eye and rolls down his cheek.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

This feeling has improved my  
senses-not made them problematic-  
not made them questionable. Above  
all, my sense of hearing was acute.

Another coroner comes out with a chest in his surgical gloved hands.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I heard all things up above and  
here on Earth; including my mind  
and soul. I also heard many things  
down in Satan's home. How am I  
paranoid?

Jon continues to look out the window with a frown on his face.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Listen and watch how sane-how  
calmly I can tell you the entire  
story.

INT. JON'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Jon sits on his couch as he reads a book in silence. Next to the couch is a small table with a lamp on it and the light is really bright. The floor is hard wood. The repeated TICK-TOCK of the grandfather clock is heard.

JON (V.O.)  
I really can't say how first the  
idea had entered my brain; but once  
it was well thought out, it scared  
me all day and all night. Objection  
there was none. Passion there was  
none. I really cared deeply for the  
Old Man. He has never done me  
wrong. He had never insulted me in  
any way. I had no desire for his  
wealth; no matter how large or how  
little.

Jon looks up from his book with a concerned look on his face.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
I think the thing that made me  
carry out the horrible deed was his  
eye! Yes, it was the man's eye!

INT. THE LINK SET - NIGHT

The OLD MAN stands and breaks the fourth wall. He has blue eyes and the right eye looks like the eye of a vulture.

A slow advance on the Old Man's vulture-like eye.

JON (V.O.)  
One of his eyes was similar to the  
eye of a vulture...a pale blue eye,  
with a film over it.  
(scoffs)  
Whenever he looked at me with his  
monstrosity, my blood ran cold and  
did so by degrees...very slowly...I  
made up my mind to take the old  
man's life and rid myself of the  
evil eye forever.

The Old Man's eye looks scary and it does resemble a vulture's eye.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Now, here is what I am saying: You say that I'm paranoid. Men who are paranoid don't know a fuckin' thing. You're wrong. You should have seen me earlier.

INT. THE OLD MAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

SUPER: "Later that night"

Jon peeks through the partly opened door and he clicks on the flashlight and as it comes on, he still stands in place.

Jon's brown eyes are shocked at what he sees.

Jon stands in place in the partly opened door.

JON (V.O.)

You should have seen how carefully I walked over to him...with what caution...with what foresight...with what dissimulation I went to work.

Then, he slowly opens it and walks over to the sleeping Old Man with the flashlight turned on.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. And every night, about midnight, I turned the knob of his door and opened it...oh so gently! As I watched my elderly house guest sleep, I noticed the vulture's eye was closed and so it was impossible to do the deed; for it was not the old man who vexed me. What vexed me was his evil eye.

Jon looks silently at the elderly man sleeping.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And every morning, when the day broke, I went boldly into the bedroom, and spoke bravely to him, calling him by name in a hearty tone, and asking how he passed the night.

(MORE)

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 So you see, he would have been a very profound old man, indeed, to suspect that every night, I looked upon him while he slept.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JON'S HALLWAY - NIGHT

Jon slowly and quietly walks toward the bedroom door.

SUPER: "The eighth night"

JON (V.O.)  
 Upon the eighth night, I was more than usually cautious in opening the door. A watch's minute hand moved more quickly than mine. Never before that night had I felt the extent of my own powers...of my sagacity. I could hardly contain my feelings of triumph.

Jon stops at the bedroom door.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 To think that there I was...  
 (he opens the door slowly)  
 ...opening the door ever so slowly and the old man never suspected my secret deeds or thoughts.

INT. THE OLD MAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jon slowly peeks his head in the room and looks toward the Old Man in silence.

JON (V.O.)  
 I slowly peeked inside and watched the old man in deafening silence.

Jon lets out a small chuckle MOS.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 I fairly chuckled at the idea...

The Old Man moves on the bed, but his sleep goes completely undisturbed.

Jon still peeks his head into the room.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
...and perhaps he heard me; for he moved on the bed suddenly, as if startled. Now, you may think that I drew back...but no. His room was pitch black...

The blinds are all closed.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
...for the blinds were closed for fear of robbers...and so I knew that he could not see the opening of the door...

Jon slowly OPENS the door and still peeks his head inside the room.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
...and I kept pushing it open, slowly. Slowly. I had my head in and I was about to turn on the flashlight in my hand, but my fist softly hit the wall instead.

The Old Man springs up in the bed in shock.

OLD MAN  
Who's there?

Jon remains silent.

JON (V.O.)  
I kept quite still and said nothing.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE OLD MAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jon still peeks his head inside the room in complete silence.

SUPER: "An hour later"

JON (V.O.)  
For a whole hour, I did not move a muscle or speak a word, and in the meantime, I did not hear him lie down.

The Old Man still sits up in the bed.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 He was still sitting up in the bed listening; just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the impending death that was to befall my old house guest.

ON JON

He looks toward the Old Man with a little fear.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 Presently, I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not the groan of pain or of grief. Oh no! It was the low stifled sound that arise from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe.

(sighs sadly)  
 I knew the sound too well. Many a night, just at midnight, when the whole world slept, it had welled up from my own chest, deepening with its dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted me. I say I knew it well.

The Old Man lays down in the bed.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 I knew what the Old Man felt and I pitied him, although I chuckled at heart. I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first slight noise, when he had turned in the bed.

Jon is full of fear at this point.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been trying to fancy them causeless, but he could not. He had probably been saying to himself--

OLD MAN (V.O.)  
 It's nothing but the wind blowing a tree branch against the window.

JON (V.O.)  
 Or--

OLD MAN (V.O.)

It is only a mouse crossing the floor.

JON (V.O.)

Or--

OLD MAN (V.O.)

It is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp.

JON (V.O.)

Yes, he has been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions; but he had found all in vain.

Jon turns on the flashlight in his hand and shines it on the Old Man's back, which is covered up.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

All in vain; because Death, in approaching him, had stalked with his black shadow before him and enveloped the victim.

(a little afraid)

And it was the mournful influence of the unperceived shadow that caused him to feel...although he neither saw nor heard...to feel the presence of my head within the room.

Jon slowly enters the room and walks over to the Old Man with the flashlight and shines the light on the Old Man's face.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

When I had waited a long time, very patiently, without bearing him lie down, the light from my flashlight shone on the vulture eye.

THE OLD MAN'S EYE

The light from the flashlight shines on it. It is wide open.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It was open. Wide, wide open and I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I saw it with perfect distinctness.

(MORE)

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It was all a dull blue, with a hideous well over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones; but I could see nothing else of the Old Man's face or person: for I had directed the light as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned eye.

Jon looks at the Old Man with a little anger, for he has hatred toward the Old Man's vulture-eye. Then, he hears a sound among the silence. He tries to search for the sound with his eyes, but his body is motionless.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And now, have I not told you that what you've mistaken for madness is but over-acuteness of the senses? Now, I say, there came to my ears a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when it is enveloped in cotton. I knew that sound well too. It was the beating of the Old Man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But even yet, I refrained and kept still. I barely breathed. I tried steadily I could maintain the light upon the eye. Meantime, the hellish beating of the heart increased. It grew quicker and quicker and louder and louder every instant. The Old Man's terror must have been extreme! It grew louder, I say, louder every moment! Do you mark me well? I have told you that I am nervous; so I am. And now at the dead hour of the night, amid the dreadful silence of that old house, so strange a noise as this excited me to uncontrollable terror.

Jon turns off the flashlight and clicks on the lamp, which is on the night table near the bed. Then, goes back to staring at the Old Man.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Yet, for some minutes longer, I refrained and stood still. But the beating grew louder, louder!

A LOUD HEARTBEAT is heard. Jon looks at the Old Man with wide eyes and silence.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
I thought the heart must burst. And now, a new anxiety seized me...the sound would be heard by a neighbor! The Old Man's hour had come!

Then, as the LOUD HEARTBEAT STOPS, Jon lets out a loud yell. The Old man shrieks come.

EXT. THE NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jon's house and the neighbor's house stand next to each other. Jon's yell is still heard.

INT. THE NEIGHBOR'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

As Jon's yelling is heard, the NEIGHBOR, a middle aged Caucasian man, looks up from his book and hears the loud yelling. Then, he puts a bookmark in his book, puts it on the couch next to him, picks up his cell phone and calls the police.

NEIGHBOR  
Hello?...Is this the police?...Yes, I am calling because I heard a loud scream in the house next door to me. ...My neighbor has a house guest.

INT. THE OLD MAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Then, Jon drags the Old Man out of the bed and onto the floor.

JON (V.O.)  
In an instant, I dragged him to the floor...

Then, Jon picks up the side of the bed and pulls it over the Old Man and SLAMS it down on him.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
...and pulled the heavy bed over him.

Jon grins at the deed he had just performed.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
I then smiled gaily to find the  
deed so far done. But for many  
minutes...

The sound of a MUFFLED HEARTBEAT is heard.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
...The heart beat on with a muffled  
sound. This, however did not vex  
me; it would not be heard through  
the wall. At length, it ceased.

The MUFFLED HEARTBEAT STOPS.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
The Old Man was dead.

Jon lifts the side of the bed off the Old Man and sets the  
bed back on the floor and looks and stands up and looks down  
at the corpse.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
I removed the bed and examined the  
corpse.

The Old Man on the floor is dead and motionless. His vulture  
eye is still seen.

BACK TO JON

He still looks down at the Old Man's motionless body.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Yes, he was stone, stone dead.

Jon bends down on one knee and puts his hand on the Old Man's  
heart for a while.

Jon's hand is on the Old Man's heart.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
I placed my hand upon the heart and  
held it there many minutes. There  
was no pulsation. He was stone  
dead. His eye would trouble me no  
more.

Jon stands up straight as he continues to look down at the  
corpse in silence.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
If still you think I am paranoid,  
you will think so no longer when I  
describe the wise precautions I  
took for the concealment of the  
body.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. JON'S HALLWAY - NIGHT

Jon walks toward the Old Man's bedroom door with an ax in his right hand and he drags it on the floor behind him. He wears surgical gloves on both hands.

INT. THE OLD MAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jon OPENS the door, walks in while he drags the ax in his right hand behind him.

Then, he walks over to the side of the bed where the Old Man's dead body is. The lamp on the night table is still turned on.

Jon looks down at the body again.

THE OLD MAN'S DEAD BODY

It is still motionless and the Old Man's vulture eye is seen.

BACK TO JON

He continues to look down at the body, he holds the ax in both hands, raises it in the air and he quickly raises and lowers it repeatedly and dismembers the body.

JON (V.O.)  
First of all, I dismembered the  
corpse. I cut off the head and the  
arms and legs.

Then, after Jon finishes the violent deed, he drops the ax on the floor. Then, he picks up the severed arms and runs out of the room.

INT. JON'S HALLWAY - NIGHT

Jon runs through the hall with the severed arms and then:

## INT. THE CHAMBER - NIGHT

Jon gets down on his knees as he holds the arms in his hands. Then, he puts the arms on the floor. Then, he picks up three planks from the floor.

JON (V.O.)  
I then took up three planks from  
the flooring of the chamber...

## SERIES OF SHOTS - JON HIDES THE BODY PARTS

-- He picks up the arms and puts them in the floor.

-- He puts a pair of severed legs in the floor.

-- He puts the severed chest in the floor.

-- He puts the severed head in the floor.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
...and deposited all between the  
scathing.

Then, Jon puts the boards back on the floor. So good, in fact, that the floor looks like it hasn't been touched.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
I then replaced the boards so  
cleverly, so cunningly, that no  
human eye...not even his...could  
have detected anything wrong. There  
was nothing to wash out...no stain  
of any kind...no blood-spot  
whatever. I had been too wary for  
that. A tub had caught it all...ha,  
ha!

## INT. THE OLD MAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jon enters the room and walks over to the night table and picks up the ax. Then he turns off the lamp and a CLICK is heard. Then, he leaves the room with the ax in his surgical gloved right hand.

## INT. JON'S HALLWAY - NIGHT

Jon walks down the hall with the ax in his surgical gloved right hand and then, he stops at a closet door. He OPENS the door, puts the ax inside and he CLOSES the door.

INT. THE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jon enters the kitchen, takes off his surgical gloves and tosses them in the wastebasket. Then, he leaves the kitchen.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JON'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jon walks over to the couch, takes his seat on it, picks up his book and opens it to the bookmarked page and continues to read it. REPEATED TICK-TOCKS are heard.

SUPER: "4:00 A.M."

JON (V.O.)  
 When I had made an end of these  
 labors, it was four o'  
 clock...still dark as midnight.

THE GRANDFATHER CLOCK

It shows the four o' clock hour and the BELL DINGS four times. Then, the REPEATED TICK-TOCKS are heard and the pendulum sways left to right.

Jon looks toward his grandfather clock and then, as he goes back to his book:

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 As the bell sounded the hour, there  
 came a knocking at my door.

A series of KNOCKS are heard on the front door.

Jon closes his book, throws it on the couch, gets up off it and answers the door.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 I went to open it with a light  
 heart...for what had I now to fear?

As Jon OPENS the door:

EXT. THE PORCH - NIGHT

Three men, DETECTIVE RODRIGUEZ, DETECTIVE PORTER and LIEUTENANT COSGROVE stand outside on the porch. They look at Jon in silence and they wear their badges on their coats.

Jon looks at the cops in silence. The REPEATED TICK-TOCKS are heard.

JON  
(to the cops)  
May I help you?

BACK TO THE COPS

They still look at Jon in silence. Then, Lieutenant Cosgrove speaks to Jon in a calm voice.

COSGROVE  
Good morning. I'm Lieutenant  
Cosgrove and behind me are  
Detectives Rodriguez and Porter.  
May we come in?

JON  
Sure. Come on in.

INT. JON'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jon opens the door wider and the three cops enter the living room and they walk to the middle of the room as Jon CLOSES the door and walks toward them and stands a few feet away from them.

JON  
How may I help you, gentlemen?

COSGROVE  
We have gotten a call from your  
neighbor saying that he has heard a  
shriek coming from this house.

PORTER  
We were also informed that you have  
a house guest here.

Jon looks at the officers with a shocked face. Then, his eyes swerve from left to right and then:

JON  
Uh, the shriek came from me. I had  
a bad dream. The dream scared the  
bejesus out of me. And the house  
guest, the Old Man, was absent and  
nowhere to be found in the entire  
country.

Jon continues to talk to the officers MOS.

JON (V.O.)

I told the men that there was nothing to be concerned about and that the noises that my neighbor had heard were coming from me and me alone.

Then, the lieutenant speaks to Jon MOS.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Lieutenant Cosgrove asked me if he and his detectives can search the premises for any clues and I agreed and I told them to search and search well.

INT. THE OLD MAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jon and the three officers enter the room and they and Jon manually introduce the Old Man's treasures MOS.

JON (V.O.)

I brought them to his chamber. I showed them his treasures, secure, undisturbed.

Jon looks at the officers with a smile.

INT. THE CHAMBER - NIGHT

Then, Jon and the officers enter the chamber. Jon continues to smile at the officers. Then, he leaves the chamber, gets four folding chairs, two in each arm, and comes back into the chamber and gives a chair to the three officers and keeps one for himself.

JON (V.O.)

In the enthusiasm of my confidence, I brought the chairs into the room and desired them here to rest from their fatigues, while I myself, in the wild audacity of my perfect triumph...

Jon and the officers unfold their chairs. The officers place their seats next to each other and Jon places his seat where the body parts of the victim had been placed.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

...placed my own seat upon the very spot beneath which reposed the corpse of the victim.

The officers look at Jon with pleased looks on their faces.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
The officers were satisfied.

Jon looks at the officers with a proud look on his face.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
My manner had convinced them. I was  
singularly at ease.

The officers talk to each other and to Jon MOS and vice  
versa.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
They sat, and while I answered  
cheerily, they chatted familiar  
things. But ere long...

Jon stops talking and his proud look slowly turns into a  
frown.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
...I felt myself getting pale and  
wished them gone. My head ached and  
I fancied a ringing in my ears...

The officers still talk to each other MOS.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
...but they sat and still chatted.

Jon still has a frown on his face as the officers continue to  
talk to Jon MOS and vice versa.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
The ringing became more  
distinct...it continued and became  
more distinct: I talked more freely  
to get rid of the feeling: but it  
continued and gained definitiveness  
until, at length, I found that the  
noise was not within my ears.

Jon looks at the three officers with a small frown and he  
talks to them MOS.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
No doubt I now grew very pale...but  
I talked more fluently, and with a  
heightened voice. Yet the sound  
increased...and what could I do?  
(MORE)

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 It was a low, dull, quick  
 sound...much such a sound as a  
 watch makes when enveloped in  
 cotton.

The officers talk to Jon MOS as Jon gasps for air. A LOW  
 HEARTBEAT is heard.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 I gasped for breath...and yet the  
 officers heard it not.

JON'S MOUTH

It moves quickly as Jon talks quickly MOS.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 I talked more quickly...more  
 vehemently; but the noise steadily  
 increased.

The VOLUME OF THE HEARTBEAT GROWS A LITTLE LOUDER.

Jon gets up from his seat and continues to talk to the  
 officers MOS.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 I arose and argued about trifles,  
 in a high key and with violent  
 gesticulations, but the noise  
 steadily increased. Why would they  
 not be gone?

Jon paces the floor as the officers continue to talk amongst  
 themselves and smile at one another. The VOLUME OF THE  
 HEARTBEAT GROWS A LITTLE MORE LOUDER.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 I paced the floor to and fro with  
 heavy strides, as if excited to  
 fury by the observation of the  
 men...but the noise steadily  
 increased. Oh God! What could I do?  
 I foamed...I raved...I swore!  
 (he swings the chair and  
 it grates upon the  
 boards)  
 I swung the chair upon which I had  
 been sitting, and grated it upon  
 the boards, but the noise arose  
 over all and continually increased.

The VOLUME OF THE HEARTBEATS GROW LOUDER AND LOUDER.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 It grew louder...louder...louder!  
 And still the men 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. But anything was better than  
 this agony! Anything was better  
 than this derision! I could bear  
 those hypocritical smiles no  
 longer! I felt that I must scream  
 or die!...And now...again! Hark!  
 Louder! Louder! Louder! Louder!

The HEARTBEAT SUDDENLY STOPS. And then:

JON  
 (to the officers,  
 shrieking)  
 Villains! Dissemble no more!

The officers look at Jon in silent shock as he shouts and admits what he has done.

JON (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 I admit the deed!...Tear up the  
 planks!

Jon points at the planks where the body parts are.

JON (CONT'D)  
 Here! Here! It is the beating of  
 his hideous heart!

Detective Porter gets up from his seat, walks over to Jon, moves Jon's chair to the side, bends down on one knee, rips open the loose floorboards and is shocked at what he sees.

Then, Lieutenant Cosgrove and Detective Rodriguez get up and walk over to where Detective Porter is and they look inside the floor and they are shocked at what they see.

Then, as the three officers stand up, Detective Porter pulls out his cell phone, opens it up and dials a number and puts the phone to his ear. As he speaks to the person on the other line:

RODRIGUEZ  
 (he takes out a pair of  
 cuffs)  
 (MORE)

RODRIGUEZ (CONT'D)

Jon Bundy, we're going to have to place you under arrest for murder.

(he turns Jon around and puts the cuffs on his wrists)

You have the right to remain silent. You give up that right, anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to an attorney. If you do not have one, one will be awarded to you during questioning. Do you understand these right as I have read them to you?

JON

Yes, I do.

EXT. THE POLICE CAR - NIGHT (PRESENT NIGHT)

Jon sits in the police car in silence. The lights from the other police cars shine on the one that Jon is in. He looks out of the window with a frown.

A slow advance on Jon's eyes is seen.

JON (V.O.)

Well, that's my story. And I must say that tonight was not the night I was paranoid or full of fear. Tonight was the night I was free of the Old Man's hideous heartbeat forever. One question still remains unanswered: Will I be paranoid when the judge sentences me to an institution? I know I won't be paranoid...

FREEZE FRAME Jon's eyes.

JON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

...will I?

FADE TO BLACK.

SUPER: "THIS SHORT FILM IS DEDICATED TO SHIRLEY ANNE GRIFFIN, GROVER LEE GRIFFIN, CRAIG MAYERS AND BEULAH "NANA" MAYERS.

ROLL CREDITS.

FADE OUT.