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Shuddersome: Tales of Poe**

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# SHUDDERSOME: TALES OF POE

A PLAY IN ONE ACT ADAPTED BY  
*Lindsay Price*

FROM THE WORKS OF  
*Edgar Allan Poe*



*Shuddersome: Tales of Poe*

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## **Cutting and Casting**

There are three lengths of *Shuddersome* to choose from.

### **45 Minute Version**

4M/5W/25 Either

This is the version that is presented in the script. It includes: *The Tell-Tale Heart*, *The Bells*, *The Oval Portrait*, *The Raven*, and *The Masque of the Red Death*.

### **30 Minute Competition Version**

3M/3W/11 Either

The necessary cuts for this version can be found in APPENDIX A. It includes: *The Tell-Tale Heart*, *The Raven*, and *The Masque of the Red Death*.

### **60 Minute Narrated Version**

8M/10W/25 Either

This version includes a Narrator, Rosalie Poe. Rosalie is Edgar Allan Poe's younger half sister. Rosalie's transitions as well as additional stories for this version can be found in APPENDIX B. It includes: *The Tell-Tale Heart*, *The Bells*, *The Oval Portrait*, *Lionizing*, *The Raven*, and *The Masque of the Red Death*.

So long as you are keeping each story intact, feel free to change the order, substitute, or remove individual stories. You may wish to do the longer version without the Narrator. That's fine. You may wish to bring Rosalie into the competition version. That's fine, too, as long as she fits your time limit.

## **Characters**

There are many doubling opportunities for a smaller cast. Likewise, the cast can be expanded by increasing the number of SHUDDERS (see below). See the Story Casting section for each story's requirements.

You can **reduce the number of guys** to two: The Young (*The Tell-Tale Heart*), and The Painter/The Prince (*The Oval Portrait/The Masque of the Red Death*).

While most of Poe's main characters are male, don't be afraid to mix the roles up: have girls play guys' parts. The Young character in *The Tell-Tale Heart* can easily be played by a girl. Change the Prince in *The Masque of the Red Death* to a Princess. Do not let the number male roles dissuade you from taking on Poe.

The SHUDDERS (ensemble) are there to help create that creepy Poe atmosphere. Think of them as evil ghosts. Have them look knowingly at each other. Have them stare eerily at the audience. These character details will give an extra aura of sinister gloom. Very Poe-like.

The SHUDDERS can be as large or small as you need them to be. You can cut down the cast size by having everyone in the stories also be in the SHUDDERS or make it its own group. The SHUDDERS can be as static or as mobile as you like. They can stay in choral positions on risers, or be incorporated into the action. The original production used large black choir books from which the SHUDDERS read their lines.

Note on NARRATORS and POEMS: It's easy to disconnect when speaking as a narrator or reciting lines of poetry. It's easy to stay outside of the story. Resist! Each story has a designated emotional vocal tone – take note and be aware of this tone. Every actor must involve themselves into the story even if they don't have a designated character. Engage your audience by keeping involved in the world Poe has created.

## Staging Options

The play works the best with a simple set using multi-use pieces. Chairs, cubes, risers. The original production had a set of risers upstage where the SHUDDERS stood. The 2nd production used small cubes to create levels in their tableaux.

It is important that there are as few true blackouts as possible to maintain the eerie tone of the piece. Go to blue instead of black, so that we can still see shadows. Make sure the actors stay in character during the transitions. Use the SHUDDERS to make your transitions – keep them involved in the eerie world of Poe even as they are setting up for the next scene. The more the actors stay in the world of the play, even in-between scenes, the more the audience will stay in the world of the play. Never give your audience the opportunity to start thinking about their laundry.

## Music and Sound

Music and sound are going to be your best friend in creating an eerie atmosphere. Use different sounding bells in *The Bells*. Use clock tower clanging gongs and wind howls. Research ominous music to play underneath *The Raven*. Create an atmosphere of sound.

## Costumes

All black is cliché, but it really works the best. There is no time for complicated costume changes between scenes. Use red accents such as a red cape on the SPECTRE in *The Masque of the Red Death*, a red blanket in *The Tell-Tale Heart*. Have the YOUNG LADY in *The Oval Portrait* put on a red lace scarf.

## Story Casting

### 45 Minute and 30 Minute Versions

<b>The Tell-Tale Heart</b> <i>2M/2 Either/Ensemble</i>	The Old The Young The Police (x2) The Shudders (ensemble)
<b>The Bells</b> <i>12 Individual Speakers/  Ensemble</i>	Silver (x3) Gold (x3) Brass (x3) Iron (x3) The Shudders (ensemble)
<b>The Oval Portrait</b> <i>1M/2W/2 Either/Ensemble</i>	Painter Picture Lady Young Lady Soul Suckers (x2) The Shudders (ensemble)
<b>The Raven</b> <i>5 Either/Ensemble</i>	Individual Speakers (x5) The Shudders (ensemble) You can have many more Individual Speakers for this poem. Feel free to divide the lines among more speakers.
<b>The Masque of the Red Death</b> <i>1M/3W/4 Either/Ensemble</i>	Narrator (x3) Guests (x3) Prince The Spectre The Shudders (ensemble)

### 60 Minute Narrated Version

Narrator: Rosalie Poe. She is Edgar Allan Poe's younger half sister. She is dressed severely and as if it is the early 1800's. She is also a ghost and doesn't know it. She carries a large, dusty book and during the stories, sits off to the side in a large wingback chair.

<b>Lionizing</b> <i>4M/5W/Ensemble</i>	Robert Jones Father Mother The Artist The Duchess The Countess The Marquis The Prince The Elector The Shudders (ensemble)
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*Shuddersome: Tales of Poe* was premiered by St. Roche Catholic Secondary School (as *The Tell Tale Heart and Other Strangeness*) on October 17, 2012 with the following cast:

Jason Adade, Marisa Altomare, Star Anigwe, Monica Aspra Rubi, Jasmin Barboza, Simone Barnaby, Crystal Jade Cargill, Paige Chmiel, Yasmeen Concepcion, Daniel daSilva, Mario DeVincenzis, Rhiann Flear, Emily Grant, Vanessa Groves, Kyra Kinio, Xena Kinio, Brittney Lamorandiere, Stefan Matias, Justin Mullen, Alessandra Salvati, Brandon Somma, Alicia Stacey, Maya Stephans, Emily Tac, Shanisha Wijertane. Directed by Cindy Cabral.

The play was subsequently presented by Listowel District Secondary School (as *The Tell-Tale Heart and Other Strangeness*) on March 21, 2013 with the following cast:

OLD: Kevin Stickley  
 YOUNG: Dima Polynkin  
 POLICE: Kennedy Service, Brandon Stolz  
 SILVER: Jodi Olson, Lena-Sophie Magnus, Melissa Dunphy  
 GOLD: Jesse Russell, Victoria Gouveia  
 BRASS: Alexis Piercey, Kennedy Service  
 IRON: Dima Polynkin, Kevin Stickley, Brandon Stolz  
 PAINTER: DJ Keller  
 PICTURE LADY: Jodi Olson  
 YOUNG LADY: Melissa Dunphy  
 SOUL SUCKERS: Alexis Piercey, Paige Stirling  
 RAVENS: Jesse Russell, Courtney Stanley, Kevin Stickley, DJ Keller, Dima Polynkin  
 PRINCE: Kennedy Service  
 GUESTS: Jodi Olson, Lena-Sophie Magnus, Victoria Gouveia  
 SPECTRE: Brandon Stolz  
 NARRATORS: Courtney Stanley, Tatyana Coghlin, Kayla Ernest-Rominger  
 SHUDDERS: Entire ensemble  
 Community Volunteer Directors: Benjamin Warren, Carrie Bath  
 Student Director: Matthew Daviau  
 Stage Manager: Chrissy Weichel  
 Lights: Kieran Russell  
 Sound: Daniel Naylor  
 Wardrobe: Jill Schalk, Mark Haasnoot  
 Seamstress: Susannah Thuell  
 Stage Hands: Parker Chauvin, Laura Lucas  
 Make-up / Hair: Jaclyn Westenhoef

*In the darkness there is the sound of a cold, eerie howling wind. It starts low and builds. And then we hear the sound of beating wings. Something large is flying through the sky, slowly. A deep, deep red light slowly creeps up and we see a SHADOWY FIGURE on the top of a cube upstage. (The light should not be bright enough to see the figure's face.) This FIGURE raises and lowers their arms to match the beating of the wings.*

*The beating of wings fades as the thump of a heartbeat rises. As the heartbeat gets louder and louder, the red light starts to pulse matching the sound and as the light pulses, the SHUDDERS enter the space.*

*They stalk slowly onstage, crawling, clawed figures, giving ominous stares to the audience, cold knowing smiles. They do not look entirely human. They might not be human.*

*Once the SHUDDERS, the YOUNG and the OLD are in place for the first story, the pulse of the lights and the red glow gives way to a blue cold light. The heartbeat fades.*

## **The Tell-Tale Heart**

*THE SHUDDERS stand upstage in a semicircle.*

*NOTE: The creak sound emulates the sound of a door creaking open.*

MALE SHUDDERS: Thump, thump. Thump, thump.

FEMALE SHUDDERS: Creeeeeeeeeeaaaaaak. Shh!

*The YOUNG and OLD sit side-by-side in chairs. The OLD has a red blanket on his lap.*

YOUNG: Nervous. Very, very, dreadfully nervous.

MALE SHUDDERS: Thump, thump. Thump, thump.

FEMALE SHUDDERS: Creeeeeeeeeeaaaaaak. Shh!

YOUNG: I have been and I am. But mad?

MALE SHUDDERS: Thump, thump. Thump, thump.

YOUNG: *(gives a loud long laugh and then stops suddenly)* Mad. The...  
*(with cheer)* disease did not make me mad. It sharpened my



senses. (*he stands*) You say madness? I say a highly developed sense of hearing. I have exceptional hearing.

SHUDDERS: Shh!

YOUNG: The scrape of a chair in another room. The fall of a leaf on the ground. I have heard all things in heaven and earth. I have heard things in hell. Hearing things does not make you mad.

MALE SHUDDERS: (*whisper*) The eye...

FEMALE SHUDDERS: Shh!

YOUNG: Mad? Ha. Sane. Look. (*holds out hand*) Look how calm I am. Listen!

MALE SHUDDERS: Thump, thump.

YOUNG: I will tell you the whole story. You'll see how calmly I tell the tale. You will change your mind. (*sitting beside the OLD*) Morning!

OLD: (*dropping blanket to his lap*) Good morning.

YOUNG: Sleep well?

OLD: Like a stone.

SHUDDERS: When, when, when?

YOUNG: I don't know. It's impossible to say. As soon as the thought entered my mind...

SHUDDERS: (*whispering*) Kill the old man. Kill the old man.

*The OLD pulls the blanket up to his chin.*

YOUNG: It haunted me day and night.

SHUDDERS: Why, why, why?

YOUNG: (*grabbing hold of his head as if he hears the SHUDDERS*) I don't know. There was no motivation. No wrongdoing on his part. (*turning to OLD*) Morning!

OLD: (*dropping the blanket to his lap*) Good morning.

YOUNG: (*to audience, earnestly*) I loved the old man. (*to OLD*) Sleep well?

OLD: Like a stone.

YOUNG: He never struck me, nor insulted me. (*to OLD*) Goodnight!

OLD: (*drawing the blanket up to his chin*) Goodnight.

YOUNG: (*to OLD*) See you in the morning. (*to audience*) It was never him at all. (*standing and whispering*) It was his eye.

SHUDDERS: (*whispering*) The eye...

YOUNG: (*pointing to OLD's forehead*) There. The eye of a vulture. Pale blue with a film. And every time that eye looks at me...

SHUDDERS: The eye, the evil, the evil, the eye –

OLD: (*interrupting*) What's the matter?

YOUNG: (*starting*) Sorry?

OLD: What's the matter? You're staring.

YOUNG: Nothing. Sorry. (*with a smile*) Lost in thought. Ha.

SHUDDERS: The eye...

YOUNG: Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold.

SHUDDERS: (*whisper*) Kill the old man.

YOUNG: And so by degrees,

SHUDDERS: (*whisper*) Kill the old man.

YOUNG: I made up my mind,

SHUDDERS: (*whisper*) Kill the old man.

YOUNG: To take his life and rid myself of the eye forever.

SHUDDERS: Thump, thump.

YOUNG: (*to OLD*) Morning!

OLD: (*dropping blanket down to lap*) Good morning.

YOUNG: Sleep well?

OLD: Like a stone.

SHUDDERS: (*whisper*) Kill the old man.

YOUNG: Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. (*stops suddenly, earnestly*) You think me mad. The mad know nothing. I know. I am wise. You'll see how wise I am.

SHUDDERS: Thump, thump.

YOUNG: (to OLD) Goodnight!

OLD: (*drawing blanket up to chin*) Goodnight.

YOUNG: See you in the morning. I was so kind before I killed him. The whole week. And then, I practised. Midnight. I stand outside his door.

*YOUNG tips toes back toward the chair.*

YOUNG: Turn the latch.

*YOUNG slowly mimes opening the door.*

YOUNG: Open the door. Slowly. Slowly. Slow, now.

SHUDDERS: Creeeeeeeeeeaaaaaak. Shh!

YOUNG: The old man's sleep...must...not...be...disturbed. There's just enough space to slip my head in and peek into the room.

SHUDDERS: (*the sound of a clock*) Dong.

YOUNG: Ah! (*draws back and shuts "the door"*) This takes a whole hour. Would the mad do this? Would the mad be so precise? (to OLD) Goodnight!

OLD: Goodnight.

YOUNG: See you in the morning! Would the mad do this for seven nights? Midnight comes. Turn latch. Open door. (*does so*) Slowly. Peek. And again. (to OLD) Goodnight!

OLD: Goodnight.

YOUNG: See you in the morning! Midnight. Latch. Door. Slowly. Peek.

SHUDDERS: (*whispering*) The eye, the evil, the evil, the eye –

YOUNG: I was waiting.

SHUDDERS: (*growing in volume*) The eye, the evil, the evil, the eye, the eye, the evil, the eye, the –

YOUNG: The old man did me no wrong. I was waiting for the eye. (to OLD) Morning!

OLD: (*dropping blanket to lap*) Good morning.

YOUNG: Sleep well?

OLD: Like a stone.

YOUNG: (*pointing*) He had no idea. No idea what I was doing. What I was thinking. The eighth night. Midnight. Latch. Door. Slowly...

SHUDDERS: Creeeeeeeeeeaaaaaak. Shh!

OLD: (*sitting up sharply, looking around*) Who's there?

*THE SHUDDERS inhale sharply.*

SHUDDERS: Thump, thump. Thump, Thump. Thump, thump.

YOUNG: A whole hour I stand in the door.

SHUDDERS: Thump, thump.

YOUNG: The room is dark as pitch. He can't see me.

OLD: (*in fear*) Groan...

YOUNG: (*whispering*) He is listening for death.

SHUDDERS: Thump, thump.

OLD: Groan...

YOUNG: The sound of terror. I know it well. It rises from the bottom of my soul. Night after night, while the world sleeps terror echoes up from my soul.

*Here everyone in the SHUDDERS picks a different sentence and repeats it until they are cut off by YOUNG. The SHUDDERS move forward, closing in on the YOUNG.*

SHUDDERS: (*all sentences overlapping*) The eye, the evil, the evil, the eye. Coming to get me. Death watches me. Death is coming to get me. Fear, fear, fear, fear, fear, fear, fear, fear, fear.

YOUNG: (*cutting off the SHUDDERS*) No, no! Not mad! Not mad! (*pause, calm*) I know it well, that's all. I know what the old man felt. But I...I chuckle at heart. Ha, ha.

SHUDDERS: Thump, thump.

YOUNG: His fears are growing.

OLD: It is nothing but the wind in the chimney.

YOUNG: He tries to wave them away.

SHUDDERS: Thump, thump.

OLD: It is nothing but a mouse on the floor.

YOUNG: Trying to comfort himself in vain.

SHUDDERS: Thump, thump.

OLD: It is merely a cricket.

SHUDDERS: Thump, thump.

YOUNG: But he knows in his heart,

OLD: Is anyone there?

YOUNG: It is too late. Death stands with his black shadow before him.

OLD: It is nothing. Nothing.

YOUNG: (*whispering*) Death approaches.

OLD: (*pointing*) Ah there!

YOUNG: (*pointing*) Ah there! Do you see? The eye has opened!

*As the SHUDDERS continue their heartbeat, the additional sound of a heartbeat swells underneath.*

SHUDDERS: Thump, thump. Thump, thump. (*continuing underneath*)

YOUNG: (*holding his head*) Do you hear? The old man's heart.

SHUDDERS: (*quickenning*) Thump, thump. Thump, thump. (*continuing*)

YOUNG: Quicker! Quicker it beats!

SHUDDERS: Thump, thump. Thump, thump. (*continuing*)

YOUNG: And louder! (*holds ears*) Louder, the heart will burst!

SHUDDERS: Thump, thump. Thump, thump. (*continuing*)

YOUNG: Someone will hear. (*looking around*) The neighbours!

SHUDDERS: Thump, thump. Thump, thump. (*continuing*)

YOUNG: The time is now! His hour has come!

*The SHUDDERS attack, surrounding as YOUNG drags OLD to the floor. OLD lets out a loud shriek.*

OLD: No, no!

*The SHUDDERS stand in a tight circle, clawing toward the centre as the heartbeat continues. We can't see what's happening, only the writhing, clawed figures of the SHUDDERS.*

SHUDDERS: (*slowing down*) Thump, thump. Thump, thump.

*The heartbeat slows and slows. Then stops. The SHUDDERS turn as a group and stare at the audience. The YOUNG steps through the SHUDDERS and stands among them.*

YOUNG: (*taking in a huge breath before speaking*) It's done. Done. Hee hee... Done? Done. Stone dead. The eye will trouble me no more.

SHUDDERS: (*whisper*) Kill the old man.

YOUNG: You think me mad. Ha, ha! A mad person would not take these next wise steps. I cut up the corpse. Oh ho! Wise indeed.

*The SHUDDERS now move away, back to their upstage semicircle. As they do, we see the body of the OLD covered with the red blanket.*

SHUDDERS: The eye, the evil, the evil, the eye –

YOUNG: Head. Arms. Legs. Not a drop of blood anywhere, a tub catches all. Ha ha! I am sharp as a ... sharp as a... (*shakes head*) Three planks up from the floor and the body goes underneath. Genius! Replace the boards so...carefully, (*moves the chairs in front of the body*) so... cunningly. Nothing. No human eye,

SHUDDERS: The eye, the evil, the evil, the eye –

YOUNG: Not even *his* would have discovered it.

SHUDDERS: Dong. Dong. Dong. Dong.

YOUNG: (*looking around*) 4 am. Still dark.

SHUDDERS: Knock, knock, knock.

*The SHUDDERS all look off in unison.*

YOUNG: (*looking off*) Who's that?

SHUDDERS: Knock, knock, knock.

*The SHUDDERS all look at the audience in unison.*

YOUNG: What have I to fear? My heart is light.

*The POLICE step forward. There are two of them.*

YOUNG: Yes?

SHUDDERS: (*whisper*) Thump, thump. Thump, thump. Thump, thump. Thump, thump.

*The POLICE grab the YOUNG and take him out slowly as the eerie howling wind rises. The SHUDDERS watch, turning their heads to follow their movement.*

*A clock tower gong is heard. Everyone in the SHUDDERS looks up. A second gong is heard. Everyone moves into place for the second scene. A third gong is heard, and the SHUDDERS look up. They are looking for something in the sky. A fourth gong is heard and the lights dim.*

## The Bells

*Note: Each stanza has a different tone that should be reflected in the tableau and the vocal delivery of the speakers.*

SILVER: The childlike wonder of winter fun.

GOLD: The romantic wonder of true love.

BRASS: The horror of senseless death.

IRON: The evil of ghouls dancing on your grave.

*SILVER speakers, think ‘Wheee!’ every time you speak!*

SILVER ONE: Hear the sledges with the bells!

*The sound of Christmas jingle bells is heard.*

*SHUDDER Group One cries out with glee and moves forward to form their tableau. They move like children playing in the snow: dancing, laughing, playing. They keep moving until it is stated that the tableau is formed.*

SHUDDERS: (*glee*) Silver bells!

SILVER ONE, TWO, THREE: What a world of merriment their melody foretells!

SILVER TWO: How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle, in the icy air of night!

SILVER THREE: While the stars that oversprinkle,

SILVER ONE: All the heavens, seem to twinkle, with a crystalline delight;

SHUDDERS: Keeping time, time, time,

SILVER TWO: In a sort of Runic rhyme,

SILVER THREE: To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells, from  
the bells,

SILVER ONE & TWO: Bells,

SILVER ONE, TWO, THREE: Bells, bells,

SHUDDERS: Bells, bells, bells.

SILVER ONE: From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells.

*The first tableau is now fully formed: A frozen picture  
of winter fun: Some in a sleigh, some in a snowball  
fight, some skating.*

GOLD ONE: Hear the mellow wedding bells,

SHUDDERS: Golden bells!

GOLD ONE, TWO, THREE: What a world of happiness their harmony  
foretells!

*The sound of wedding church bells is heard.*

*SHUDDER Group One moves back as Group Two  
moves forward to change into the second tableau. This  
is a wedding scene, so the group are all members of a  
wedding party – everyone is so happy and joyful.*

*GOLD speakers, think “Ah Love” every time you  
speak!*

GOLD TWO: Through the balmy air of night, how they ring out their  
delight!

GOLD THREE: From the molten-golden notes, and all in tune, what a  
liquid ditty floats,

GOLD ONE: To the turtle-dove that listens, while she gloats, On the  
moon!

GOLD TWO: Oh, from out the sounding cells,

GOLD THREE: What a gush of euphony voluminously wells!

SHUDDERS: How it swells!

GOLD ONE: How it dwells on the Future!



SHUDDERS: How it tells,

GOLD TWO: Of the rapture that impels,

GOLD THREE: To the swinging and the ringing, Of the bells,

GOLD ONE & TWO: Bells, bells, bells,

GOLD ONE, TWO, THREE: Of the bells, bells, bells,

SHUDDERS: Bells, bells, bells, bells,

GOLD ONE: To the rhyming and the chiming of the bells!

*Now the second tableau is formed. It is a celebratory wedding photo, with everyone happy and smiling.*

BRASS ONE: Hear the loud alarm bells-

SHUDDERS: Brazen bells!

BRASS ONE, TWO, THREE: What a tale of terror, now, their  
turbulency tells!

*Clanging alarm bells are heard.*

*SHUDDERS Group Two moves back as Group Three moves forward into the third tableau. This tableau deals with a horrific fire, everyone moves forward with gestures of silent despair: characters throwing their arms into the air, praying, weeping, characters falling to their knees, falling into each others' arms.*

*BRASS speakers think "OH NO!" every time you speak. Think panic and horror of senseless death, but don't speak so fast we can't understand the words.*

*In this section, the NARRATORS should be overcome by the fire. They see and feel the smoke and the flames. They cough as if surrounded by smoke.*

BRASS TWO: In the startled ear of night, how they scream out their  
affright!

BRASS THREE: Too much horrified to speak, they can only shriek,

SHUDDERS: Shriek!

BRASS THREE: Out of tune, In a clamorous appealing to the mercy of  
the fire,

BRASS ONE: In a mad expostulation with the deaf and frantic fire,

SHUDDERS: Leaping higher, higher, higher,

BRASS TWO: With a desperate desire,

BRASS THREE: And a resolute endeavor, now –

BRASS ONE: Now to sit or never, by the side of the pale-faced moon.

SHUDDERS: Oh, the bells, bells, bells!

BRASS ONE, TWO, THREE: What a tale their terror tells of Despair!

SHUDDERS: How they clang, and clash, and roar!

BRASS TWO: What a horror they outpour, on the bosom of the  
palpitating air!

BRASS THREE: Yet the ear it fully knows, by the twanging,

SHUDDERS: And the clanging,

BRASS THREE: How the danger ebbs and flows.

BRASS ONE: Yet the ear distinctly tells,

BRASS TWO: In the jangling,

BRASS THREE: And the wrangling,

BRASS ONE: How the danger sinks and swells,

BRASS TWO: By the sinking or the swelling in the anger of the bells,

BRASS THREE: Of the bells,

BRASS ONE, TWO, THREE: Of the bells,

SHUDDERS: Bells, bells, bells, bells, bells, bells

BRASS ONE: In the clamor and the clangor of the bells!

*The third tableau is formed. It is a group of townspeople looking on in horror as a devastating fire rages.*

IRON ONE: Hear the tolling of the bells,

SHUDDERS: Iron Bells!

IRON ONE, TWO, THREE: What a world of solemn thought their  
monody compels!

*A slow, plodding, gong is heard.*

*SHUDDERS Group Three moves back as Group Four moves forward into the fourth tableau. Everyone in this tableau are evil ghosts and ghouls, think clawed creatures.*

*IRON speakers, think of an evil laugh and the macabre every time you speak. Use whispers!*

IRON TWO: In the silence of the night,

IRON THREE: How we shiver with affright

IRON TWO & THREE: At the melancholy menace of their tone!

IRON ONE: For every sound that floats,

IRON TWO: From the rust within their throats, is a groan.

IRON THREE: And the people –

SHUDDERS: (*whisper*) Ah, the people!

IRON THREE: They that dwell up in the steeple, all alone.

IRON ONE: And who, tolling, tolling, tolling, in that muffled monotone,

IRON TWO: Feel a glory in so rolling on the human heart a stone.

IRON THREE: They are neither man nor woman.

IRON ONE, TWO, THREE: They are neither brute nor human.

SHUDDERS: (*whisper*) They are Ghouls.

IRON ONE: And their king it is who tolls;

IRON ONE, TWO: And he rolls,

IRON ONE, TWO, THREE: Rolls, rolls, rolls!

IRON TWO: A paeon from the bells!

IRON THREE: And his merry bosom swells with the paeon of the bells!

IRON ONE: And he dances, and he yells;

SHUDDERS: Keeping time, time, time,

IRON ONE: In a sort of Runic rhyme, To the paeon of the bells,

SHUDDERS: Of the bells!

IRON TWO: Keeping time, time, time,

IRON THREE: In a sort of Runic rhyme,

IRON ONE: To the throbbing of the bells,

IRON ONE, TWO, THREE: Of the bells, bells,

SHUDDERS: Bells!

IRON ONE: To the sobbing of the bells!

IRON TWO: Keeping time, time, time,

IRON THREE: As he knells, knells, knells, in a happy Runic rhyme,

IRON ONE: To the rolling of the bells,

SHUDDERS: Of the bells, bells, bells!

*The fourth tableau is formed. It is a graveyard scene. In the background, there are ghouls, who are happy and dancing at the recent death.*

IRON TWO: To the tolling of the bells,

IRON ONE, TWO, THREE: Of the bells, bells, bells,

SHUDDERS: Bells, bells, bells, bells.

IRON ONE: To the moaning and the groaning of the bells.

*The scene ends with the sound of four gongs.*

## **The Oval Portrait**

*The SHUDDERS start to hum a simple sweet melody (suggestion: Beautiful Dream, Stephen Foster, 1864)*

*Lights change and everyone on stage stretches and moves, dancing in swirling motions around the stage. Everything is light and pleasant.*

*Once the scene starts, the SHUDDERS can actually begin singing the song, or you can have a recording fade up and take over. The point is that the music is soft, sweet and lovely, acting in contrast to what's about to happen.*

*YOUNG LADY moves forward. She is lovely, gleeful, all light and smiles. She starts to sway and dance to the music as the SOUL SUCKERS move forward and set a chair downstage. They turn their backs on the*

audience. The PAINTER steps forward with a palette and brush. He watches the YOUNG LADY dance.

As the YOUNG LADY moves forward to dance, the SHUDDERS move back and form a tableau, watching the action.

The PAINTER approaches her and goes down on one knee. He is completely captivated by her. She is flattered. He leaps to his feet and shows her his brush and palette, he wants to paint her.

YOUNG LADY steps back. She shakes her head and turns away. The PAINTER pursues. He guides her to the downstage chair. YOUNG LADY continues to shake her head, she does not want to be painted. She dances away from the chair and the PAINTER pulls her back. He sits her down. She tries to rise and he pushes her down. YOUNG LADY sighs and resigns herself to be painted.

The PAINTER rushes to the other side of the stage. He begins to paint. PICTURE LADY enters and stands upstage of the PAINTER with her back to the audience.

YOUNG LADY tries to engage the PAINTER, waving, smiling and laughing in the chair, but the PAINTER pays no attention. He commands her to sit still. The YOUNG LADY sighs and poses.

As the PAINTER paints, the SOUL SUCKERS slowly turn, staring ominously at the YOUNG LADY. They gesture in the space around her. One of them makes a pulling gesture behind the YOUNG LADY's head and draws out a long blue ribbon. It seems that the ribbon is coming out of YOUNG LADY. This is a fragment of YOUNG LADY's soul, her light being drawn out of her. YOUNG LADY reacts, as if she feels this part of her soul leaving her. She desperately tries to capture the ribbon, to the point of getting out of the chair, which draws the ire of the PAINTER. He strides across the stage and this time forcefully sits YOUNG LADY in the chair.

YOUNG LADY watches, desperately as the SOUL SUCKERS float the ribbon around the stage, swirling it around PICTURE LADY. This causes PICTURE

*LADY to stretch and move a little. She turns halfway, representing that the work is 'half done.'*

*The PAINTER stumbles back, exhausted from his work. The YOUNG LADY stands, and stumbles. She recovers and moves to the PAINTER, who rejects her and turns away.*

*The YOUNG LADY tries to dance again, to engage him. But her dance is not fully up to speed. It's halting and there is less energy.*

*The PAINTER stretches, he is ready to paint again. He turns to see the empty chair. He pulls the YOUNG LADY to the chair, against her protests. She tries to keep from sitting but he is insistent. He must paint her, he must finish the painting. She tries to resist. He insists. She sighs, sits and poses.*

*The PAINTER rushes across the stage starts to paint. The SOUL SUCKERS again approach YOUNG LADY, clawing at the air around her. This time, both SOUL SUCKERS draw blue ribbons out of YOUNG LADY. More of her soul is leaving, more of her light. YOUNG LADY tries to hold on to the ribbon, she tries to fight, but she is growing weaker and weaker. The SOUL SUCKERS taunt her, waving the ribbon in the air as they cross the stage, and swirl the blue ribbon around the PICTURE LADY.*

*YOUNG LADY tries to stand and reaches out toward the PAINTER, begging, pleading. She falls to the ground. PAINTER pays no attention to her. He's furiously painting, it's almost done. As the SOUL SUCKERS wave the ribbon around the PICTURE LADY. It's as if she comes to life, she turns full to the audience, she smiles, she does a little twirl.*

*By now, YOUNG LADY is on the ground, crawling, reaching out for her lost soul. The SOUL SUCKERS descend on her, drawing ribbon after ribbon after ribbon from her. YOUNG LADY reacts as if in pain. She feebly tries to grab the ribbons to no avail. She finally slumps on the floor. The SOUL SUCKERS dance with the PICTURE LADY who is now fully lifelike. The SOUL SUCKERS exit as the PICTURE LADY poses like YOUNG LADY.*

*The PAINTER stumbles back. The painting is finished. He is overjoyed! He turns to share his joy with YOUNG LADY and sees her on the floor. He rushes to her, scooping her in his arms. She does not respond.*

*He cries over her lifeless body. He looks from the YOUNG LADY to the PICTURE LADY. The PICTURE LADY reaches out to the PAINTER and the PAINTER reaches back.*

*The lovely music fades out as the sound of slow beating wings fades up. It's the sound of something quite large flying through the air. The SHUDDERS look up.*

*The PICTURE LADY (who also plays the shadowy figure at the beginning of the play) starts to raise and lower her arms to match the sound of the beating wings. The SHUDDERS look to the audience and join in, flapping their arms, slowly.*

*The Raven, is coming.*

## **The Raven**

*Note: You can divide this into further sections for more Individual Speakers.*

*The vocal tone for this piece is "Ghost story." Avoid delivering the piece in a "Poem Voice." Each section has a tableau theme. Keep these themes in mind for the vocal delivery. Think of the bird as evil, think of the bird having malice and menace as you speak.*

*The sound of the beating wings fades and ominous music rises. The SHUDDERS move into a tableau as the FIVE Individual Speakers step forward. They each carry a chair forward and stand in front of it. For the whole poem, these FIVE all do the same actions, even if only one of them is speaking. The SHUDDERS have their heads down.*

**SHUDDERS:** Tap, tap, tap, tap, tap. *(The SHUDDERS snap their heads up)* Tap, tap, tap, tap, tap. *(they snap their heads to the left)* Tap, tap, tap, tap, tap. *(they slowly look toward the audience with some menace)*

*During Section One the SHUDDERS melt into a tableau. The movement should be very slow, melting and menacing. The movement into the tableau should*

*take the whole time. Think evil, think fear. The theme for Section One is Midnight: What's that sound?*

ALL FIVE: *(sitting slowly)* Once upon a midnight dreary, *(leaning forward)* while I pondered weak and weary,

ONE: *(slowly placing an elbow on the knee, palm up)* Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore,

TWO: *(lowly placing chin in the palm)* While I nodded, nearly napping,

THREE: *(sit up suddenly)* Suddenly there came a tapping, *(they all look off)*

FOUR: As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.

FIVE: 'Tis some visitor,' I muttered, 'tapping at my chamber door. Only this, and nothing more.'

*For the whole poem, all FIVE do the actions, even if they are only attributed to one person.*

ONE: *(leaning forward)* Ah, distinctly I remember,

TWO: *(an elbow on the knee)* It was in the bleak December,

THREE: *(placing chin in the palm)* And each separate dying ember,

FOUR: *(drumming fingers on the face, once)* Wrought its ghost upon the floor.

ALL FIVE: *(sitting up sharply)* Eagerly I wished the morrow;

FIVE: *(leaning forward)* Vainly I had sought to borrow from my books surcease of sorrow, *(elbow on the knee)* sorrow for the lost Lenore. *(placing chin in the palm – the SHUDDERS also say “Lenore” in a whisper)* For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels named Lenore, *(drumming fingers on the face, once)* nameless here for evermore.

ONE: *(sitting head to the side)* And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain,

TWO: *(turning head to the side)* Thrilled me,

THREE: Filled me,

FOUR: With fantastic terrors never felt before.

ONE: *(standing)* So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating:



FIVE: Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door.

ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR: Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door;

FIVE: This it is, and nothing more.

*Section Two and the SHUDDERS transform into their second tableau. Same speed, same menace. The theme for Section Two is Lost Love.*

TWO: (*quickly sitting*) Presently my soul grew stronger;

THREE: Hesitating then no longer,

FIVE: (*standing*) Sir,

OTHER FOUR: Said I,

FIVE: Or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore; but the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping, and so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door, that I scarce was sure I heard you –

FOUR: (*gesture opening a door*) Here I opened wide the door.

ALL FIVE: (*whisper*) Darkness there, and nothing more.

ONE: (*peering forward*) Deep into that darkness peering,

TWO: Long I stood there wondering, fearing,

THREE: (*standing up straight*) Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before.

FOUR: (*slowly sitting*) But the silence was unbroken,

ONE: And the darkness gave no token,

TWO: And the only word there spoken was the whispered word,

SHUDDERS: (*whispering*) Lenore.

THREE: This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word,

SHUDDERS: (*whispering*) Lenore.

FOUR: (*leaning forward*) Merely this and nothing more.

ONE: (*elbow on knee, palm up*) Back into the chamber turning,

TWO: (*chin on palm*) All my soul within me burning,

THREE: *(sitting up sharply)* Soon again I heard a tapping,

FOUR: Somewhat louder than before.

FIVE: *(standing)* Surely,

OTHER FOUR: Said I,

FIVE: *(looking off)* Surely that is something at my window lattice; let me see then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore, let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore;

ALL FIVE: Tis the wind and nothing more!

ONE: *(fling arm out)* Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,

*ALL FIVE move head left to right to follow the Raven into the room.*

*Section Three and the SHUDDERS all transform with stealth and menace into the next tableau. The theme for Section Three is Bad Omen. Think of the feeling in your gut when a black cat crosses your path.*

TWO: *(moving head left to right to follow the Raven into the room)* In there stepped a stately raven of the saintly days of yore.

THREE: Not the least obeisance made he. Not a minute stopped or stayed he.

*ALL FIVE look up.*

FOUR: *(looking up)* But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door,

ONE: Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door.

TWO: *(slowly sitting, still looking up)* Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

THREE: Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,

FOUR: By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,

FIVE: *(laughing and pointing)* Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou,

OTHER FOUR: I said,

FIVE: *(leaning back casually on the chair)* Art sure no craven. Ghastly grim and ancient raven wandering from the nightly shore.

ALL FIVE: Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!

ONE: (*sitting up straight*) Quoth the raven,

SHUDDERS: (*whispering*) Nevermore.

TWO: (*leaning forward*) Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,

THREE: (*elbow on knee, palm up*) Though its answer little meaning, little relevancy bore;

FOUR: (*chin on palm*) For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being,

ONE: (*drumming fingers on face, once*) Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door.

TWO: (*sitting up straight*) Bird or beast above the sculptured bust,

THREE: Above his chamber door,

FOUR: With such name as,

SHUDDERS: (*whispering*) Nevermore.

FIVE: (*slowly looking up*) But the raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only, that one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.

ALL FIVE: (*slowly stand, looking up*) Nothing further then he uttered,

FIVE: Not a feather then he fluttered till I scarcely more than muttered:  
(*looking straight ahead*) Other friends have flown before, on the morrow he will leave me, as my hopes have flown before.

ONE: Then the bird said,

SHUDDERS: (*whispering*) Nevermore.

*ALL FIVE look up.*

TWO: Startled at the stillness broken,

THREE: By reply so aptly spoken,

*They start to pace back and forth.*

FIVE: Doubtless,

OTHER FOUR: Said I.

FIVE: What it utters is its only stock and store, caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful disaster followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore, till the dirges of his hope that melancholy burden bore of 'Never-nevermore.'

*Section Four and the SHUDDERS all move slowly with stealth and menace into the next tableau. The theme for Section Four is death.*

FOUR: But the raven still beguiling all my sad soul into smiling,

ONE: (*standing in front of chair*) Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird and bust and door;

*They all look up.*

TWO: (*slowly sitting*) Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking,

THREE: (*lean forward*) Fancy unto fancy, thinking,

FOUR: (*elbow on knee, palm up*) What this ominous bird of yore,

ONE: (*chin on palm*) What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore,

TWO: (*sitting up sharply*) Meant in croaking,

SHUDDERS: (*whispering*) Nevermore.

THREE: (*leaning forward*) This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing,

FOUR: (*elbow to knee, palm up*) To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core;

ONE: (*chin in hand*) This and more I sat divining,

TWO: (*sitting up*) With my head at ease reclining,

THREE: (*leaning back*) On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamp-light gloated o'er,

FOUR: (*sitting up*) But whose velvet violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o'er,

ONE: She shall press, ah, nevermore!

TWO: (*looking off to the side*) Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer,

THREE: (*looking to the other side*) Swung by Seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor.

FIVE: (*standing, looking up*) Wretch!

OTHER FOUR: I cried,

FIVE: (*point up*) Thy God hath lent thee, by these angels he has sent thee. Respite, respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore!

ALL FIVE: (*dropping arm*) Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe, and forget this lost Lenore!

FOUR: (*sitting*) Quoth the raven,

SHUDDERS: (*whispering*) Nevermore.

*Section Five and the SHUDDERS all move slowly with stealth and menace into the next tableau. The theme for Section Five is heaven and hell.*

FIVE: (*standing*) Prophet!

OTHER FOUR: Said I.

FIVE: (*pointing up*) Thing of evil!

ALL FIVE: Prophet still, if bird or devil!

FIVE: Whether tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore, desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted, on this home by horror haunted. (*dropping arm*) Tell me truly, I implore, is there, is there balm in Gilead?

ALL FIVE: Tell me, tell me, I implore!

ONE: (*sitting*) Quoth the raven,

SHUDDERS: (*whispering*) Nevermore.

FIVE: (*standing*) Prophet!

OTHER FOUR: Said I.

FIVE: (*pointing*) Thing of evil!

ALL FIVE: Prophet still, if bird or devil!

FIVE: By that Heaven that bends above us, by that God we both adore, tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn, it shall clasp sainted maiden whom the angels named Lenore.

(*dropping arm*) Clasp a rare and radiant maiden, whom the angels named Lenore?

TWO: Quoth the raven,

SHUDDERS: (*whispering*) Nevermore.

FIVE: (*pointing*) Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!

OTHER FOUR: I shrieked upstarting.

FIVE: (*point off to the side*) Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore! Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken! Leave my loneliness unbroken!

ALL FIVE: Quit the bust above my door!

FIVE: Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!

THREE: Quoth the raven.

SHUDDERS: (*whispering*) Nevermore.

FOUR: (*slowly sitting*) And the raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting,

ONE: (*leaning forward*) On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;

TWO: (*elbow to knee, palm up*) And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,

THREE: (*chin to palm*) And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;

FOUR: (*drum fingers on face, once*) And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor shall be lifted.

SHUDDERS: (*whispering*) Nevermore.

*The ominous music fades and changes into some Baroque chamber music.*

## **The Masque of the Red Death**

*As the music changes, everyone onstage becomes guests of PRINCE PROSPERO. They chat, laugh and move among one another.*

*The Three NARRATORS step forward.*

*Note: The vocal tone for the NARRATORS here is that they know a secret. They know what's going to happen. They look at each other when they talk about blood and smile a secret smile. Think eerie.*

*ALSO: Find a way to move the NARRATORS around during the story.*

NARRATOR ONE: The Red Death had long devastated the country.

NARRATOR TWO: No pestilence had ever been so fatal, *(the NARRATORS look at each other)* or so hideous.

NARRATOR THREE: Blood was its Avatar and its seal *(smiles)* the redness and the horror of blood.

*The SHUDDERS all laugh joyfully. TWO of the THREE GUESTS step forward as the SHUDDERS form a tableau of merriment.*

GUEST ONE: I saw it happen to my chambermaid.

GUEST TWO: *(rearing back)* You weren't in the same room?!

GUEST ONE: No, no. She had long been banished. I watched through the parlour window.

GUEST TWO: Thank goodness.

GUEST ONE: She cried and screamed and then started bleeding out of... *(she laughs)* Well, everywhere!

GUEST TWO: Gracious. How lucky are we?

GUEST THREE: *(stepping forward)* Lucky are we what?

GUEST ONE: To be safe and sound in here.

GUEST TWO: *(whispering)* Her chambermaid bled out of everywhere.

GUEST ONE: It was quite the sight. Hideous, I must say.

GUEST THREE: Did she bleed out her eyes?

GUEST ONE: Oh yes. Quite the sight.

GUEST TWO: I suppose they don't call it the Red Death for nothing.

*The three laugh, just a little too loudly. The SHUDDERS join in, all laughing and transition into another pose of merriment. The NARRATORS watch with some scorn.*

*PRINCE PROSPERO steps forward and poses.*

NARRATOR ONE: There was no Red Death in the court of Prince Prospero.

GUEST THREE: Three cheers for Prince Prospero!

SHUDDERS: Hip, hip, hooray! Hip, hip, hooray! Hip, hip, hooray!

NARRATOR TWO: When his dominions were half depopulated, he summoned a thousand friends from among the knights and dames of his court,

NARRATOR THREE: And there retired to the deep seclusion of one of his abbeys.

NARRATOR ONE: The abbey was surrounded by a strong, high wall with gates of iron.

NARRATOR TWO: And when the courtiers, entered, welded the bolts shut.

NARRATOR THREE: There was no way in (*she shares a private smile*) or out.

*The SHUDDERS laugh and babble joyfully to each other. They move amongst each other, chatting as they do. The PRINCE moves.*

PRINCE: Did someone call my name?

*Everyone gives a deep bow.*

GUEST ONE: We were just counting our lucky stars, dear Prince.

GUEST TWO: We're so thankful to be in here and not out there facing the –

PRINCE: Ah ah ah. There will be no talk of death! I command you to merry and lighthearted.

ALL: Yes Prince!

PRINCE: It's folly to even think about what's happening out there. What is coming up? The buffoons?

GUEST TWO: I believe, the improvisatori plays in but five minutes!

GUEST ONE: Wonderful!

PRINCE: My friends, the world will take care of itself. Bring on the players! Bring on the wine! Let us have nothing but merriment!



*Everyone cheers. The SHUDDERS form a pose as if they are watching a charming, witty entertainment.*

*The THREE GUESTS sit in an elegant pose. The PRINCE stands behind them surveying the crowd.*

NARRATOR ONE: It was toward the end of the fifth, or sixth month of his seclusion.

NARRATOR TWO: And while the pestilence raged most furiously, Prince Prospero entertained his thousand friends.

PRINCE: (*gesturing wide*) My friends, my friends, I must make an announcement. Tonight, we shall have a ball. A masquerade!

*Everyone cheers. The crowd reacts and changes their pose.*

PRINCE: Every room in the abbey will have a different theme, a different shade, a different place to play! Come, come, let us explore the rooms!

NARRATOR THREE: There were seven rooms.

NARRATOR ONE: And each room had windows of stained glass,

NARRATOR TWO: Whose colours matched the decorations of the chamber.

GUESTS: (*with wonder*) Oh Prince!

NARRATOR THREE: The first room was hung in blue and vividly blue were its windows.

GUESTS: Oh Prince!

NARRATOR ONE: The second chamber was purple in its ornaments and tapestries.

GUESTS: Oh Prince!

NARRATOR TWO: The third was green throughout.

GUESTS: Oh Prince!

NARRATOR THREE: The fourth was furnished and lighted with orange.

GUESTS: Oh Prince!

NARRATOR ONE: The fifth was white, the sixth was violet.

GUESTS: (*very awkward*) Oh... Prince...

*The GUESTS stand. They look around ill at ease. A red light covers the stage.*

NARRATOR TWO: The seventh room was shrouded in black velvet tapestries that hung all over the ceiling and down the walls.

NARRATOR THREE: But in this chamber only, the colour of the windows differed from the decorations.

NARRATOR ONE: The panes here were scarlet. A deep (*they look at each other*) blood colour.

NARRATOR TWO: And the effect of the light that streamed through the blood-tinted panes,

NARRATOR THREE: (*secret smile*) Was ghastly in the extreme.

GUEST THREE: Prince, may I suggest that we begin our merriment in the blue room?

PRINCE: To the blue room!

*Everyone cheers and moves across the space. Everyone forms a tableau of celebration. The NARRATORS stroll across the space as they speak.*

SHUDDERS: Dong.

NARRATOR ONE: In the seventh room, there also stood a gigantic clock.

SHUDDERS: Dong.

*They change to a second tableau of celebration.*

NARRATOR TWO: Its pendulum swung to and fro with a dull, heavy, monotonous clang.

SHUDDERS: Dong.

*They change to a third tableau of celebration.*

NARRATOR THREE: And when the hour struck,

SHUDDERS: Dong.

*They changes to a fourth tableau of celebration.*

NARRATOR ONE: There came from the brazen lungs of the clock a sound which was clear and loud and deep.

SHUDDERS: Dong.

*In small groups, they slowly comes out of their pose,  
looking around ill at ease.*

NARRATOR TWO: It caused the musicians of the orchestra to pause.

SHUDDERS: Dong.

NARRATOR THREE: The waltzers to cease.

SHUDDERS: Dong.

NARRATOR ONE: The giddiest grew pale.

SHUDDERS: Dong.

*Everyone mills about the stage with unease. The  
GUESTS huddle together.*

GUEST ONE: Gracious.

GUEST TWO: (*whispering*) The clock it sounds so...

GUEST ONE: (*whispering*) Don't say it!

GUEST THREE: (*whispering*) It doesn't sound ominous.

GUEST TWO: Not at all.

GUEST THREE: There's nothing to feel nervous about.

GUEST TWO: Not at all.

GUEST THREE: Don't let the prince know how you feel.

GUEST ONE: Do you ever think that the prince is...

GUEST TWO: What?

GUEST ONE: I don't want to say.

GUEST TWO: Then you shouldn't say it.

GUEST ONE: (*whispering*) Some think him mad. For deserting his  
dominions?

GUEST TWO: Some? I do not.

GUEST THREE: All you have to do is hear him, see him, to know that  
he is perfectly sane.

*The SPECTRE slowly enters and stands off to the side, standing with his back to the audience. The SPECTRE wears a red cape, a red hat and a mask.*

PRINCE: Dancing, dancing! We must have more dancing!

*Everyone cheers and continues to dance.*

PRINCE: Beat beat, the heartbeat of life!

GUEST TWO: I hope the party never ends!

PRINCE: The dreams live!

GUEST THREE: Three cheers for the Prince!

GUESTS: Hip, hip, hooray! Hip, hip –

*The cheer is cut short by the chiming of the clock.*

SHUDDERS: Dong, dong, dong, dong, dong, dong, dong, dong, dong,  
dong, dong, dong.

*There is silence. Everyone stops dancing, standing awkwardly.*

GUEST ONE: What's happened?

GUEST TWO: Why has the music stopped?

GUEST THREE: Is something happening?

*The SPECTRE slowly turns around. We now see that he wears a skull mask stained with red.*

NARRATOR ONE: Before the last echoes of the last chime had utterly sunk into silence,

NARRATOR TWO: Many individuals in the crowd became aware of the presence of a masked figure,

NARRATOR THREE: Who had caught the attention of no single individual before.

GUEST ONE: Who is that?

NARRATOR ONE: The figure was tall and gaunt.

NARRATOR TWO: And shrouded in clothes from the grave.

GUEST TWO: Look at his face.



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