### Story Casting

#### 45 Minute and 30 Minute Versions

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#### 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.

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<td><strong>Robert Jones</strong></td>
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LINDSAY PRICE

\textit{Shuddersome: Tales of Poe} was premiered by St. Roche Catholic Secondary School (as \textit{The Tell Tale Heart and Other Strangeness}) on October 17, 2012 with the following cast:

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

The play was subsequently presented by Listowel District Secondary School (as \textit{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 Coghlan, Kayla Ernest-Rominger
SHUDDERS: Entire ensemble
Community Volunteer Directors: Benjamin Warren, Carrie Bath
Student Director: Matthew Daviau
Stage Manager: Chrisly 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 Westenhofer
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: Creeeeewwwwaaaaaak. 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: Creeeeewwwwaaaaaak. 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!


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?


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.
LINDSAY PRICE

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: Creeeeeeeaaaaaaaaaak. 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.


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: Creeeeeeeeeeeaaaak. Shh!

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

THE SHUDDERS inhale sharply.


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.

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.
LINDSAY PRICE

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: (quickening) 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.
SHUDDERSOME: TALES OF POE

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.


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?
POLICE ONE: Good evening.

YOUNG: How can I help you?

POLICE TWO: Sorry to disturb you at such a late hour.

YOUNG: Why, it's no trouble at all. (to the audience) Hee, hee. (to POLICE) But what has brought the police to my door?

POLICE TWO: The neighbours heard a shriek.

POLICE ONE: They suspect foul play.

YOUNG: My goodness!

POLICE TWO: May we search the premises?

YOUNG: (showing them in) By all means, officers, by all means. (following the POLICE as they look around) The shriek, I'm afraid, was my own. A bad dream. The owner is away in the country. Come, come, this is his room right here. (to audience) Do you believe it? I brought them right into the old man's room. Hee, hee, hee.

POLICE TWO: Everything looks all right.

POLICE ONE: Sorry to have disturbed you.

YOUNG: Please, have a seat. Won't you? You must be weary from this late night adventure. (aside) Right in the old man's room! Genius!

The POLICE sit in the two chairs.

POLICE TWO: Thank you.

POLICE ONE: Thank you indeed.

YOUNG: As you can see there's nothing –

SHUDDERS: Thump, thump.

YOUNG: Ah... (shaking head) As you can see there's nothing, ah, nothing out of order.

The POLICE never hear the heartbeat and see nothing out of the ordinary in YOUNG's behaviour until the very end.

SHUDDERS: Thump, thump.

POLICE ONE: We appreciate your cooperation.

YOUNG: It's no trouble.
SHUDDERSOME: TALES OF POE

SHUDDERS: Thump, thump.
YOUNG: *(looking around)* Do you...
POLICE TWO: Yes!
YOUNG: Nothing.
SHUDDERS: Thump, thump.
YOUNG: *(to audience)* Do you... hear that?
POLICE ONE: We often get these calls, they all have to be checked out.
SHUDDERS: Thump, thump.
YOUNG: *(hissing, looking around)* Stop it!
POLICE TWO: You remember the body in the basement, Bill?
POLICE ONE: Sure do.
SHUDDERS: Thump, thump.
YOUNG: They must hear. They must! They must know what I have done.
POLICE TWO: All because a neighbour reported an odd noise.
SHUDDERS: Thump, thump. Thump, thump. Thump, thump. *(continues underneath)*

_The heartbeat continues to grow and only stops when YOUNG next speaks._

POLICE ONE: And then there was the body in the garden, remember that?
POLICE TWO: Probably never would have found that one except for the dog.
POLICE ONE: Oh that dog.
POLICE TWO: Dug right down to a pair of hands.

_They laugh, jovially._

YOUNG: They are mocking me. Laughing at me. I can’t take this anymore! Villains! Hide no more! *(shoves the chairs to the side to reveal the body)* I admit the deed! Tear up the planks! Here, here! It is the beating of his hideous heart!
SHUDDERSOME: TALES OF POE

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 rolling 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
LINDSAY PRICE

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.
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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
SHUDDERSOME: TALES OF POE

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 stopped 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.
SHUDDERSOME: TALES OF POE

(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.
LINDSAY PRICE

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.
SHUDDERSOME: TALES OF POE

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!
LINDSAY PRICE

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 change 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.
LINDSAY PRICE

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, dorp, 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.
NARRATOR THREE: The mask, which covered his face, was made to resemble a stiffened corpse.

GUEST THREE: The mask, it looks like...

GUEST ONE: Like he's bleeding out his eyes.

GUEST TWO: There is blood on his costume.

NARRATOR TWO: The figure had assumed the Red Death.

*The SPECTRE starts to slowly, slowly (count to five between each step!) cross the stage.*

PRINCE: Who dares? Who dares insult us with this blasphemous mockery? Seize him and unmask him that we may know whom we have to hang at sunrise.

NARRATOR ONE: *(mocking)* But a certain nameless awe found the whole party.

NARRATOR TWO: And none put forth their hand to seize the figure.

PRINCE: No one? Bah! Out of my way, *(raising a hand as if holding a knife)* How dare you. Death to those who invade our space!

*The PRINCE lunges forward as the SPECTRE turns to stare at the PRINCE. The PRINCE cries out and falls to the ground.*

GUEST THREE: The prince has fallen!

GUEST ONE: *(pointing at the SPECTRE)* Get him!

*Everyone rushes the SPECTRE, clawing at the air around him. The NARRATORS look at each other and shake their heads.*

SHUDDERS: Death! Death! Death!

NARRATOR ONE: Summoning the wild courage of despair,

SHUDDERS: Death!

NARRATOR TWO: A throng of the revellers at once threw themselves into the black chamber,

SHUDDERS: Death!

NARRATOR THREE: They seized the figure,

SHUDDERS: Death!
SHUDDERSOME: TALES OF POE

NARRATOR THREE: And gasped in horror at finding the corpse-mask, and the burial clothes left without a body for them to cling to.

NOTE: It's very effective to have the SHUDDERS grab at the mask and cape and then the actor playing the SPECTRE melts to become one of the SHUDDERS.

GUEST ONE: (holding the cape) Where is he? Where did he go?
GUEST TWO: (holding the mask) I have his mask.
GUEST THREE: Where is he?
GUEST ONE: He can't have disappeared, he was right here!
GUEST TWO: Unless...
GUEST THREE: No, no! Don't say it.
GUEST ONE: The Prince is dead. The spectre has vanished.
GUEST THREE: The Red Death.
GUEST TWO: It can't be.
NARRATOR ONE: The Red Death had come like a thief in the night.
GUEST ONE: We haven't escaped after all. (starts to feel the effects of the plague)
NARRATOR TWO: And one by one dropped the revellers in the blood-tinted hall.
GUEST TWO: Is there no hope? (starts to feel the effects)
NARRATOR THREE: And one by one they died, each in the despairing posture of their fall.
GUEST THREE: None. (starts to feel the effects)

The NARRATORS stand behind the GUESTS as the GUESTS grab their faces and throats and slowly sink to the floor, dying.

NARRATOR ONE: Darkness and Decay,
NARRATOR TWO: And the Red Death,
NARRATOR THREE: Holds illimitable (means endless) dominion over all.
EVERYONE: (whispering) Illimitable dominion. Illimitable dominion. Illimitable dominion. (keep repeating)
LINDSAY PRICE

The end is a build of sound. First, everyone repeats the above line.

After one round of the repeated line, the sound of the clock tower gong repeats. On top of this the thump of a heartbeat sounds.

Once the heartbeat sounds, the actors rise up, one at a time. As they rise, they shout out one line they said during the show.

For example:

ONE: It rises from the bottom of my soul!
TWO: Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!
THREE: Too much horrified to speak, they can only shriek!
FOUR: Death is coming to get me!

And so on. Build on the sound of chaos till everyone is standing, glaring at the audience. The play ends with the following two lines. Practice so that these lines come out crisp and precise.

INDIVIDUAL: Quoth the Raven!
EVERYONE: Nevermore!

Blackout

—THE END—
ROSALE: *looking up from the book* Goodness. How strange. What a strange way to end and it started off so nicely. *(she shudders)* That was not a shudder of fear; I have a chill. I find this room quite cold. Dry and cold. *(she turns the page)* Ah. This next story is about art. That is much better. A very gentle pastime. An appropriate pastime for a lady. I have dedicated many an afternoon to an easel and oils painting a bouquet of flowers. *(she sighs)* Lovely. *The Oval Portrait.*

>> The Oval Portrait. <<

ROSALE: I have serious doubts that my brother, half-brother; wrote anything sensible at all. What on earth is his thinking? I am almost convinced not to turn the page for fear of what is written there! *(she gasps)* Fear? Nonsense. There is nothing to be afraid of. *(peering out into the audience)* There is something very strange in the manner in which everyone is attired here this evening. Are you not aware of the proper dress for young gentlemen and ladies when you go out on the town? It's quite shameful. I almost have half a mind to vacate the premises at once! I will certainly do so once this engagement is complete, if that you can be assured. *(she turns the page and breathes a sigh of relief, which she quickly covers up with scorn)*. Oh. I see. Apparently, this next story is not of the frightening variety at all. It is a comedy. That will remain to be seen. I rarely find humour in anything. This "comedy" is called *Lionizing*. *(she sniffs as she sits)*

ROBERT JONES steps forward. He strikes an arrogant pose.

ROBERT: I am, that is to say I was, a great man. My name is Robert Jones. I was born somewhere in the city of Fum-Fudge. And I, have, a nose. *(he poses his nose)*

MOTHER: *(stepping forward)* Oh what a genius!

ROBERT: Said my mother.

FATHER: *(stepping forward)* Son,

ROBERT: Said my father,

FATHER: You've got a big one.

ROBERT: And to that I grasped my nose with both hands. *(grabs hold of his nose)* All through my childhood until the day I came of age.

FATHER: My Son,

ROBERT: Said my father.
SHUDDERSOME: TALES OF POE

FATHER: (clapping ROBERT on the shoulder) What is the chief end of your existence?

ROBERT: My father, it is the study of nosology (he poses his nose)

FATHER: And what Robert,

ROBERT: He enquired.

FATHER: (he imitates ROBERT's nose pose) Is Nosology?

ROBERT: Sir, it is the science of noses. (he switches sides with his nose pose)

FATHER: And can you tell me,

ROBERT: He demanded.

FATHER: What is the meaning of a nose?

ROBERT: A nose, my father, has been various defined by a thousand different authors. It is now noon, we shall have time enough to get through all of them by midnight. To begin: the nose according to Bartholinus is —

FATHER: (interrupting) Robert, Robert, Robert. I am... (claps ROBERT on the shoulder) thunderstruck at the extent of your information. It is very...that's a lot of stuff. You should consider your education finished and done and really it's time for you to fend for yourself. Follow your nose.

ROBERT: Such a smart man.

FATHER: Follow it and you will arrive at Lianship.

ROBERT: Do you really think so, Father?

FATHER: Throw that nose around and you'll be treated like a celebrity in no time. (turns ROBERT around and gives him a gentle kick on the butt) So, get out of my house and God bless you!

ROBERT staggers a bit from the kick and then rights himself. He tides his clothes and poses. MOTHER and FATHER step back.

ROBERT: I considered this fortunate. And I resolved to be guided by my paternal advice. I determined to follow my nose, (he poses his nose) and wrote a pamphlet on nosology on the spot. Fum Fudge was in a uproar.
LINDSAY PRICE

Every time the groups of SHUDDERS speak, they form a new pose — think royal, think nobility, think exaggerated aristocracy. They think they're serious, never funny.

FEMALE SHUDDERS: Wonderful genius!
MALE SHUDDERS: Superb physiologist!
FEMALE SHUDDERS: Clever fellow!
MALE SHUDDERS: Fine writing!
FEMALE SHUDDERS: Profound thinker!
ROBERT: Oh go on. (pause) I mean it, go on.
MALE SHUDDERS: Great man!
FEMALE SHUDDERS: Divine soul!
MALE SHUDDERS: One of us!
FEMALE SHUDDERS: Who can he be?
MALE SHUDDERS: What can he be?
SHUDDERS: Where can he be?
ROBERT: Where, indeed. I pay these people no mind.

He looks back at the SHUDDERS and snubs them. The SHUDDERS gasp, and mummer to each other.

ROBERT: I am after bigger fish. A celebrity in a small pond is no celebrity at all. (he gestures) The scene unfolds itself in the artists' shop. Duchess of Bless My Soul sits for her portrait. The Marquis of So-and-so holds the Duchess' poodle. The Earl of This and That flirts with her salts.

ROBERT poses. The DUCHESS, the MARQUIS, the COUNTESS and the ARTIST step forward. They form a pose.

DUCHESS: Oh beautiful!
MARQUIS: Oh my!
COUNTESS: Oh shocking!
ARTIST: (circling ROBERT) What will you take for it?
DUCHESS: For his nose!
ROBERT: A thousand pounds.
ARTIST: A thousand pounds?
ROBERT: A thousand pounds.
DUCHESS: (looking up close at his nose) Beautiful.
ROBERT: A thousand pounds.
ARTIST: Do you warrant it?
ROBERT: I do.

He blows his nose. Everyone applauds with aristocratic flair. They watch with great eagerness at the following conversation.

ARTIST: (prodding the nose) Is it quite original?
ROBERT: (turning away) Humph!
ARTIST: Has no copy been taken?
ROBERT: None.
ARTIST: Admirable.
ROBERT: A thousand pounds.
ARTIST: A thousand pounds!
ROBERT: Precisely.
ARTIST: A thousand pounds.
ROBERT: Just so.
ARTIST: You shall have them! I shall draw up a cheque on the spot.

Everyone applauds. The ARTIST steps back, the DUCHESS, the COUNTESS and the MARQUIS strike an exaggerated elegant pose. They are joined by the PRINCE.

ROBERT: I became the talk of the town. That sad little rake the Prince of Wales invited me to dinner. The scene was set with all the established elegant-zi.

PRINCE: All fools are philosophers, all philosophers are fools!
LINDSAY PRICE

DUCHESS: (overlapping a little with above) Let me tell you about the most exquisite Muriton of red tongue, cauliflowers with veloute sauce.

COUNTESS: (overlapping a little with above) Did you know the earth is supported by a sky blue cow with an incalculable number of green horns.

MARQUIS: (overlapping a little with above) I know exactly where to find the five and forth tragedies of Homer Junior.

ROBERT: And myself. Oh myself. I spoke of myself, myself, myself, Nosology, myself, my pamphlet, myself, my nose and myself.

He poses with his nose, and the group politely applauds.

COUNTESS: Marvellous clever man.

DUCHESS: (stepping forward) Will you go to Almack’s pretty creature?

ROBERT: (with an exaggerated bow) Upon honour, Dear Duchess.

DUCHESS: Nose and all?

ROBERT: As I live.

DUCHESS: Here then, is a card, my life. Shall I say you will be there?

ROBERT: (with an exaggerated bow) Dear Duchess with all my heart.

DUCHESS: Pshaw, no. But with all your nose?

With a bubble of excitement and chatter the shudders form a pose of expectation as ROBERT crosses the stage.

ROBERT: (looking around) Almack. The rooms were crowded to suffocation.

COUNTESS: He is coming!

ROBERT: Said somebody on the staircase.

MARQUIS: He is coming!

ROBERT: Said someone farther up.

DUCHESS: (stepping forward) He is come, he is come the little love.

ELECTOR steps forward. He crosses his arms and spits.
ELECTOR: (German accent) Devil!
ROBERT: Sir. Elector of Bluddennuff. You are a baboon.
ELECTOR: Sir. (as if a great insult) Donner und Blitzen.

Everyone gasps.

ROBERT: A duel was the only answer. (they shake hands and stand back to back) We exchanged cards and the next morning —

COUNTESS: Ready?
ROBERT: Ready!

They both turn and fire.

ELECTOR: (German accent): Achtung!
ROBERT: (shooting) Bang!

ROBERT gives a victory pose. ELECTOR puts a hand to his face. Everyone gasps.

ELECTOR: (running off) Mein Nase!
COUNTESS: His nose!
DUCHESS: You shot off his nose!

All stand coldly with looks of great disgust.

ROBERT: Success! This would take me to new heights! I called on all my friends.

PRINCE: Fool!
MARQUIS: Dolt!
COUNTESS: Ninny!
DUCHESS: Noodle!
ALL FOUR: Be off!

They snub ROBERT turning their back on him.
ROBERT gestures to the SHUDDERS, who also snub him with a sniff and turn their back. ROBERT staggers as if being dealt a blow. FATHER steps forward, shaking his head. He pats ROBERT on the shoulder.

ROBERT: Father.
FATHER: Son.
ROBERT: (wringing his hands) Father!
FATHER: (shaking his head) Son, son... son.
ROBERT: What is the chief end of my existence?
FATHER: Well, my son... It is still the study of Nosology. But in hitting the Elector upon the nose, you overshot the mark.
ROBERT: Do I not have a fine nose? (he weakly poses his nose)
FATHER: You have a fine nose, it is true. But Bludennuff has none. He has become the hero of the day. I grant you that in Fum Fudge the greatness of a lion is in proportion to the size of his nose, but good heavens, there is no competing with a lion who has no nose at all.

ROBERT and FATHER hold their pose for a beat. The SHUDDERS then move slowly to get into place for the next story. Some stare at ROSALIE with menace.

ROSALIE: (frowning, looking at the book) There is a note here for The Raven which surely must be a mistaken. It is written here that The Raven was written in the year 1845. That is impossible. That year has not happened yet. Edgar certainly does not have the ability to write premonitions. (with great disdain) Someone was being lazy with their note taking. Clearly. Impt. The Raven.

>> The Raven. <<

ROSALIE: I have a very keen eye and a sharp attention to detail. Not only are many of you not dressed in an appropriate manner, it appears that I am the only lady adequately attired. Shocking! I simply cannot be seen amongst such disregard for what it means to be a true lady. How can it be that I am the only one aware of proper etiquette? With such an imbalance, it is almost as if I am the one out of place, out of time. Which, you must agree, is ludicrous. Why would I be out of time? Why, the thought is simply, inconceivable. Absurd! I know who I am and where I am and how young ladies and gentlemen should be dressed. (pointing at the book) It's these stories. These strange stories have added my brain, much as my brother, half-brother's, has become. In his mind, he would suggest that if I am out of time there must be something wrong with me. I must be dead, perhaps a ghost wandering the earth unaware of my state... (She starts frozen for a moment. She turns and stares at the SHUDDERS. In unison, the SHUDDERS turn and stare at ROSALIE, which causes her to turn...}