

## **Poe's Dark Verses:**

The Fall of the House of Usher  
and  
Haunting Poems

*Edgar Allan Poe's works adapted by Elisa Le Cam*

**Poem 1, The Raven:**

Three characters: NARRATOR, ACTOR, THE RAVEN

A room. Bed center-stage right, dark purple wallpaper on the LED screen. *NARRATOR, calm and collected stands down-stage right, facing the public. ACTOR in his dressing-gown with a cup of tea in hand.*

**NARRATOR**

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,  
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore-

*ACTOR lays on the bed and closes his eyes.*

While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,

*KNOCKING stage left. ACTOR sits up.*

As of someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.

**ACTOR**

'Tis some visitor,

**NARRATOR**

I muttered,

**ACTOR**

Tapping at my chamber door-  
Only this and nothing more.

**NARRATOR**

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December;  
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.  
Eagerly I wished the morrow;-vainly I had sought to borrow  
From my books surcease of sorrow-sorrow for the lost Lenore-  
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore-  
Nameless *here* for evermore.

**NARRATOR**

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain  
Thrilled me-filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;  
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating,

**ACTOR**

'Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door-  
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door;-  
This it is and nothing more.

**NARRATOR**

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,

**ACTOR**

Sir,

**NARRATOR**

Said I,

**ACTOR**

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-

**NARRATOR**

here I opened wide the door;-

*ACTOR opens door.*

**NARRATOR**

Darkness there and nothing more.

*ACTOR peers through.*

**NARRATOR**

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,

Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before;  
But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,  
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word,

**ACTOR**

Lenore?

**NARRATOR**

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

**THE RAVEN (off-stage)**

Lenore! -

**NARRATOR**

Merely this and nothing more.

*ACTOR*, shuts the door, walks back to bed.

**NARRATOR**

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,  
Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before.

*KNOCKING stage left.*

**ACTOR** (laughing)

Surely,

**NARRATOR**

Said I,

**ACTOR**

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;-  
'Tis the wind and nothing more!

**NARRATOR**

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,

*ACTOR hardly has the time to open the window that THE RAVEN walks in, wings open, forcing ACTOR to duck down as they make their way to down-stage left. Once THE RAVEN is placed, ACTOR, walks around them, curious.*

In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore;  
Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he;  
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door-  
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door-  
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

*ACTOR and NARRATOR both look at THE RAVEN.*

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,  
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,

**ACTOR**

Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou,

**NARRATOR**

I said,

**ACTOR**

art sure no craven,  
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore-

**ACTOR** (cont.) (inviting for an answer)

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

**NARRATOR** (somerly)

Quoth the Raven...

*THE RAVEN opens its wings.*

**THE RAVEN**

Nevermore.

*ACTOR is taken aback.*

**NARRATOR**

Much I marveled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,  
Though its answer little meaning- little relevancy bore;  
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being  
Every yet was blest with seeing bird above his chamber door,  
With such a name as 'Nevermore'.

*ACTOR and NARRATOR both sigh, thinking.*

**NARRATOR (cont.)**

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.  
Nothing further then he uttered- not a feather he fluttered-  
Till I scarcely more than muttered

**ACTOR**

Other friends have flown before-  
On the morrow *he* will leave me, as my hopes have flown before.

**NARRATOR**

Then the bird said

**THE RAVEN**

Nevermore.



**NARRATOR**

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,

**ACTOR** (laughing)

Doubtless,

*ACTOR stands up, walks to center stage.*

**ACTOR** (mockingly)

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'.

*ACTOR places a cushion on the floor and sits down, still smiling, happy with his 'master' impression, looks back at THE RAVEN, expecting a reaction. THE RAVEN still stands tall and proud. ACTOR sits down, disappointed.*

**NARRATOR**

But the Raven still beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,  
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust and door;  
Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking

Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore-  
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt and ominous bird of yore  
Meant in croaking 'Nevermore'.

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing  
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core;  
This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining  
On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamp-light gloated o'er,  
But whose velvet violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o'er,  
    *She shall press, ah, nevermore!*

*ACTOR looks up at THE RAVEN.*

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer  
Swung by Seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor.

**ACTOR**

Wretch,

**NARRATOR**

I cried,

**ACTOR**

Thy God hath lent thee-by these angels he hath sent thee  
Respite-respite and nepenthe, from thy memories of Lenore;

Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!

**NARRATOR**

Quoth the Raven

**THE RAVEN**

Nevermore.

**ACTOR**

Prophet!

**NARRATOR**

said I,

**ACTOR**

thing of evil!-prophet still, if bird or devil!-  
Wether Tempest sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore,  
Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted-  
On this home by Horror haunted -tell me truly, I implore-  
Is there- is there balm in Gilead? -tell me -tell me, I implore!

**NARRATOR**

Quoth the Raven

**THE RAVEN**

Nevermore.

**ACTOR**

Prophet!

*ACTOR falls to his knees, as if about to pray.*

**NARRATOR**

said I,

**ACTOR**

thing of evil!-prophet still, if bird or devil!  
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 a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore-  
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore.

**NARRATOR**

Quoth the Raven

**THE RAVEN**

Nevermore.

*ACTOR stands up, beaten.*

**ACTOR**

Be that word our sign in parting, bird or fiend!

**NARRATOR**

I shrieked, upstarting-

*ACTOR, walks back to his bed, fixing his dressing gown.*

**ACTOR** (accusingly)

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!-quit the bust above my door!

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

*ACTOR lays on his bed, back towards THE RAVEN.*

*NARRATOR walks around the stage like in a crime scene.*

**NARRATOR**

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, *still* is sitting

On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;

And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,

And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;

Shall be lifted - nevermore!

Blackout.

**Poem 2, A dream within a Dream:**

3 Characters: ACTOR 1, ACTOR 2, WOMAN

A train station. FX. *Lights fade up, ACTOR 1 and WOMAN, wearing brown clothes in a 40s / 50s style, enter arm in arm up-stage right and walk to downstage center. ACTOR 1 and WOMAN, face each other, hold hands and lean in for a warm embrace. ACTOR 1 kisses WOMAN's forehead. WOMAN takes her briefcase and walks off down-stage left.*

**ACTOR 1**

Take this kiss upon the brow!  
And, in parting from you now,  
Thus much let me avow -  
You are not wrong, who deem  
That my days have been a dream;  
Yet if hope has flown away  
In a night, or in a day,  
In a vision or in none,  
Is it therefore the less gone?  
All that we see or seem  
Is but a dream within a dream.

*Blackout. The LED screen flashes video images of 30s surrealist movies. LED screen switches to a wide ocean, the waves seemingly engulfing him. ACTOR 2 stands exhausted and out of breath.*

**ACTOR 2**

I stand amid the roar  
Of a surf-tormented shore,  
And I hold within my hand  
Grains of the golden sand -  
How few! Yet how they creep  
Through my fingers to the deep,  
While I weep - while I weep!  
O God! Can I not grasp  
Them with a tighter clasp?  
O God! Can I not save  
One from the pitiless wave?  
Is *all* that we see or seem  
But a dream within a dream?

We are back at the train station. ACTOR 1, pulls himself together, wakes up from his daydream.

**Poem 3, Alone:**

1 Character: THE NARRATOR



*THE NARRATOR stands in the center-stage spotlight, facing the public.*

**NARRATOR**

From childhood's hour I have not been  
As others were - I have not seen  
As others saw - I could not bring  
My passions from a common spring -  
From the same source I have not taken  
My sorrow - I could not awaken  
My heart to joy at the same tone -  
And all I lov'd - I lov'd alone -  
Then - in my childhood - in the dawn  
Of a most stormy life - was drawn  
From ev'ry depth of good and ill  
The mystery which binds me still -  
From the torrent, or the fountain -  
From the red cliff of the mountain -  
From the sun that 'round me roll'd  
In its autumn tint of gold -  
From the lightning in the sky  
As it pass'd me flying by -  
From the thunder, and the storm -  
And the cloud that took the form  
(When the rest of Heaven was blue)

Of a demon in my view -

**Poem 4, Annabel Lee:**

1 Character: NARRATOR

*Lights up on NARRATOR, a young woman dressed in modern clothes.*

**NARRATOR**

It was many and many a year ago,  
In a kingdom by the sea,  
That a maiden there lived whom you may know  
By the name of Annabel Lee;  
And this maiden she lived with no other thought  
Than to love and be loved by me.  
I was a child and *she* was a child,  
In this kingdom by the sea,  
But we love with a love that was more than love-  
I and my Annabel Lee-  
With a love that the wingèd seraphs of Heaven  
Coveted her and me.  
And this was the reason that, long ago,  
In this kingdom by the sea,  
A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling  
My beautiful Annabel Lee;

*NARRATOR stands up, slowly walking to center stage.*

So that her highborn kinsmen came  
And bore her away from me,  
To shut her up in a sepulchre

In this kingdom by the sea.  
The angels, not half so happy in Heaven,  
Went envying her and me-  
Yes!- that was the reason (as all men know,  
In this kingdom by the sea)  
That the wind came out of the cloud by night,  
Chilling and killing my Annabel Lee.

Two actors walk across the stage with coat racks filled with 19<sup>th</sup> century period dresses.

But our love it was stronger by far than the love  
Of those who were older than we-  
Of many far wiser than we-  
And neither the angels in Heaven above  
Nor the demons down under the sea  
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul  
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;

*NARRATOR* runs to embrace Annabel Lee's dress now on DSR.

For the moon never beams, without bringing me dreams  
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;  
And the stars never rise, but I feel the bright eyes  
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;

And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side  
Of my darling- my darling- my life and my bride,  
In her sepulchre there by the sea- In her tomb by the sounding sea.

*NARRATOR turns around slowly holding the dress close to her, slightly dancing. The scene changes around her.*

**SHORT STORY 1, The Tell-Tale Heart:**

Narrator, mad, stands center stage. Three mysterious tall dark figures, a court-case on the LED screens. A lantern downstage. Bedsheets SL.

**NARRATOR**

True! - Nervous - dreadfully, nervous I had been and am; but why *will* you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my sense not dulled them. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad? (*realizes*) Hearken! Observe how calmly I can tell you the whole story.

NARRATOR rushes to downstage.

I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. For his gold I had no desire.

Huge eye appears on the LED screen.

I think it was his eye! Yes, one of his eyes resembled that of a vulture - a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so gradually I made up my mind to take the life of the old man.

NARRATOR rushes to upstage right, getting into position, OLD MAN enters, they walk arm in arm.

**NARRATOR**

You fancy me mad. But you should have seen *me*. I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him.

NARRATOR putting the OLD MAN to bed, under the blankets SL.

NARRATOR takes the lantern and rushes to center stage.

**NARRATOR** (*miming*)

And every night, I turned the latch of his door and opened it - oh, so gently! And then, when I had made an opening sufficient for my head, I put in a dark lantern, and then I thrust in my head. Oh, you would have laughed. Ha! - would a madman have been so wise as this? And then, I undid the lantern just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye.

NARRATOR unveils lantern shining in the public's eyes, Huge eye appears on LED again this time closed, with a rectangle of light surrounding it.

**NARRATOR**

And this I did for seven long nights - every night just at midnight - but I found the eye always closed; and so it was impossible to do the work.

NARRATOR shuts lantern and puts it down, she walks to the OLD MAN.

**NARRATOR**

And every morning, I went boldly into the chamber and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a hearty tone, and inquiring how he had passed the night.

OLD MAN grunts. NARRATOR walks back to center stage.

**NARRATOR**

Upon the eighth night I *felt* the extent of my own powers - of my sagacity. I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph. (*picking up lantern*) I had my head in, and was about to open the lantern, when my thumb slipped upon the tin fastening, and the old man sprang up in the bed crying out -

**OLD MAN**

Who's there?

**NARRATOR**

For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. (*pause*) Presently I heard a slight groan.

OLD MAN groans.

It was not a groan of pain or of grief - oh no! - it was the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe. His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been saying to himself -



**OLD MAN**

It is nothing but the wind in the chimney - it is only a mouse crossing the floor. It is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp.

**NARRATOR**

His suppositions were *all in vain*; because Death, in approaching him enveloped the victim. And it was the mournful influence of the unperceived shadow that caused him to feel the presence of my head within the room. I had waited a long time and resolved to open a little crevice in the lantern. (*opens the lantern*) A single dim ray, like the thread of the spider, shot from out the crevice and fell upon the vulture eye.

LED screen with huge eye open and rectangle of light.

**NARRATOR**

I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I could see nothing else of the old man's face or person: for I had directed the ray as if by instinct, precisely upon the damn spot.

NARRATOR strangles the OLD MAN, he shrieks and dies.

**NARRATOR**

His eye would trouble me no more.

NARRATOR grabs OLD MAN by his feet and drags him SR.

**NARRATOR**

There was nothing to wash out - no stain of any kind - no bloodspot whatever -  
ha! ha!

We hear a DOORKNOCK SL.

**NARRATOR**

I went down to open it with a light heart, - for what had I *now* to fear?

TWO POLICEMEN walk in.

**POLICEMAN 1**

A shriek has been heard by a neighbor during the night, we have been deputed  
to search the premises.

**NARRATOR**

*(to public)* I smiled - for what had I to fear? *(to the policemen, welcoming them  
in)* Gentlemen welcome! The shriek was my own, in a dream. The old man is absent  
in the country. Search! Search well.

NARRATOR gets 2 chairs from SL.

**NARRATOR**

In the enthusiasm of my confidence, I desired them *here* to rest from their fatigues.

POLICEMEN sit down and make small talk.

**NARRATOR**

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

We hear a HEARTBEAT... getting louder and louder. LED screen shows a clock it turns slowly into a bloodied heart. We hear the clock ticking also, both sounds seem to merge at times.

**NARRATOR**

They chatted of familiar things. But, ere long, I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone... Why *would* they not be gone?... (*she stands up grating her chair on the floor*) Why would they not be gone?... Almighty God! -no, no! They heard! - they *knew*! They were making a *mockery* of my horror! (*to the policemen*) Villains! Dissemble no more! I admit the deed! - tear up the planks! -here, here! (*pointing to the ground*) It is the beating of his hideous heart!

The heart on the LED screen swells, blood red, beating all the time. After about 7 very loud beats, it explodes, silence.



## **SHORT STORY 2, The Fall of the House of Usher**

### *Characters*

- Narrator
- Usher
- Lady Madeline
- Butler

### ***Scene 1: Outside the House of Usher***

MOON AND FOGGY CLOUDS ON LED SCREEN

Set opens on a foggy stage. NARRATOR walks among the mist, suitcase in hand, intrigued by the scene that surrounds him.

*NARRATOR walks to central spotlight.*

**NARRATOR** (talking to the public)

It was a dark and soundless day near the end of the year, and clouds were hanging low in the heavens. All day I had been riding on horseback through country with little life or beauty; and in the early evening I came within view of the House of Usher. I looked at this scene I say with a complete sadness of soul which was no healthy or earthly feeling. There was a coldness, a sickening of the heart. What was it, I asked myself, what was it that was so fearful, so frightening in my view of the House of Usher? This was a question to which I could find no answer.

## ***Scene 2: Usher's Grand Hallway***

### **NARRATOR**

Its owner was named Roderick Usher.

*BUTLER comes to take off his coat.*

We had been friends when we were boys; but many years had passed since our last meeting. A letter from him had reached me, a wild letter which demanded that I reply by coming to see him. It was the manner in which all this was said which did not allow me to say no.

*BUTLER takes his suitcase. NARRATOR nods his head in thanks, BUTLER expressionless exits stage left.*

*NARRATOR walks to off-center stage left*

Although as boys we had been together, I really knew little about my friend. I knew, however, that his family, a very old one, had long been famous for its understanding of all the arts and for many quiet acts of kindness to the poor. The name had passed always from father to son, and when people spoke of the "House of Usher", they included both the family and the family home.

*NARRATOR prepares to exit stage right, but comes back front center stage, hesitant, as if about to tell us a secret.*

**NARRATOR** (cont.)

A strange idea grew in my mind – an idea so strange that I tell only to show the force of the feelings which laid their weight on me. I really believed that around the whole house, and the ground around it, the air itself was different. (laughs) It was not the air of heaven. (serious) It rose from the dead. It was a sickly, unhealthy air that I could see, slow-moving, heavy and gray. Perhaps the careful eye would have discovered the beginning of a break in the front of the building, a crack making its way from the top down the wall until it became lost in the dark waters of the lake.

*NARRATOR exits stage right.*

**Scene 3: Usher's Lounge.** (with a strange painting of a Romantic styled scenery on the wall SL)

*USHER stands off-center stage left. NARRATOR enters joining USHER.*

**NARRATOR**

As I entered the room, Usher met me with a warmth which at first I could not believe was real.

*USHER brings NARRATOR in for a hug, they share a look of compassion.*

**NARRATOR** (cont.) (to the public)

A look, however, at his face told me that every word he spoke was true.

*USHER invites NARRATOR to sit down down-stage right.*

**NARRATOR**

We sat down; and for some moments while he said nothing, I looked at him with a feeling of sad surprise. Surely, no man had ever before changed as Roderick Usher had! Could this be the friend of my early years? It is true that his face had always been unusual. He had gray-white skin; eyes large and full of light; lips not bright in color, but of a beautiful shape; a well-shaped nose; hair of great softness - a face that was not easy to forget. And now the increase in this strangeness of his face had caused so great a change that I almost did not know him. The horrible white of his skin, and the strange light in his eyes, surprised me and even made me afraid. *(pause)* I could not, even with an effort, see in my friend the appearance of a simple human being.

*NARRATOR stands up, pointing to the liquor bar, suggesting that they each have a glass. USHER acquiesces and demurs. NARRATOR walks to up-stage left.*

He told me what he believed to be the nature of his illness. It was, he said, a family sickness, and one from which he could not hope to grow better- but it was, he added at once



**USHER**

Only a nervous illness which would without doubt soon pass away.  
*NARRATOR walks back towards USHER drink in hand.*

**NARRATOR**

It showed itself in a number of strange feelings.

*USHER flinches away from the drink and walks towards the LED screen stage left.*  
*USHER starts painting in big strokes of purples and reds.*

He suffered much from a sickly increase in the feeling of all the senses; he could eat only the most tasteless food; all flowers smelled too strongly for his nose; his eyes were hurt by even a little light; and there were few sounds which did not fill him with horror. A certain kind of sick fear was completely his master.

**USHER** (to Narrator)

I shall die, I shall die! I must die of this fool's sickness. In this way, this way and no other way, I shall be lost. I fear what will happen in the future, not for what happens, but for the results of what happens. I have, indeed no fear of pain, but only fear of its result - of terror! I feel that the time will soon arrive when I must lose my life, and my mind, and my soul, together, in some last battle with that horrible enemy: FEAR!

*Lights off, USHER exits stage left, NARRATOR exits stage right.*

#### **Scene 4: Usher's Grand Hallway**

*NARRATOR stands down-stage right in the spotlight, all other lights are dimmed.  
USHER is sat up-stage left, reading a book.*

#### **NARRATOR**

Much of the gloom which lay so heavily on him was probably caused by something more plainly to be seen - by the long-continued illness - indeed, the coming death- of a dearly loved sister

*Lights snap on LADY MADELINE standing, staring off into the distance.*

#### **NARRATOR**

-his only company for many years.

*'Usher's Grand Hallway' lights back up. LADY MADELINE walks in a large sweep from the MIRROR LIGHT to down-stage, then across the stage to stage left. NARRATOR walks from the downstage right spotlight to up-stage center, joining USHER.*

#### **USHER**

When she dies...

**NARRATOR** (to the audience)

He said, with a sadness which I can never forget.

**USHER**

When she dies, I will be the last of the old, old family - the House of Usher.

*USHER pauses, then comes back to his book.*

*NARRATOR, following LADY MADELINE, still walking, goes to off-center stage right.*

**NARRATOR**

While he spoke, the lady Madeline, for so she was called, passed slowly through a distant part of the room, and without seeing that I was there, went on.

*LADY MADELINE walks upstage left, all the way behind the LED screen, making her way slowly to stage right.*

**NARRATOR** (still looking to stage left)

I looked at her with a complete and wondering surprise and with some fear- and yet I found I could not explain to myself such feelings.

*LADY MADELINE exits stage right. USHER, with a sadness, puts book away and sweeps to downstage right, and sits in his armchair.*

*Lighting switches from 'Usher's Grand Hallway' to 'Lounge'.*

*NARRATOR walks to downstage right, joining USHER on the other chair.*

**NARRATOR**

The illness of the lady Madeline had long been beyond the help of her doctors. She seemed to care about nothing. Slowly her body had grown thin and weak, and often for a short period she would fall into a sleep like the sleep of the dead. So far she had not been forced to stay in bed; but by the evening I arrived at the house

**USHER**

The power of her destroyer!

**NARRATOR**

was too strong for her. *(pause)* I learned that my one sight of her would probably be the last I would have - that the lady, at least while living, would be seen by me no more.

***Scene 5: Usher's Grand Hallway***

*CURSED PAINTING on LED screen, worse than the last, Romantic styled portrait filled with madness. USHER is playing the violin upstage left. CURSED PAINTING very slightly seems to take life. NARRATOR walks from upstage right to downstage right. USHER plays his violin more quietly.*

**NARRATOR**

There was a strange light over everything. The paintings which he made made me tremble, though I know not why.

*NARRATOR starts walking to the armchairs downstage right.*

*Lighting switches from 'Usher's Grand Hallway' to 'Lounge'.*

*USHER sweeps to downstage right, playing the violin, more gently yet woefully.*

**NARRATOR (cont.)**

That sickly condition of the senses, made most music painful for Usher to hear. The notes he could listen to were very few. It was this fact, perhaps, that made the music he played so different from most music. But the wild beauty of his playing could not be explained.

*USHER stops playing the violin. Spotlight on USHER.*

**USHER**

Lady Madeline is alive no more. I'm going to keep her body for a time in one of the many vaults inside the walls of the building. I have decided to do this because of the nature of her illness, because of the strange interest and

questions of her doctors, and because of the great distance to the graveyard where members of my family were placed in the earth.

*NARRATOR nods in agreement and respect. USHER sighs and exits stage right. NARRATOR stands up.*

*Blackout except from down-stage right spotlight on NARRATOR.*

**NARRATOR**

We two carried her body to its resting place.

*NARRATOR walks from upstage right to upstage left. He walks from spotlight to spotlight, each fading away as he leaves it.*

The vault in which we placed her was small and dark, and in ages past must have seen strange and bloody scenes.

As we placed the lady Madeline in this room of horror, I saw for the first time the great likeness between brother and sister. They had been born on the same day. For that reason, the understanding between them had always been great, and the tie that held them together very strong. We looked down at the dead face one last time, and I was filled with wonder. As she lay there, the lady Madeline looked not dead but asleep - still soft and warm - though to the touch cold as the stones around us.

*Blackout except downstage left spotlight where NARRATOR stands.*

**NARRATOR** (cont.)

As fear and wonder filled our hearts, we closed the heavy iron door and returned to the rooms above, which were hardly less gloomy than the vault.

***Scene 6: Usher's Guest Room / Narrator's Room***

*NARRATOR enters, walking towards the bed on stage right.*

**NARRATOR**

I felt my friend's condition, slowly but certainly, gaining power over me; I felt that his wild ideas were becoming fixed in my own mind.

*NARRATOR sits down on the bed.*

As I was going to bed late in the night of the seventh or eighth day after we placed the lady Madeline within the vault, I experienced the full power of such feelings.

*NARRATOR lays down on the bed. LED screen flashes nightmare images of forests, rustling through leaves and cracks in walls...*

*NARRATOR suddenly sits up on the bed.*

**NARRATOR**

Sleep did not come.

*NARRATOR walks nervously around the room. DOORKNOCK stage left. NARRATOR smiles reassured.*

I knew it was Usher.

*NARRATOR looks through the keyhole of the door.*

In a moment I saw him at my door, as usual very white, but there was a wild laugh in his eyes. Even so, I was glad to have his company.

*USHER comes rushing in.*

**USHER**

And have you not seen it??

*USHER opens the window on small LED stage right. We hear a loud swoosh of wind.*

**NARRATOR**

You must not - you shall not look out at this!

*NARRATOR leads USHER to a chair on off-center stage left.*



This appearance which surprises you so has been in other places, too. Perhaps the lake is the cause. Let us close this window; the air is cold.

*After having sat down USHER, NARRATOR goes to close the window, takes a book placed on the foot on the bed and walks back to USHER.*

Here is one of the stories you like best. I will read and you shall listen thus we will live through this fearful night together.

**NARRATOR** (to audience)

The old book which I had picked up was one written by a fool for fools to read, and it was not, in truth, one that Usher liked. It was, however, the only one within easy reach. *(looks down at USHER)* He seemed to listen quietly. *(Turns book's page)* Then I came to a part of the story in which a man, a strong man full of wine, begins to break down a door, and the sound of the dry wood as it breaks can be heard through all the forest around him.

*NARRATOR pauses, we hear in the distance the sound of broken dry wood. USHER, like a terrified cat looks at where the noise came from. NARRATOR ignores this and comes back to the book.*

**NARRATOR**

I continued the story, and read how the man, now entering through the broken door, discovers a strange and terrible animal of the kind so often found in

these old stories. He strikes it and it falls, with such a cry that he has to close his ears with his hands.

*NARRATOR pauses once more; we hear a cry (human or animal?) stage right.*

**NARRATOR** (more alarmed)

There could be no doubt. This time I did hear a distant sound, very much like the cry of the animal in the story.

*NARRATOR looks around the room in disbelief yet trying to collect himself, USHER folds up on himself and turns away.*

I tried to control myself so that my friend would see nothing of what I felt. I was not certain that he has heard the sound, although he has clearly changed in some way.

**NARRATOR**

He has slowly moved his chair so that I could not see him well. I did see that his lips were moving as if he were speaking to himself. His head had drooped forward, but I knew he was not asleep, for his eyes were open and he was moving his body from side to side.

**NARRATOR** (rushing)

I began reading again, and quickly came to a part of the story where a heavy piece of iron falls on a stone floor with a ringing sound.

*We hear a loud low ringing sound stage left.*

These words had just passed my lips when I heard clearly, but from far away, a loud ringing sound - as if something of iron had indeed fallen heavily upon a stone floor, or as if an iron door had closed.

*USHER turns his head towards the NARRATOR, slowly, smiling yet with tears in his eyes.*

**USHER**

Yes! I heard it! Many minutes, many hours, many days have I heard it - but I did not dare to speak! We have put her living in the vault! Did I not say that my senses were too strong? I heard her first movements many days ago - yet I did not dare to speak! And now, that story - but the sounds were hers! Oh, where shall I run?! She is coming - coming to ask why I put her there too soon.

USHER's eyes trace across the public as if he can see her making her way towards them.

**USHER**

I hear her footsteps on the stairs. I hear the heavy beating of her heart.

USHER turns around pointing at upstage right.

**USHER**

I TELL YOU, SHE NOW STANDS AT THE DOOR!!

LADY MADELINE standing, covered in blood and mud takes USHER down with her as the scene collapses around them.

**NARRATOR** (to the audience)

I rushed from the room; I rushed from the house. I ran.

NARRATOR exits stage left.

***Scene 7: Outside the House of Usher***

***NARRATOR running on the spot center stage, we see the House of Usher and the storm surrounding him on the LED screen. As the blood red moon peers through the cracks, (contre rouge getting brighter and brighter) the NARRATOR turns around to see the great House of Usher falling away into the deep black lake.***

***NARRATOR turns back to the public, troubled. Lights change to "room" with a center spotlight on the NARRATOR, LED screen shows a new comfortable room with a fireplace. NARRATOR takes out a notebook and a pen, two actors bring a chair for him to sit on. NARRATOR sits down and writes.***

**NARRATOR**

The light was that of the full moon, of a blood-red moon, which was now shining through that break in the front wall, that crack which I thought I had seen when

I first saw the palace. Then only a little crack, it now widened as I watched. The whole face of the moon appeared. I saw the great walls falling apart. There was a long and stormy shouting sound - and the deep black lake closed darkly over all that remained of the HOUSE OF USHER.

*End.*