Poe-Dunked

A Comedy in One Act

By
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STORY OF THE PLAY

Twelve short scenes depict events in the life of Edgar Allan Poe—or how his life might have been in today's world! Some of the more popular tales are represented: "The Tell-Tale Heart" is a police investigation; "The Cask of Amontillado" is a Jerry Springer-type TV show; and "The Masque of the Red Death" has a group of Hollywood types hiding out in a castle.

In "The Fall of the House of Usher" Poe himself pitches the story to a producer for a horror film. Other scenes depict Poe as he might have been in elementary school; seeing a psychiatrist; trying to write "The Raven"; being rejected by a careless editor; and working in a fast-food restaurant.

This farce accurately reflects some of the events in Poe's tragic life, yet is fast-paced and entertaining.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

The play is written for a flexible cast of 6 junior or senior high school actors. Actors change roles with each scene. Throughout the course of the play, each actor has a chance to portray Poe, the role distinguished by wearing a cape. Directors should feel free to use more or fewer actors, or when necessary, to recast the roles among the actors. Roles are not gender specific. Actors should dress identically such as in black shirts and pants.

SCENES

1. Elementary School
2. “The Raven”
3. The Psychiatrist
4. “The Tell-Tale Heart”
5. The Waffle House
6. “The Cask of Amontillado”
7. At Home
8. “The Masque of the Red Death”
9. The Editor
10. “The Fall of the House of Usher”
11. Fast Food
12. The End

NOTES

The play needs only 5 chairs, a podium, a sofa, a café table and a small desk with quill and paper. A table with props is upstage. The Actors remain on stage throughout the play. When not performing they can be upstage in silly poses. The furniture is moved back and forth as called for by the scenes. There is no pause between the scenes.

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) resented writers from New England, and specifically the poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

PROPS

Poe's cape
shoe box
box of nails
shovel
necklace
photograph or picture of a cat
quill
writing paper
dictionary
lab coat
note pad
pen
donut
2 cell phones
2 aprons (waitress and chef)
menu
order pad for a waitress
2 coffee cups
dollar bill
tacky sports jacket
TV remote control
religious tracts
clip-on ties
3 Halloween masks, including one like a skull
toilet plunger
blanket
teddy bear
paper crown (a la Burger King)
headscarf

Scene 1: Elementary School

(AT RISE: The podium is downstage left facing right. The 5 chairs are center facing the podium. ACTORS enter. Actor 1 crosses to the podium. Other Actors cross to the prop table, take props and cross to the chairs. Actor 2 puts on the cape and takes a shoe box, Actor 3 takes a box of nails, Actor 4 a shovel, Actor 5 a necklace and Actor 6 a picture of a cat.)

ACTOR 1: *(To audience.)* And now, Edgar Allan Poe goes to elementary school. *(To other ACTORS.)* Okay, class. Does anyone have anything for show and tell? *(ACTOR 2 raises his hand.)* Eddie. What did you bring to show today? *(Actor 2 eagerly stands, about to open the shoe box.)* And it had better not be another dead bat! *(Actor 2 sits, dejected.)*

ACTOR 3: *(To ACTOR 2.)* You're so weird!

ACTOR 1: Does anyone besides Eddie have anything for show and tell? *(ALL raise their hands. Indicates ACTOR 3.)* What did you bring to show the class?

ACTOR 3: *(Standing.)* I brought some nails. *(Holds up a box of nails.)* My father built a tree house for me, and he used nails just like these.

ACTOR 1: That's a very nice thing to share.

ACTOR 2: *(To ACTOR 3.)* Did he nail the door closed?

ACTOR 3: Of course not! Why would he do that?

ACTOR 2: To keep things out. Like rats, or gorillas ... or bubonic plague!

ACTOR 3: You are so weird! *(Sits.)*

ACTOR 1: Who wants to go next? *(ACTORS 4, 5 and 6 raise their hands. To ACTOR 4.)* What did you bring?

ACTOR 4: *(Stands.)* I brought a shovel.

ACTOR 2: Are you going to hit somebody with it?

ACTOR 4: No! When I went to the beach I used it to make a sand castle!

ACTOR 2: If I had a shovel I'd use it to dig out a place in my basement and I'd get some bricks and mix up some concrete and I'd build a wall and chain somebody behind it and I'd brick 'em in so no one could hear them scream.

(Other ACTORS are horrified.)

ACTOR 4: Why would you do that?
ACTOR 2: Revenge!

(OTHERS gasp.)

ACTOR 4: *(To ACTOR 1.)* Eddie's scaring me! *(Sits.)*
ACTOR 1: Now, Eddie. Remember that little talk we had about frightening the other children? *(ACTOR 2 bows his head. To ACTOR 5.)* How about you, dear? Did you bring something to show the class?
ACTOR 5: *(Stands.)* I brought a necklace my grandmother gave me.

(ACTOR 5 holds it out. The necklace swings back and forth. ACTOR 2 stares at the necklace, in a trance.)

ACTORS: *(In admiration.)* Ooo.
ACTOR 2: It'd be cool if there was a sharp blade at the end of it and you were tied to the floor and the blade got closer and closer.
ACTOR 5: You are so creepy! *(Grabs the necklace tightly in her hand and returns to chair.)*
ACTOR 1: Anyone else? *(ACTOR 6 stands.)*
ACTOR 6: I brought a picture of my cat, Frisky.
ACTOR 2: Is Frisky a black cat?
ACTOR 6: She's kind of gray.
ACTOR 3: Is she friendly?
ACTOR 6: She's very friendly.
ACTOR 2: Can you walk her on a leash?
ACTOR 6: No! She's a cat! Not a dog!
ACTOR 2: If I had a cat, I'd make it walk on a leash.
ACTOR 6: You can't do that! It would strangle to death!
ACTOR 2: *(Grinning.)* Really?
ACTOR 4: Our cat bit my grandmother.
ACTOR 2: I think I'd like your cat.
ACTOR 5: Eddie's being weird again!

End of Freeview

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