

“POE-TIC JUSTICE: A Naughty Thriller” Script, Song Artwork by Susan Horowitz

Character Description: 1 male, 1 female (flexible genders)

EDDIE, an attractive, sexy graduate student and former actress, quick-witted, emotive

MONTY, a handsome, suave, manipulative English professor

Set Requirements: One Set

Time & Place:

Time: Modern

Place: Monty’s apartment, sophisticated, cultured. An artwork is displayed on an easel, covered by Eddie’s shawl.

Costumes: Contemporary. (Costumes may suggest Edgar Allan Poe)

Props: All props are available by Internet download or from other sources

Recorded Song (“Sing To You Like a Woman”): Optional, available by Internet download. The Playwright (Susan Horowitz) is also the Singer-Songwriter

On-stage Artwork: Optional (described in dialogue) available by Internet download The Playwright (Susan Horowitz) is also the Artist. On-stage Artwork can serve as cover art.

AT RISE: The stage is dark. Recorded Song is playing. (Suggested downloadable song - playwright's original, sensual love song "*Sing to You Like a Woman*")

RECORDED SONG

*You know I love our sweet conversations
These moments seem to set us free
They're something rare, so let me share my secret fantasy...*

*I want some black lace cut low, golden chains and fringes.
I want to catch your eye, hear you sigh till your mind unhinges
I want my heart to beat, feel your heat
Make us laugh and make you cry
Sing to you like a woman... till we die...*

LIGHTS FADE IN:

Monty's apartment, sophisticated, intellectual. An artwork is displayed on an easel, covered by Eddie's shawl.

EDDIE, in a sexy outfit (perhaps with elements suggesting the song and/or Edgar Allan Poe) is practicing and self-correcting her speech, using the audience as attendees at an imaginary conference.

EDDIE

"Welcome to the international, annual conference on Edgar Allan Poe. I am thrilled. I mean, honored, by the opportunity to speak to you - my fellow Poe enthusiasts, esteemed colleagues, President A. Lee, and my sponsor, Professor Montresor. I will now perform, uh, present my paper '*Poe-tic Justice!*'... with my original artwork.

(she points to the covered artwork)

Thank you so much for publishing my paper in the conference journal, and I hope, I hope..." Oh God, I hope this gets me the job! What if they think my picture is... weird? What if they think I'm weird? Maybe I shouldn't have put in the kiss with the red glitter. What if they think it looks cheap or I'm cheap or...? Oh God!

(MORE)

EDDIE (CONT'D)

(she looks at the covered artwork)

It's a good thing I can show my picture to Monty first. He'll know what to do...

(She hears a lock turn)

Monty? Is that you at the door?...

MONTY, a handsome, suave English professor, uses his key to open the door. He enters, carrying a masculine, stylish shoulder bag.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

I know I'm early. I let myself in so I can show you my picture. I hope you don't mind.

MONTY

Ah yes, your key. Eddie, I think we should talk.

EDDIE

About what?

MONTY

Well, your key - among other things.

EDDIE

But you gave it me the key.

MONTY

I know, but now they're considering me for tenure, so we need to be more careful.

EDDIE

We're always careful. But as soon as the semester is over, we can relax. I'll have my degree. We can go out in public, meet your colleagues. No more secrets - like you promised.

MONTY

But... well look, Eddie, I've been thinking. Secrets - our secret - is sexy, thrilling... like a story by Poe. What's romance without a touch of danger?

EDDIE

Monty, that's fantasy. I'm talking about real life, my graduate degree and a job. I need...

MONTY

Why worry about the future? Seize the day - as we say in Latin: *carpe diem!* Besides, I know the real reason you came over early.

EDDIE

You do?

MONTY

You wanted to show me your... outfit. I must say, you do understand the impact of costume - my little actress. In fact, you deserve a Tony for best costume. Your award for performance comes... later. For now, how about... a kiss?

He pulls her into an embrace and dips her back.
She closes her eyes for a kiss. He almost kisses her - then pulls her up and releases her.

EDDIE

That was a kiss? Why did you pull back? Do I smell..? Have you been drinking?

MONTY

Of course not. Why all the questions? Don't forget, I'm your professor. I ask the questions, and you, you earn your kisses - like you earn your grades. Are you a good student or a bad student? I suspect that you're bad, very, very bad...

(he starts to unfasten her top)

EDDIE

Not so fast. I mean, let's save that for later.

MONTY

Later? Delayed gratification was never your style.

EDDIE

But I need you to concentrate.

MONTY

I am.

EDDIE

I want you to look at my picture. It's about Edgar Alan Poe and... me. I want you to give me your honest opinion.

MONTY

You mean that thing on the easel? Now, look sweetie, I have to go to my faculty meeting, so we don't have much time. Tell you what, I'll look at your picture later this week.

EDDIE

But I have a deadline. And I need you to write something about my class paper.

MONTY

You mean more critical comments? I already gave you your "A."

EDDIE

You didn't just give it to me. I earned it.

MONTY

You certainly did.

EDDIE

I don't mean that. I mean my ideas about Poe. You said I'm your best graduate student.

MONTY

You are... with benefits.

EDDIE

Benefits... Maybe we should have waited.

MONTY

For what?

EDDIE

Until after I graduated.

MONTY

And miss the moment? That kind of calculation doesn't sound like you.

EDDIE

I know. But I don't want anyone to think... I mean, when you write my reference letter...

MONTY

Letter? Now who's talking about benefits? What about romance? Pull me into your vortex - your sea of love! The way you did our first time... remember?

EDDIE

I didn't exactly pull you in. You gave me that wine - that Amontillado. You said it was like sherry. It turned out to be a lot stronger than I thought.

MONTY

Come on, Eddie, you knew what you were doing.

EDDIE

Not after that third glass.

MONTY

Which you didn't have to drink.

EDDIE

You were very persuasive... I never met anyone like you. You know everything - literature, Latin, wine... You aroused my mind.

MONTY

Your mind? Darling, what you arouse is not exactly mental.

EDDIE

Yes, but my ideas, my understanding of Poe...

MONTY

So instinctive - maybe because you're like Poe - passionate, irrational!

EDDIE

I'm not irrational. My paper is a critical essay. But I need to go beyond a scholarly essay, I need to create art - to expose the truth about Poe.

MONTY

Are you saying that scholarly essays, my scholarly essays, don't "expose the truth"?

EDDIE

No, no, no, I didn't mean that. Your research is... fantastic!

MONTY

And my critical analysis.

EDDIE

Of course, of course. I just need to do something to express my feelings - so I made that picture. But before I present it, I need your opinion.

MONTY

But sweetie, you got your grade. Why do you need a picture?

EDDIE

Because I want to show Poe's inner feelings. He was a man, but as an artist, he felt like a vulnerable woman - always playing a role.

MONTY

Playing a role? Really, darling, just because you're an actor...

EDDIE

Was. I was an actor - like Poe's real parents. But when he was adopted by a "respectable" family, he tried to kill his theatrical side. As I wrote in my paper...

MONTY

Why do you keep talking about your paper? Don't kill my romantic mood.

EDDIE

I'm not killing anything, I just need...

MONTY

What I need is a chance to relax.

(He pulls a bottle from his bag)

EDDIE

Amontillado?

MONTY

Of course. Let's celebrate your grade: "A" for Amontillado and Amore - love. The only thing we're going to kill is a little time and this fine wine.

(he begins unfastening her top)

EDDIE

Later, Monty. You need to stay sober long enough to write...

MONTY

(from the top of her outfit, he pulls out a chain with a medallion of a jester)

What's this?

EDDIE

My surprise. I was saving it for later. It's a jester, a fool... for love... like me.

MONTY

So we're doing costumes - a little fantasy play - like Poe's story "The Cask of Amontillado." As I recall, Poe's character Fortunato was dressed like a fool... for fun...

EDDIE

Yes, but in the end he turned out to be real fool, and it wasn't much fun for him.

MONTY

Well, poor Fortunato was unfortunate - in fact, he was murdered - suffocated in that wine cellar. He never tasted the Amontillado, whereas we...

EDDIE

We can have it all.

MONTY

Yes we can. We just have to be discrete.

EDDIE

Well, just until you get tenure. Then, we can be free.

MONTY

Look Eddie, you never know how long these things take. When it comes to tenure, there are committees and, and... well, there's more to it.

EDDIE

But you're published. You're going to present your paper at the conference.

MONTY

It takes a lot more than that.

EDDIE

Don't worry, darling. You'll get your tenure. I can see it now - in my imagination - a letter from President Lee confirming your tenure. When does your mail come - four o'clock? You'll get that letter today.

MONTY

Today? What made you say that?

EDDIE

Just a guess. But it doesn't have to be a letter. Maybe they'll call your cell phone.

MONTY

My cell phone!?

EDDIE

Sure. That's even better. I predict that your phone will ring - with amazing news!

MONTY

How can you predict that?

EDDIE

Because I'm psychic. Didn't I predict that you'd present your paper at the conference?

MONTY

Yes. They said my essay was...

EDDIE

Brilliant - like mine.

MONTY

What? You can't compare your class paper to my scholarly work.

EDDIE

That's why I had to prove that it's more than a class paper. I can't go back to being an unemployed actor - not with my student loans. You're always pushing me to take risks - so I submitted my paper for publication.

MONTY

You did what? Where? Some student magazine?

EDDIE

The conference journal.

MONTY

You don't mean... You can't mean...?

EDDIE

The International Conference on Edgar Allan Poe. I'll present a multi-media lecture - my paper with my picture!

(MORE)

EDDIE (CONT'D)
(She whips the shawl off the easel and
reveals her picture: images of Edgar
Allan Poe, a raven, and a kiss)

MONTY

What is that?!