PROLOGUE

SD1: A small light appears on a dark stage, casting long shadows.

SD2: All is still until—

All Ravens (flying in): Caw, caw, caw!

Raven 1: Long ago, the master of bloodcurdling tales was a man named Edgar Allan Poe.

Raven 2: Poe wrote about murder and morgues . . .

Raven 3: Gargoyles and graveyards . . .

Raven 4: And this tale, about a man fallen into madness.

SD1: A thin, pale man steps from the shadows.

Villain: Madness? I am not mad.

All Ravens: Caw! Caw! Caw!

Villain: You do not believe me, I can tell. But it's no matter. I shall prove it to you.

SD2: Ravens fly around the stage—more and more of them—until the stage is filled with flapping wings.

SD1: When the stage clears, the man is gone.

SCENE 1

SD2: An old man sits in a big wooden bed.

SD1: A large raven is perched on the headboard. Three others sit on the footboard.

SD2: The old man is not, however, aware of the birds. It is as though they are invisible.

Old Man (weakly): Would you kindly bring me some tea?

Villain (cheerfully, offstage): Of course. I'll be right there, with the morning paper too.

Old Man (kindly): Thank you very much.

SD1: The villain walks in, carrying a tray.

Old Man: You do not look well today. Didn’t you get any sleep last night?

Villain: I am fine, old man. If anything, my senses are especially keen.

Old Man: Is it a headache? Let me fix you something.

Villain: No, no. You just enjoy your tea.

All Ravens: Such a kindhearted old man.

Villain (to the audience): ’Tis too true. The old man had never done me harm. But he had this one sickly eye—pale blue with a hideous film over it. It was like the eye of a vulture. When it looked at me, my blood ran cold.

SD2: The villain turns his head back toward the old man.

Villain: So I made up my mind to kill him.

All Ravens: He made up his mind!

Villain: I was not crazy. It was his evil eye. It mocked me. It haunted me. I had to rid myself of THAT EVIL EYE!

SD1: He runs from the room. The ravens follow.

SCENE 2

SD2: The stage is dark and silent, save for gentle snoring.

Old Man (snoring): Sssssnnuuhhh . . .

SD1: Slowly—ever so slowly—the door opens. The villain skulks into the room holding a lantern.

Villain (to the audience): Night after night, I crept into the old man’s room.

All Ravens: Night after night, he shone a sliver of light upon the eye.

Villain: But every night, the eye was closed. So I waited. After all, it was not the old man who vexed me. It was his eye.

All Ravens: His evil eye!

Villain: On the eighth night—

SD2: The villain accidentally bumps into the dresser.

Old Man (groaning): Ohhhhhhh . . .

Villain: For an hour I stood still, hardly breathing. I sensed, all the while, the old man listening. And then . . .

Old Man (groaning): Ohhhhhhh . . .

Villain: It was the groan of mortal terror, a low stifled sound from the bottom of his soul.

All Ravens (groaning): Ohhhhhhh . . .

Villain: I shone my light upon the eye. And—

All Ravens: It was open!
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WHY DO WE LOVE SCARY STUFF?

When we watch or read something scary, we feel a rush of energy. Our hearts beat faster, our breathing quickens, our palms sweat. We become focused on the moment, escaping the routine of our everyday lives and forgetting our worries for a time. We become agitated and our minds are filled with fear and anxiety.

WHY DO WE LOVE SCARY STUFF?

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