

MADD

by

Steven Ray Smith Jr.

stevenraysmithjr@gmail.com

FADE IN

EXT. A SMALL TATTERED HOTEL

(Baltimore - October 6, 1849)

The sun hangs low in the sky. A beggar runs followed closely by a policeman.

NARRATOR

(V.O.)

I must tell you a tale. A tale that haunts me. It is a horrible memory, but a magnificent story.

(break)

It is about the death of a man.

The sound of liquid being poured onto a floor is interrupted by a man gasping for air.

FADE TO

BLACK

The gasps are drowned out by the rushing liquid.

NARRATOR

(V.O.)

And the death of a monster.

CUT TO

INT. DIMLY LIT HOTEL ROOM

A man is on the floor with ropes restraining his limbs. This is **EDGAR ALLEN POE**. A large barrel of liquor sits on top of a precariously built stand. It is positioned above Poe's head. Liquor spills from the barrel onto Poe's face. The flow of liquid decreases and Poe tries to replenish his oxygen.

POE

Please, sir!

(gasps for air)

I have nothing for you! I have nothing for myself. I am but a shell of who I once was.

(CONTINUED)

Poe's deep breaths echo through the room. A figure stands in the shadows. It is **JONATHAN MADD**. Madd withdraws his hand from his pocket and strikes a match. He reveals his face as he lights a pipe. He is an average man wearing a dark blue suit with a slightly over-sized top hat on his head.

POE

You're Madd!

(beat)

Jonathan Madd! What do you want from me?

MADD

Oh, Mr. Poe.

(beat)

Edgar, Eddy if I may. You know what I wanted, But you went and took it away from the both of us, didn't you?

Poe inches across the floor while in his restraints.

POE

You're insane! I have no clue why you are doing this.

Madd pulls the empty barrel out of its perch.

MADD

(sing-song)

Poor poor Mr. Poe, has nowhere left to go.

Madd puts a full barrel on top of the stand.

POE

You won't get away with this Madd!

MADD

(sing-song)

You've got a debt to pay, so we'll drown it all away with a barrel that constantly flows.

Madd pulls Poe under the barrel. He pops the cork and the liquor pours onto Poe's face. Madd sits in a chair beside Poe's flailing body. He places a foot upon Poe's chest, holding him in place.

MADD

How about I tell you a story Mr. Poe. A story that began many years ago. 1837 to be exact.

(CONTINUED)

(beat)
Can you hear me Eddy?

Madd gives Poe a chance to breathe. The gasps for air satisfy him. He returns Poe's face to the falling liquid.

MADD
Now, where was I?
(beat)
Oh yes, May 25, 1837.

Madd's mind trails off.

FADE TO

INT. A SMALL HAT SHOP

Top hats and bowler hats sit on shelves lining a wall in the store. Bonnets and hats with large brims occupy the adjacent wall and the tops of faux heads throughout the center of the store. Madd inspects the gentlemen hats.

MADD
(V.O.)
It was a magnificent day out and I had stepped into a local New York shop to find a hat to wear to my cousin's wedding. The scent of mercury was strong inside and the lighting was poor.
(beat)
But the smell faded away as the most beautiful woman I had ever seen walked inside. Her presence lit up the room more brilliantly than a thousand candles. The sweet sound of her name could bring pleasure to the ears of the deaf. Oh, Virginia.

VIRGINIA walks in and looks around the room. Madd watches her every movement. Her eyes fall upon Madd's stare. She blushes.

VIRGINIA
Excuse me sir, may I have some assistance with choosing a hat.

MADD
You, madam may have the rest of my time on this earth. I live to serve your every wish.

(CONTINUED)

(beat)
And what shall I call my master?

She blushes more.

VIRGINIA
My name is Virginia, and your
servitude will not be necessary.
Though, I do thank you for your
flattery.

MADD
You are most welcome, sweet
Virginia. Might I inquire, for what
event are you purchasing this
headdress?

VIRGINIA
No special occasion in particular.
It's just, I've only arrived in the
city today along with my husband
and mother and it seems as though I
have forgotten all my hats at my
last residence.

Madd's face sinks hearing she has a husband. He turns to
looks at the many hats inside the store.

MADD
Well then, I suppose you'll need a
piece with a large brim. The sun
should not have a chance to harm
such a beautiful face.

Madd passes a few hats before choosing a headpiece.

MADD
How about this one?

Virginia puts on the hat and looks in a mirror.

VIRGINIA
I just adore it. Thank you very
much sir. How much do I owe you?

MADD
I could never take your money
Virginia. For you, the world should
have no price.

VIRGINIA
You are very generous.

MADD

It is easy to be generous to
someone who has eyes such as yours.

She blushes again.

VIRGINIA

I really must go.

Virginia turns to leave. She stops at the door and looks
back at Madd.

VIRGINIA

Thank you again.

She smiles then she exits. Madd stares at the door. The **SHOP
OWNER** walks from the back room. He looks at Madd.

SHOP OWNER

Excuse me sir, may I help you with
something?

Madd looks at the shop owner.

MADD

Um. Yes.

He puts a hat on the counter.

MADD

I'll take this one.

SHOP OWNER

Are you sure? It looks to be a bit
large for...

MADD

Yes, Yes... How much do I owe you?

SHOP OWNER

\$4.20

Madd pulls some coins from his pocket. He drops them on the
counter and they scatter. Madd grabs the hat and rushes to
the door. He stands in the doorway and searches for
Virginia. He lowers his head in disappointment.

FADE TO

INT. DIMLY LIT HOTEL ROOM

The stream of liquid lessens as it exits the barrel.

MADD

We only met a few times after that.

(beat)

Now she is gone and your jealousy
is what took her from me.

POE

She was taken from me!

MADD

I will no longer listen to your
lies!

Madd replaces empty barrel with a full one.

POE

I could not kill her! I loved her!

MADD

What do you think Poe. How much of
this guilty pleasure would be too
much for a drunkard like you?

POE

Please, no more.

Madd pulls the cork and sits in his chair. Poe's pleading
turns into gurgled nonsense. Madd places his foot onto Poe's
chest again.

MADD

You know Edgar, You really should
put this stuff down. It'll be the
death of you.

Madd laughs at his own joke.

FADE TO

CONTINUED

The stream of Liquor slows to a drip. Madd places his ear
next to Poe's face.

POE

(weak)

Why is a raven like a writing desk?

(CONTINUED)

MADD

What's that? Why is a raven like a writing desk?

(beat)

Even close to death those silly riddles continue to dribble out of your mouth.

Poe chuckles, then goes limp. Madd checks Poe's pulse again.

MADD

Still here? You have a strong will Eddy, I'll give you that, but the night is young and you will not witness the morning sun. Not with that much poison running through your veins. I suppose I should dispose of you now and have someone else find your corpse.

Poe groans.

MADD

Oh, don't worry old chap. I'll be sure to find a nice place to bury you.

(beat)

Perhaps in a ditch.

Madd drags Poe's body away.

FADE TO

The room is empty except for Madd and an overcoat on top of a table. He grabs the overcoat and rifles through the pockets.

MADD

Would be a shame to have his pocket change go to waste.

A small notebook and a revolver fall from the jacket. Madd picks both up and studies them. He places the gun on the table and looks at the notebook. *Virginia's Diary* is written on the cover. Madd opens the diary to the last entry.

MADD

(reading)

My sweet Edgar, I have loved you for all of my life and I take great solace in your love for me.

(CONTINUED)

VIRGINIA

(V.O.)

I must sadly confess a secret that I have kept from you my love. The days I had spent in New York were not as lonely as I had you believe. In your absence, I have felt the embrace of another man. I curse my unfaithfulness, but I must bear the sorrow of telling you now that my light grows dim. For a while I had thought I made a mistake in choosing you, but now I know that he was my mistake. I see that your love for me knows no boundaries. The underworld would quake in fear if I were to ask you for that hellish demon's pitchfork. In my last wishes to you, I hope that you live the rest of your days happy and hopeful and know that I have always loved you and only you. Your Virginia.

The diary falls from Madd's hands and tears swell in his eyes.

MADD

What have I done?

FADE TO

INT. MADD'S APARTMENT

Madd sits at a table with Poe's revolver in his hand and tears in his eyes. Madd puts the barrel of the weapon in his mouth more than once, each time it falls back to the table. The sadness in his face suddenly disappears and he smiles.

MADD

(hysterically)

Why is a raven like a writing desk?

Madd's laughter fills the apartment. He lifts the weapon and places the barrel in his mouth. Bang! Blood and brain matter sprays across the wall. Madd falls limp.

NARRATOR

(V.O.)

So. Here we are at the end, or maybe a new beginning. I'm not sure if it matters anymore. I guess life is funny that way.

(CONTINUED)

Madd's body is on the floor. A man wearing black shoes and blue slacks stands beside it. The slightly over-sized top hat is next to the man's feet with the top hanging on for dear life. He picks it up.

NARRATOR

(V.O.)

Perhaps knowing how your life will end isn't as important as knowing where your new beginning will be.

CUT TO REVERSE

The top of the man's head has a huge gash akin to an exit wound from a firearm. He puts on the hat, covering the wound.

NARRATOR

(V.O.)

If you have not realized it by now, I am Jonathan Madd.

CUT TO REVERSE

The man is Madd with pale skin and dark rings around his eyes. He stares down at his dead body. Smoke fills the room.

NARRATOR

(V.O.)

Or at least I used to be. I'm not sure who I am now.

The smoke cloaks everything in the room except Madd.

VOICE

(O.S.)

Who, are, you?

Madd looks up and smiles.

CUT TO BLACK

The End.