

The Masque of the Red Death

Servant: Everyone is inside.

Prince Prospero: Good.

Servant: Are you sure you want to do this?

Prince Prospero: My friend, you don't think I haven't noticed so many people die from the horrid devil's disease? Even though I thought it was sad, I wasn't nearly as concerned. It took losing my son to realize I must do whatever it takes to save the rest of the friends and the members of the court I had left. I am confident that this is the solution.

Servant: Very well. I will help weld the gates to the castle shut.

(Servant bows to Prince Prospero and exits to where the gates supposedly are. Sound of people working on the doors and be faintly heard from offstage. Princess Guinevere enters and crosses to Prospero. They are alone.)

Princess Guinevere: (slightly sad) The gates are coming along well. They are almost done.

Prince Prospero: Wonderful! (notices his wife's sadness) What is the matter?

Princess Guinevere: It's just... how are we supposed to live like this? I feel like I am going to miss my old life; all of the things we used to do.

Prince Prospero: My dear, we can still do all of those things! Just because we are avoiding death doesn't mean we can't do everything we used to.

Princess Guinevere: Are you sure?

Prince Prospero: I am. As a matter of fact I will prove it to you. (thinks) Tonight we will host a ball! (thinks) A masquerade! In celebration of our new lives! We will have buffoons, actors, dancers, musicians and wine! I will design everyone's costume to make it a perfect evening. I

guarantee you that we will be so happy by the end of today that we could say our lives are complete!

Princess Guinevere: Oh I love it! You are so clever. I trust you. I can't wait!

(Guinevere kisses Prospero on the cheek and exits. Servant enters and bows to Prince Prospero.)

Servant: The gates are shut for good. What do we do now?

Prince Prospero: You help me plan the most magnificent masquerade there has ever been. Send for the entertainers, fetch the best wine we have, we will make this the best ball we will ever throw. People will tell their grandchildren of this day. Let there be merriment and not one frown on a single person's face. Come, we have a lot of work to do.

(they exit)

(blackout. When lights come back on there are seven colored rooms all in a straight line. Colors include blue, purple, green, orange, white, violet, and black. The folding doors on the room slide back nearly to the walls on either hand, so that the view of the whole extent is scarcely impeded. In the middle of each wall there's a tall and narrow Gothic window with stained glass. The color varies in accordance with the color of the decorations of room (ex.) blue colored room; blue window. The only exception to this is the black room where the window is scarlet red. In the black room there is a giant grandfather clock that reads 11:58pm. All are on stage dressed in various masquerade outfits. Prince Prospero enters with Princess Guinevere. They are linked arm in arm.)

Prince Prospero: So? Are you enjoying yourself?

Princess Guinevere: Oh yes. This is the most fun I've had in a long time. Except-

Prince Prospero: Except what?

Princess Guinevere: Have you noticed anything strange about that black room?

Prince Prospero: Do you not like it?

Princess Guinevere: Oh no! That's not it at all. It's just... no one is going in there. No one has all night. And that clock, whenever it goes off it's like time is standing still. The room gets quiet,

no one moves, I'm not even sure if people continue breathing. Then all of a sudden when it stops chiming people continue drinking, dancing, and laughing like nothing happened.

Prince Prospero: Now that I think about it I do see what you mean. After the ball I will have the clock removed and I promise to redecorate that room.

(Almost instantly after he speaks the clock strikes midnight. All stop what they are doing and just stare. All of a sudden after the last stroke of the clock a person wearing a horrid looking mask appears upstage in the blue room. The mask resembles the red death and people look at him confused and even possibly offended. *Prince Prospero* should be the last to turn around and see him; *Guinevere* should be the second last. *Prince Prospero* slowly turns and faces upstage with everyone else.)

Prince Prospero: (upset) Who dares? Who dares insult us with this blasphemous mockery? I do not remember designing a costume of something we all fear! Who is this disgrace?! Who is this unfit fool?! Seize him and unmask him — that we may know whom we have to hang at sunrise, from the battlements!

(At first people go to seize him, but stop out of fear. The masked figure crosses down stage and passes by *Prince Prospero*, who is astonished and angry. The masked figure goes through all of the rooms and waits in the black room mysteriously.)

Prince Prospero: (angry, frustrated) Fine! If no one else is brave enough to kill him, then I will. That is what happens when a honorable prince such as myself is locked away with a bunch of cowardly messes!

(*Prince Prospero's* rage grows so intense he bolts down through all of the rooms with a dagger in hand. He stands about three feet from the masked figure and is ready to strike, when the masked figure turns around. They stare at each other intensely. Suddenly *Prince Prospero* clutches his chest and lets out a scream. He falls to the ground dead. As a result to the scream *Princess Guinevere* runs through the room and everyone follows. They expect to see the masked figure dead. When *Princess Guinevere* sees her husband she runs to his side. She breaks down crying and then looks up at the figure.)

Princess Guinevere: (angry, sobbing) How?! How can you do such a thing?! You offended us all and you deserve to be punished. But now you kill my husband?! You kill our leader! You monster! You should die from torture, and then continue to be tortured after your humiliating and painful death within the gates of hell! I swear by my own life I-

The figure has not been effected by anything she has said. He stares at her intensely and in an instant she falls dead next to her husband. People scream. Some try to see if the royals are still alive while some try to escape out of the room. The figure spins around the room and slowly everyone drops to the ground dead. The figure looks out to audience.)

(Curtain)