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<https://scriptsforstage.co.uk/wp/product/angel-odd-performance-licence/>

Production Notes

This short play is intended to be performed either as part of a night of bizarre and entertaining mystery and comedy. There are four speaking parts and one non-speaking part. The Narrator is a character who should be present on stage reading from a large book. The Angel has a strange dialect but it should not be acted with any particular accent; more an unusual made-up accent.

Characters

Narrator	The Narrator (M/F)
Duff	Protagonist in the Angel of the Odd (M)
Angel	The Angel of the Odd (M/F)
Mary	Potential suitor for Duff (F)

Scene 1 – Duff’s living room

Narrator: (OS) There is a great deal of events in this world. Some make sense and others, do not. It is often said that when events cannot be explained that it is just ‘one of those days’. That may be fair; but when things go to plan, is it your own doing or is it something else? Fate? Kismet? Perhaps. And when those things happen that one cannot adequately explain? What then? Chance? Design? For Duff, our hero in this tale, would discover that the key to happiness is to just let situations be what they are, instead of what you think they should be in The Angel of the Odd.

(Tabs open. Lights up. Duff, a gruff middle-aged man, enters reading a newspaper. He should be wearing a ‘bald cap’ which will give the impression later that he has lost his hair. He wears a wig on top.)

Duff: War, poverty, unemployment and what’s this **(looks closer)** Cat eats dog? Well that’s not true at all. These newspapers are full of nonsense. Earlier today, I had a huge dinner, several bottles of wine and then read Griswold’s ‘Curiosities’. It was then I decided to take myself off to read something sane. Something real – or so I assumed. Now I feel completely foolish having believed that there are houses to let, lost dogs and cats and items for sale. Nothing in this paper can be true now that they announce so readily that a cat has eaten a dog in London Town. Apparently, it has rained frogs in South

America and there is evidence of water flowing uphill? This is an absolute load of – **(notices something in the paper and reads)** ‘The avenues to death are numerous and strange. In London today a man died after swallowing a needle. It happened whilst playing ‘puff the dart’, a game in which a long needle is placed in a thin tube and blown at a target. The man, twenty three, did inhale and draw the needle into his throat. It entered the lungs and within a few days caused his death’.

(Duff paces the room for a while looking agitated)

Duff: This is really the top of it all. Contemptible falsehood. A poor poor hoax. How much money must they need to invent such tripe? Knowing of the gullibility of all who read these pages, set their wits to work in the imagination of improbable possibilities; of odd accidents, as they term them. However, to an intellect such as mine, to an understanding as deep as mine, I understand that the recent *increase* in these ‘odd accidents’ is by far the oddest thing yet. There is nothing singular about this man who swallowed the needle – it is in fact part of the entire hoax that is *this* newspaper.

(Lights off suddenly)

Duff: What is this about? Has the meter run out?

Narrator: Just then, Duff received a visitor.

(The ‘Angel of the odd’ enters behind Duff. The angel should appear as odd as possible. In Poe’s original story, the angel has beer kegs for legs, its body is a wine bottle and has two long bottles for arms, a box for a head and a funnel for a hat. The Angel speaks in a very strange but understandable rumbling/grumbling dialect. The angel must also adopt an odd accent and pull odd comical faces as it speaks. Lights come back on.)

Angel: Mein Gott! Whatta fool yous been for thinking dat!

Duff: Woah! **(Looking around but not seeing the Angel)** What was that? **(pokes a finger into his ear)** Sometimes when I’ve had too much to drink I get a rumble in my ears but this was not that! Could it have been a man hitting a barrel with a stick? No – it was words. I could make out words. **(Duff paces, looking very confused still not noticing the angel downstage)** I admit I have had a few glasses but not so much I could not find who had spoken to me. If indeed it was words?

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Angel: Haarrumph!! Yoo muss be sooo dunk dat yoo do not see be by your zide!

(Duff turns and finds himself nose to nose with the Angel. He jumps with fright.)

Angel: I say! You muss be dunk as a pig to not see be sitty here. And! I say you muss be a bigger fool, fool ab a goose for to disbelief what hab been printed in de printers ob de papers. It's de troof! Dat is what it is. De troof! Every single word ob it!

(Duff stands quivering in the Angel's wake, backing away slightly)

Duff: What... who? Who are you and what do you want? **(Pauses. Moves to the side to try and look round the back of the angel without getting too close)** How did you get in here? What are you talking about?

Angel: Wooo! As for how I come'd here, dat ib none ob your pizzness. As for what I talks about, I be talks about what I tink ib proper to talks about. As for who I bees, why dat ib de bery ting I come'd here for to let you zee for yourself. Isn't it? Hhmm!?

(The Angel leans into Duff, awaiting an answer and unsettling him)

Duff: **(Panicked)** You are a drunken thief. You mean to take all of my things and leave me to die. I shall ring the police and my footman and they will throw you to the street!

Angel: **(Giggling playfully)** He! He! He! Hu! Hu! Hu! Dat you cannot do!

Duff: What? Can't do? What can't I do?

Angel: Ring de bell sir. He! He! He!

(Duff tries to walk offstage past the Angel. The Angel extends an arm which hits Duff on the head and knocks him to the floor.)

Angel: You see? He! He! He! It ib best you stay dare Mr. Duff. And now you shall know who I bees. Look up at me.

(Duff, sitting on the floor looking scared, looks up at the Angel)

Angel: I am de Angel ob de Odd **(Grins comically)**

Duff: Very odd if I may say. I was always under the impression that Angels had wings.

Angel: **(Yelling)** Wings? What would I do wit dem? Do you take me for a chicken?

Duff: (Scared) No! Oh no – you are not a chicken, clearly. Certainly not.

Angel: (Calmly) Well then, sit still and behabe yourself or I will bop you with me bottle again. A chicken hab wings. A theatre hab wings. A sports field hab a wing. Angels do not hab wings and I am de Angel ob de Odd!

Duff: (Stuttering) In- indeed. How can I help, oh – Angel of – odd.

Angel: Help!?! Ha! What a lowly bred ting you must be to ask an Angel how he can help.

(Duff edges across the floor on his behind, towards a table upon which is a salt-cellar. He grabs it and throws it at the Angel but it misses and hits a large clock, stage right.)

Angel: No, you don't do dat! Naughty maaaaan.

(The Angel bops Duff on the head comically with his 'bottle' arms. Duff gets closer to the floor with each bop. The Angel stops hitting Duff on the third bop and backs away.)

Angel: Oh my days! Dis man is eeder very dunk or bery soddy for throwing salt at my head. You muss not drink it so strong – you muss put water in de wine or you end up seeing tings! Yes!

Narrator: Curiously, the Angel poured water into a glass on the table from the end of its arm.

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(The Angel empties the contents of one of his bottle-arms into a glass. This can be implied but if liquid is dispensed into the glass on the table, the liquid must be water. The Angel motions for Duff to get to his feet and take the glass. Duff does so gingerly, takes a sip and stands calmly before the Angel.)

Angel: It is my job to preside ober de doings of human kind. I bring about odd accidents ob which you are continually sceptic. Tut tut tut!!

Duff: You cannot possibly –

Angel: (Raising a bottle arm) You wanting de bopping again Mr. Duff?

Duff: No, but you can't possibly –

Angel: De bopping is coming Mr. Duff!

(Duff recoils and allows the Angel to continue)

Angel: You will not show me contempt Mr. Duff. I am de Angel ob de Odd and as you will refuse to being agreement, I will swear a vast oath! I shall bring about de correlation of cognition incongruous to your contretemps with my fundamentals! **(Bowing honourably)** Wishing you mush happidess and a liddle common sense.

(The lights go off suddenly. The Angel exits. The lights come back on. Duff stands shaking a little, still sipping from his drink.)

Narrator: The wine Duff had drunk and the bopping the Angel gave left him feeling drowsy. He always took a fifteen minute nap after dinner but at six o'clock he had an appointment to keep.

Duff: **(Sipping water nervously)** I have an appointment. The insurance on my home expired yesterday and as some dispute had arisen, it was agreed that today, at six, I should meet the board of directors to settle the terms of renewal.

Narrator: Glancing at the clock, he noticed it was but half past five. More than enough time to walk to the insurance office.

Duff: I am very drowsy. My siestas have never exceeded twenty minutes and I can get to the office in five.

Narrator: Confident he could sleep, wake and walk to the office in twenty five minutes, Duff fell into a slumber.

(Duff lies down on a mattress, sofa or a blanket on the floor and sleeps. Lights off. Lights on again a few seconds later. Duff awakens and glances at the clock.)

Duff: I feel refreshed and the time is but five thirty three. I have slept for only three minutes? Ah! In this case, I shall take another nap. Plenty of time, yes, plenty of time.

(Lights off. Lights back on a few seconds later.)

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Narrator: Duff awoke once more and glanced at his clock.

Duff: Five thirty three? **(Panicked)** But I have slept longer than a minute this time!

Narrator: On checking his pocket watch, he realised that his clock had ceased running.

Duff: Half past seven? I have slept two hours. **(Calm)** It makes no difference. I will call in the morning, apologise and conduct my business then. So what on earth is wrong with this clock?

(Duff walks over to the clock and picks up the salt cellar he threw at the angel earlier.)

Narrator: The salt cellar had fractured the glass; a shard protruding inwards and preventing the minute hand from progressing beyond thirty three minutes past the hour.

Duff: An accident. An *odd* accident, but an accident nonetheless. These things happen now and then I suppose! What am I saying? Things like this do not happen. They shouldn't happen. They can't happen! But this *did* happen. To get over this oddness, I shall take a good book to bed and retire for the night.

(Lights dim. Duff exits and brings back a book and a candle (either a flameless one or a representation of a candle.)

Narrator: So Duff took a candle and a book and climbed into bed

(Duff sits on the mattress, couch or floor and opens his book.)

Duff: The Angel of the Odd indeed. I shall read a few pages **(emits a huge yawn)** actually, today has been exhausting, I think I shall take to sleep instead.

(Duff puts the book down but knocks over the candle. He does not notice he has done this, turns over and begins to sleep.)

Narrator: Within moments, the room was on fire.

(Red and orange lights flash to represent fire)

Duff: **(Waking up, coughing)** What is that? Fire? But how?

(Duff gets out of bed and notices the candle)

Duff: How did that happen? Did a rat partake to steal my night light?

Narrator: In just a few minutes the entire building was wrapped in flames.

Duff: There is no way out but for the window.

(Duff moves to a window down stage)

Narrator: Luckily, a crowd had gathered and raised a long ladder.

(Duff climbs through the window and stands on the other side as if on a ladder)

Duff: How lucky I am! Saved!

(He suddenly looks panicked and looks down)

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Narrator: Duff though he'd been saved but a large pig had broken loose from a nearby farm. Duff gazed down and noticed that the pig had something about it which reminded him of the Angel of the Odd.

Duff: Shoo! Get away from there I tell you!

Narrator: The pig had taken it into its head that its left shoulder needed scratching and could find no more convenient rubbing-post than that afforded by the foot of the ladder.

Duff: No! Shoo! Get away –

(Duff falls comically behind the window and yells as if falling to the ground. Lights fade off and tabs close.)

Narrator: Duff fell to the pavement below, but happily he did no more damage than a fracture to his arm. His house on fire, his arm fractured, his hair had been singed off in the fire and the loss of his house insurance made up Duff's mind.

(Duff enters front of tabs, arm in a sling and with his wig removed to reveal the bald cap. He uses a different wig to before, though it fits badly and is plainly obvious.)

Duff: At times like these, there is only one thing for it! I shall take a wife!

(Mary enters stage right, sobbing into a handkerchief)

Mary: I am torn with sorrow! I have recently lost my **(pauses to count on her fingers before continuing to wail her sorrow)** seventh husband! Oh if only there were a man who could mend my wounded spirit with the balm of his vows.

Duff: Lady! I see that you are in need of comfort.

Mary: Indeed but it is not a padded chair I seek

Duff: Please, you misread my intentions. I can see you require a companion to help you in your hour of grief.

Mary: And you have money?

Duff: A little (**he kneels before her, taking her hand**) and many assets

Mary: Then we must at once be off to de church!

Duff: (**Suspiciously**) Sorry?

Mary: Er, *the* church, to be married!

(**Mary strokes Duff's wig and her bracelet gets caught in the hair.**)

Mary: I seem to have my bracelets caught in your hair sir. Let me try and tug them away

Duff: NO! don't...

(**Mary lifts the wig off Duff's head to reveal the bald cap. She is disgusted and passes the wig between her hands for a moment before flinging it offstage**)

Mary: Forgive my disdain and wrath, Sir, but I do not forgive lies and I like my men, well, hairy! Good Day!

Narrator: Duff, although disappointed, decided not to give up on his search for a wife and so met a lady of less implacable heart.

(**Duff stands stage left. Francesca enters and stands stage right**)

Narrator: They met regularly and though romance had not yet blossomed, Duff felt it would not be long before their hearts would entwine. One day, there was a chance meeting in a busy street in London.

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(**Though not necessary for this scene, there could be a backdrop of Victorian London and possibly some passers-by. Duff stops Francesca and moves towards her slowly, looking excited. She sees him, smiles and acts coy.**)

Narrator: However, as Duff prepared to greet Francesca with one of his best considered bows, a small particle lodged itself in his eye.

Duff: (**grasping at his eye**) ooowwww!

Narrator: It rendered him, for that moment, completely blind.

(Francesca witnesses Duff writhing in pain, looks extremely indignant and walks off stage)

Narrator: Taking Duff's antics to be rude, passing her by ungreeted, she took her leave, never to be seen again.

Duff: This accident! It could have happened to anyone under the sun. At any time!

(The angel of the odd enters)

Angel: Wass he doing now? Sumting in de eye, huh? Mr. Duff?

Duff: **(Turning towards the voice)** Yes, quite a large sumting, er, something.

(The angel waves a bottle-arm over Duff's face and removes the 'something'. Duff recovers and sees the angel.)

Duff: You?

Angel: Don lookit me! I was juss passing and I saw you and de eye. Juss passing, yes.

(The angel leaves. The stage is now empty except for Duff who will mime the next few 'odd accidents')

Duff: I have nothing left to do but to throw myself in the river and let this world continue without me! Fortune has so determined to persecute me so I shall cheat it. It will haunt me no longer.

Narrator: Duff stood by the river

(Duff looks down at the stage then dips a toe in the imaginary river, looking a little uncertain)

Narrator: He then took off his clothes

(Duff takes off his trousers, underneath he has longjohns)

Duff: For there is no reason why we cannot leave this world as we enter it.

Narrator: Just then, a solitary crow swooped down and stole his trousers

(An actor dressed in black enters as a crow, steals the trousers and runs off stage)

Duff: Hey! Those are mine!!

(Duff runs off stage after the bird)

Narrator: He ran and ran until he no longer felt earth beneath his feet

Duff: (Enters) There is no longer earth beneath my... aaarrggghh!! (He freezes whilst looking down at his feet about to fall)

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Narrator: He had thrown himself over a precipice. However, he should have been dashed to pieces but for the good fortune of grasping a rope which hung from a passing hot air balloon.

Duff: (Mimes grabbing at a rope and hanging from it unless a rope can be dropped from above for Duff to grasp) Oooh! That was lucky! (shouting upwards) I say! Mr. Balloon driver. Hello? (pauses) The fool cannot – or – the villain *will* not hear me!

Narrator: In time, Duff's grip on the rope weakened. He soon resigned himself to his fate that he would drop quietly into the sea

Duff: How awful. I had not time to find my trousers in pursuit of the crow and I have broken my arm in the fall from the ladder.

(OS or through the PA system so it seems the voice is coming from above
Duff: the angel hums a jolly tune)

Duff: What is that? (shouting above him) Hello up there?

Narrator: The angel of the odd peered over the edge of the hot air balloon basket. By the look on his face he seemed to be on excellent terms with himself and the universe.

Duff: I... I... (quietly) I am too exhausted to speak.

Narrator: The angel glared at Duff for a few minutes in silence before finally speaking.

Angel: Who pe you? And what de deffil you be do down dare? Ey?

Duff: (searching for a word) Help!

Angel: Help? Not me. Dare is de bottle of wine. Help yourself und be tam'd!

Narrator: With those words, the angel let fall a heavy bottle of cherry wine. It dropped precisely upon Duff's head.

(Duff mimes being hit on the head by a bottle)

Duff: Oooooowww!! This is all too much, I may as well let go of this rope and be done with it.

Angel: Hold on! Don't be in de hurry! Don't! Will you allow me to drop another bottle on de head or have you got zober and come to you zenzes?

Narrator: Duff nodded twice

(Duff nods)

Narrator: The first to tell the angel he did not want another bottle and the second to tell of his sobriety and that he had positively come to his senses.

Angel: So you belief in me? At long last you belief, then, in de possibility of de odd?

(Duff nods)

Angel: And you have belief in me, de angel of de odd?

(Duff nods)

Angel: And you acknowledge that you be de blind drunk and a fool?

(Duff nods)

Angel: Ok. Put your right hand into your left hand drouser pocket den. In recognition of your full zubmizzion to de angel of de odd.

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Narrator: It was a simple request but Duff could not do it. His arm broken in the fall meant he could not let go of the rope with his other hand. He would have to let go altogether. And in any case, his trousers had been stolen by a crow.

(Duff looks sad and shakes his head in defeat)

Angel: **(Shouting)** Go to de deffil den!

Narrator: And with that, the angel drew a sharp knife across the rope and let Duff loose.

(Duff mimes falling from the rope, or if the rope is real, it is released so that it falls to the stage along with Duff. Lights flash, SFX. Glass smashing, general sound of breakages and a person tumbling and hitting the ground. The flashing ceases and the lights go off.)

Narrator: It just so happened that Duff fell from the balloon directly over his house, entered the ample chimney and emerged the other side covered in soot and ash, lying in the dining room hearth.

(Spotlight on Duff sitting centre stage looking stunned and his face covered in soot. (This should be stored in one of Duff's pockets and applied whilst the lights are off))

Duff: I have finally come to my senses after that fall. It is four in the morning, I am sitting in the ashes of an extinguished fire, my feet reposed on the wreck of a small table, sitting in dessert, a newspaper, some broken glass, shattered bottles and an empty jug of cherry wine!

(Duff looks at the audience with bewilderment. Spot light off.)

Narrator: Thus revenged himself the Angel of the Odd.

(Tabs close.)

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