

Winter 1996

## Eldorado: The Poes in Norfolk

Myreen Moore Nicholson  
*Old Dominion University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/humanities\\_etds](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/humanities_etds)



Part of the [American Literature Commons](#), [Creative Writing Commons](#), and the [Playwriting Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Nicholson, Myreen M.. "Eldorado: The Poes in Norfolk" (1996). Master of Arts (MA), Thesis, Humanities, Old Dominion University, DOI: 10.25777/sgdj-3368  
[https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/humanities\\_etds/23](https://digitalcommons.odu.edu/humanities_etds/23)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Institute for the Humanities at ODU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Institute for the Humanities Theses by an authorized administrator of ODU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@odu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@odu.edu).

ELDORADO: THE POES IN NORFOLK

by

Myreen Moore Nicholson

B.A. August 1962, Old Dominion College

M.S.L.S. June 1971, University of North Carolina at  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

A Creative Project Submitted to the Faculty of  
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

HUMANITIES

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

December 1996

Approved by:

~~Douglas G. Greene~~, Director

~~Konrad Winters~~

~~Jeffrey Richards~~

Copyright by Myreen Moore Nicholson 1996  
All Rights Reserved.

## **ABSTRACT**

### **ELDORADO: THE POES IN NORFOLK.**

Myreen Moore Nicholson  
Old Dominion University, 1996  
Director: Dr. Douglas G. Greene

Edgar Allan Poe is one of the best known Americans in the world, as a great poet, literary critic and essayist, and innovator of the analytic detective story. Yet he basically remains his own best mystery. Major cities have monuments to him. This creative work's object is to show that Norfolk, Virginia, was central in his life and art. In fact, the theatre company with which his actress mother, Eliza Arnold Poe (and her friends, the Sullys), was longest affiliated, was headquartered there. Edgar's sister Rosalie was born in a house on Brewer Street. Times and the circumstances of Poe in Norfolk become commanding. The work is presented linearly, centered about this writer's hereditarily and newly found information about his last visit a few weeks before his death. Associated dynamic and theatrical scenes of Poe's parents are introduced to give clues, and mysteries such as the identity of 'Annabel Lee' are illuminated through the previously ignored past topography of Norfolk.

Co-Chairs of Advisory Committee: Dr. Konrad Winters  
Dr. Jeffrey Richards

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Section	
<b>ACT I</b>	
Scene i	2
Scene ii	3
Scene iii	11
Scene iv	14
Scene v	14
Scene vi	21
Scene vii	23
<b>ACT II</b>	
Scene i	32
Scene ii	42
Scene iii	47
Scene iv	49
Scene v	51
Scene vi	52
Scene vii	58
<b>ACT III</b>	
Scene i	63
Scene ii	67
Scene iii	70
Scene iv	72
<b>VITA</b>	73

Eldorado: The Poes in Norfolk

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Edgar Allan Poe, *poet and critic, at almost three years, nineteen, and forty*  
 Eliza Arnold Hopkins Poe, *his beautiful actress mother, at ten and early twenties*  
 David Poe, *about twenty-four, father of Edgar Poe*  
 Henry Poe, *alcoholic poet, about twenty-one, brother of Edgar Poe*  
 Susan V. C. Ingram, *Norfolk woman, at almost nineteen and eighty-two*  
 William J. Grinson, *Virginia journalist and historian, at six and forty-three*  
 Nancy Green, *seven, daughter of Manager of Norfolk's Green Theatre Company*  
 John Allan, *Edgar A. Poe's step-father*  
 Frances Valentine Allan, *John Allan's wife, Poe's step-mother*  
 Mother Tubbs, *Eliza's step-mother and nurse to Edgar and Rosalie*  
 Maria "Aunt Muddy" Clemm, *David Poe's sister and mother of Virginia*  
 Charles Tubbs, *Eliza Arnold Hopkins Poe's step-father*  
 Virginia Eliza Clemm, *at eight, Edgar's cousin, future wife*  
 Henry Clemm, *Muddy's son, Virginia Clemm Poe's brother*  
 Elizabeth Kemble Whitlock, *actress, important English theatre family*  
 Matthew Sully, Jr., *actor, at sixteen*  
 Robert Sully, *actor and artist, at nine*  
 Dr. Robert Carter, *Richmond doctor*  
 Thomas Abthorpe Cooper, *impressive English-born actor entrepreneur*  
 Mrs. French, *Susan Ingram's aunt*  
 John West, *Scottish actor*  
 Mr. Sollee, *theatre manager, Charleston*  
 John Myers, *about twenty-four, son of Norfolk millionaire merchant*  
 Biddy Bellaire, *lead character for Garrick play, Miss in Her Teens*  
 Fribble, *older foppish character in Miss in her Teens*  
 Tag, *accomplice of Biddy character*  
 The Captain, *handsome young male lead in Miss in her Teens*  
 Puff, *accomplice to The Captain character*  
 Mr. Edgar, *actor in Charleston, South Carolina*  
 J. P. Morgan, *one of the world's richest men, collector of famous autographs*  
 Dr. Robert Archer, *Army Surgeon at Fort Monroe, from Norfolk family*  
 Critic, *Rambler Magazine*  
 Rolla, *hero character of Sheridan's Pizarro*  
 Orano, *character in Sheridan's Pizarro*  
 Almagro, *character in Sheridan's Pizarro*  
 Inca priests, Virgins of the Sun, Spanish soldiers, *characters in Pizarro*  
 Adolescent girls and Adolescent boys, Young Boy, Young Children  
 Officers' and Women's Voices  
 Servants, Clerk

## ACT I

### Scene i

*An elderly lady, Miss Susan V.C. Ingram, arrives at the library of J. P. Morgan, one of the world's richest men. New York City, 1913. A free-standing display case center stage.*

*Aside is Edgar Allan Poe, poet and critic.*

EDGAR A. POE:

### Eldorado

Gaily bedight,  
A gallant knight,  
In sunshine and in shadow,  
Had journeyed long,  
Singing a song,  
In search of Eldorado.

But he grew old--  
This knight so bold,  
And o'er his heart a shadow  
Fell as he found  
No spot of ground  
That looked like Eldorado.

And, as his strength  
Failed him at length,  
He met a pilgrim shadow--  
'Shadow,' said he--  
'Where can it be--  
This land of Eldorado?'

'Over the Mountains  
Of the Moon,  
Down the Valley of the Shadow,  
Ride, boldly ride,'  
The shade replied, --  
'If you seek for Eldorado!'

CLERK:

It's this way, Miss Ingram. Mr. J. P. Morgan is expecting you.

SUSAN V. C. INGRAM:

Oh, what a lovely case you have placed it in.

J. P. MORGAN:

Oh, of course. It's the pride of my collection. Something I've always wondered,

Miss Ingram. What was he talking about when he yelled "Reynolds,"

"Reynolds," repeatedly at his death?

SUSAN V. C. INGRAM:

May I inquire as to how it came about that you obtained my--the poem?

J. P. MORGAN:

Oh we got both pieces, the five-page poem that Edgar Poe wrote down for you

and his attached letter, for one thousand dollars at auction.

SUSAN V. C. INGRAM:

Oh, I see. I don't suppose you could open the glass?

## Scene ii

*Fort Moultrie, Sullivan's Island, near Charleston, South Carolina, 1828.*

*Edgar Allan Poe, a soldier about nineteen years old, using the name Ed Perry, at left at a small desk, writing a letter.*

EDGAR A. POE:

To Mr. John Allan, Richmond, Virginia. From Edgar A. Perry, Fort

Moultrie, Sullivan's Island, South Carolina, December 1, 1828. Dear Pa, . . . what



chiefly gave me concern was hearing of your indisposition-- I could not help thinking that you believed me degraded and disgraced-- But at no period of my life, have I regarded myself with a deeper satisfaction, nor did my heart swell with more honorable pride. I have been in the American Army as long as suits my ends or my inclination, and it is now time that I should leave it-- To this effect I have made known my circumstances to Lieutenant Howard who promised me if it could be effected he would grant me my wish-- my discharge solely upon my reconciliation with yourself-- I am altered from what you knew me, and am no longer a boy tossing about on the world without aim or consistency. . . . I must conquer or die, --succeed or be disgraced. A letter addressed to Lieut: J. Howard assuring him of your reconciliation with myself . . . and desiring my discharge would be all that is necessary. Write me once more if you do not really forgive me, let me know how Ma preserves her health--

[*hesitates*] How should I send it, as I'm using my army name Ed Perry?

Sincerely, Edgar A. Poe

P. S. We are under orders to sail for Point Comfort, across from Norfolk, and will arrive there before your answer can be received. Address me at Fort Monroe, Virginia.

[*Poe seals letter, takes out a book, more writing, repeating lines of his early poetry.*]

Then--ah--then--I would awake  
To the terror of the lone lake.

.....  
 Death was in that poisonous wave,  
 And in its gulf a fitting grave  
 For him who thence could solace bring  
 To his lone imagining,  
 Whose solitary soul could make  
 An Eden of that dim lake

"Oh, that my young life were a lasting dream . . ."

". . . those wreathed friezes intertwine

. . . the viol, the violet, and the vine."

OFFSTAGE WOMAN'S VOICE:

Richmond, Virginia. December 15, 1828: Her parents announce the marriage of  
 Elmira Royster of Richmond to Alexander Barret Shelton.

MAN'S VOICE:

Norfolk, December 15. The ship *Harriet (of Bath) Johnson*, from Charleston,  
 with two companies of U. S. Troops anchored off Old Point this afternoon.

OFFICER'S VOICE:

Fortress Monroe, Old Point Comfort, Virginia. December 20. Colonel James  
 House. Special order No. 91--Private E. A. Perry of Company "H" and Joseph  
 Moore of Company "E" are detailed for duty in the Adjutant's office until further  
 orders.

[Poe writing, *Fortress Monroe, Old Point Comfort*.]

EDGAR A. POE:

December 22, 1828. To John Allan, from Edgar A. Perry: I wrote you shortly

before leaving Fort Moultrie and am much hurt at not receiving an answer-- Perhaps my letter has not reached you and under that supposition, I will recapitulate its contents-- Lieut. Howard has given me an introduction to Col. James House of the First Artillery, to whom I was before personally known only as a soldier of his regiment. He spoke kindly to me, told me that he was acquainted with my Grandfather General Poe, with yourself and family, and reassured me of my immediate discharge upon your consent-- I will be an honor to your name. Richmond and the United States were too narrow a sphere, and the world shall be my theatre--

Norfolk, December 28. To John McKenzie, Richmond. Dear friend John. How is your and my sister Rosalie? I must ask of you a favor. I have a good opportunity to get to the army academy at West Point. But it is dependent upon the reconciliation and consent of my stepfather John Allan. Please, whatever you could do to make him favor this move, would be appreciated.

*[Army sounds.]*

OFFICER'S VOICE:

Morning report, January 2, 1829. Artificer Perry has been promoted to Sergeant Major.

*[Poe in hospital bed. Attending is Dr. Robert Archer, Army Surgeon.]*

EDGAR A. POE:

Pa, . . .the appointment to West Point could easily be obtained either by your personal acquaintance with Mr. William Wirt-- or by the recommendation of

General Winfield Scott, or even of the officers residing at Fortress Monroe. . . .

You can have no idea of the immense advantages my present station in the army would give me in the appointment as a cadet--it would be an unprecedented case--my cadetship would be only a necessary form which I am sure I could run through in six months. This is the view of the case which many have taken in this regard.

You will remember how much I had to suffer upon my return from the University.

I never meant to offer a shadow of an excuse for the infamous conduct of myself and others at that place.

. . . Thank you, Dr. Archer-- [*Poe sits up and walks about.*]

It was however at the commencement of that year that I got deeply entangled in difficulty which all my after good conduct in the close of the session (to which all there can testify) could not clear away. I had never been from home before for any length of time.

#### WOMAN'S VOICE:

February 28, 1829. *The Richmond Whig*: The wife of John Allan, Frances Keeling Valentine Allan-- her mother was Frances Thorowgood, father John Valentine, both of the Norfolk area, has passed away . . . family members reside in Richmond and Norfolk . . .

[*Light hits Poe's stepmother Frances Allan reclining on her deathbed, as she entreats husband John Allan to be kind to Eddie. Dies.*]

[*John Allan's mansion in Richmond, Virginia. Interior. Draped for mourning.*

*Elaborate sideboard, silver candlesticks, etc. Edgar Poe and John Allan seated. John Allan to his desk. March 4, 1829. Servants.]*

JOHN ALLAN:

Edgar, I promised your stepmother Frances, that I would help you into West Point. She felt that it could satisfy your future needs. Hmm--let's see, how should I put it. . . .uh . . . To the Honorable Powhatan Ellis, Senator from Mississippi: Dear Sir, Your brother, Charles Ellis, has advised me that I would not be bold to write you concerning the matter of my adopted son, Edgar, and a desired appointment to West Point Army Academy. . . My wife, Frances Valentine, who recently passed away, was cousin to Margaret Nimmo, of Norfolk, to whom my partner, your brother, Charles Ellis, is married . . . If you can help me in this matter . . .

*[Poe paces the room. Servant at sideboard.]*

JOHN ALLAN:

Even though you missed the funeral, Edgar, you need appropriate clothes-- Here, present this note: Please to furnish Edgar A. Poe with a suit of black clothes, three pairs socks or half hose-- McCreary will make him also a pair of suspenders-- and hat--and knife, pair of gloves.

*[Allan passes note to servant at sideboard. Servant exits.]*

*[Fortress Monroe. Old Point Comfort, Virginia.]*

EDGAR A. POE:

Fortress Monroe. Old Point Comfort, Virginia. March 10, 1829:

Dear Pa, . . . Colonel House has left to congratulate Andrew Jackson on winning the Presidency-- so I have not yet seen him. In the mean time I am employing myself in preparing for the tests which will engage my attention at West Point should I be so fortunate as to obtain an appointment. I am anxious to retrieve my good name with friends and especially your good opinion. I think a letter of recommendation from Judge Barber, Major Gibbon and Colonel Preston forwarded to that address and a letter to Mr. Patterson requesting, if nothing would prevent that I may be regarded as a Bostonian.

EDGAR POE [ *takes the watercolor scene out of his trunk and reads the back*]:

"Boston harbor, morning 1808. For my little son Edgar, who should ever love Boston, the place of his birth, and where his mother found her best and most sympathetic friends." My real mother--Eliza Arnold Poe--the actress . . . my stepmother Frances Allan was a good person. She was from here-- It's an hour ride across Hampton Roads, to Norfolk . . . . They were always getting the news those last summers. [*Reading his own poetry:* ]

In visions of the dark night  
I have dreamed of joy departed  
But a waking dream of life and light  
Hath left me broken-hearted.

Ah! what is not a dream by day  
To him whose eyes are cast  
On things around him with a ray  
Turned back upon the past?

.....  
You are not wrong, who deem  
That my days have been a dream;  
Yet if Hope has flown away  
In a night, or in a day,

In a vision, or in none,  
Is it therefore the less gone?  
*All* that we see or seem  
Is but a dream within a dream.

I have been happy, but in a dream!

OFFICER VOICE:

April 20, 1829. J. Howard, Lieut. First Artillery: Edgar Poe served under my command June 1827 to January—1829, during which time his conduct was unexceptional . . . . He at once performed the duties of company clerk and subsistence promptly and faithfully done, his habits are good, and entirely free from drinking—

*[Poe looking from ramparts of Fortress Monroe toward Norfolk . Wearing army coat.]*

ANOTHER OFFICER VOICE:

. . . has been exemplary in his deportment, prompt, and faithful in the discharge of his duties . . .

ANOTHER OFFICER VOICE:

W. J. Worth, Commanding Officer, Fortress Monroe, Old Point Comfort:  
His education is of very high order, and he appears to be free from bad habits.  
In fact the testimony of Lt. Howard and Adjutant Griswold is full to that point.  
Understanding he is through his friends an applicant for cadet's warrant, I  
unhesitatingly recommend him as promising to acquit himself of the obligations of  
that station—

OFFICER VOICE:

Edgar A. Perry is herewith honorably released from the United States Army.

JOHN ALLAN:

John Allan, to Secretary of War, John Eaton: He stood his examination at [Jefferson's University] the close of the year with great credit to himself. His history is short. He is the grandson of the Quartermaster General Poe of Maryland, whose widow I understand still receives a pension for the Services...of her husband. —Frankly, Sir, I do declare that he is no relation to me whatever; that I have many in whom I take an interest to promote theirs with no other feeling than that every man is my care, if he be in distress. For myself I ask nothing. Pardon my frankness, but I address a soldier—

Scene i i i

*Baltimore. May 1829. The Poe Clemm home. A cramped, poor but clean, small household. Discovered are Edgar Allan Poe, his brother Henry Leonard Poe, about twenty-two years old, dissipated and drinking, Poe's father David's sister, tall and masculine Maria Poe Clemm (Muddy), her son Henry Clemm, her daughter Virginia Eliza (Sissy) Clemm, about eight years old, and paralyzed grandmother. Other cousins.*

EDGAR A. POE:

Dear Pa—I have yet to hear from West Point. It could be months, a year—I have no income—and have given up Byron as a model. I have been in Baltimore with my father's relatives for some time. My grandmother is here, very ill. You will remember that she supplied and made six hundred pairs of pants for Lafayette's troops. He came to visit her after we saw him in Richmond that time I marched



to his old headquarters. I left behind me a trunk of books and some letters.

Will you forward it to Baltimore. -- I have learned that I am the grandson of  
Benedict Arnold--

[Poe *tutors* Cousin Virginia Eliza Clemm (Sissy).]

MARIA (MUDDY) CLEMM:

Eliza, your mother the actress, Eddie, left you here until you were eight months old. You came here when you were a few months old and stayed five months. Your brother Henry has been here almost always. Your mother had her hands full with Henry here. Two children on the theatre circuit was too much for a twenty-one year old. And then later, poor little Rosalie, of course. By the time of your mother's death when you were three. . . at twenty-four, she knew way more than two-hundred roles . . . . Because I didn't marry my cousin's widowed husband til I was twenty-seven-- Then I had my Henry. Virginia's brother Henry Clemm, and your brother Henry Poe. Two Henrys in the house. . . . Eddie, I was your mother.

EDGAR A. POE:

Then I'll not call you Maria, but Muddy, like Virginia does.

VIRGINIA:

"Sissie."

MUDDY:

Virginia has a nice voice, like your mother. Though they aren't related, of course [*laughs*]. There was a closing piece your mother used to do, when she was just about Virginia's . . .

VIRGINIA:

"Sissie"

MUDDY:

. . . when she was just about Sissie's size. She did all types of characters—a versatile actress even as a child. A singer, and a real beauty. Virginia memorized her epilogue she did when she was nine:

VIRGINIA: [*crosses into light, and recites:*]

Accept my warmest thanks for favours shown;  
I claim no merit—candour is your own.  
But tho to merit I can lay no claim,  
To please has been my never-ceasing aim;  
And to effect this end, to me you find  
What various characters have been assigned,  
A miss just in her teens, a rigid nurse,  
A boy to please old maids, O lud! That's worse;  
Sometimes I have appeared a ghost, 'tis true,  
But yet—I'm flesh and blood—as well as you;  
A sailor too—"O pity, pity" Jack--  
Sun in a cloud, and taken all aback;  
A lover I have been—but how perplexing!  
And to our sex the thing is always vexing!  
But, Ladies, pardon me, 'twas by direction,  
And nothing—nothing—nothing—but a fiction.

[*Bows to clapping.*]

EDGAR POE:

According to the *Norfolk Beacon*, Mr. Mackenzie, my sister Rosalie's adopted father, has died there, rather suddenly.

HENRY POE:

Eddie, I really do not know what happened to our father, David. He just disappeared —we had a clipping that said in Norfolk . . .

MUDDY:

Your father, my brother David Poe, had gone to Norfolk on business. He was a law student who had done amateur parts here, and he saw your mother there on stage. She and young Matthew Sully were playing in *The Highland Reel*, opposite each other as Moggy McGilpin and Shelty.

EDGAR POE:

Yes, yes, that's my friend Robert Sully's family--from Richmond. His father, Matthew, Junior, acted with my real father and mother. And his uncle Thomas painted this small oval portrait that I brought with me from Richmond.

MUDDY:

There was a fight at the stage door. It was written up twice in the papers. As I said, David was there that night.

#### Scene iv

*STAGE DOOR PANTOMIME. An argument between theatre persons and a member of audience. David Poe emerges from the group and the offending person is thrown down the steps by the Sully sons and David. Calls for 'Captain Tazewell' and the 'Light Horse'. Sixteen-year old Eliza Arnold (Hopkins) is an observer. The young men stand aside and confer, and then part to the sound of horses. Eliza retreats. A young man stays behind admiring the plumage of the Captain.*

#### Scene v

MUDDY:

Then he determined to leave the study of law and become an actor. She was married at the time to Charles Hopkins. Later, they all three worked for the West's Company, later the Placide and Green, or the Green Company. It was headquartered in Norfolk. It built theatres in all the large cities of Virginia. They even built the Charleston, South Carolina, one. Mr. West's wife, Margaret, they lived in Norfolk around the corner from the headquarters theatre, the Fenchurch--was the sister of Matthew Sully, the famous actor acrobat. The children were in the theatre, some painted--scenery, that is . . . and then your mother's first husband died. Your parents were with other companies in Boston and New York. But one or both of them returned to the Green Company. After that, the Green Company did Fredericksburg, and some other small cities. The Green Company ended with the Richmond Theatre fire. Because some thought it was retribution. They built a church over their ashes. About ninety people died. The only actor that died was a little girl, the daughter of the Greens. And a musician perhaps--Maryanne Whitlock.

EDGAR POE:

You mean Monumental Church? We--the Allens--had a pew there, Number 80. Pa paid over \$300 for it. So, if my mother hadn't become sick, I might have been in the fire. For most of my childhood I thought she died in that fire. They still have not put me on the list for West Point. -- My stepfather Allan refuses to send me any money. I must go to Washington to see the Secretary of War. It's summer, I shall walk.

HENRY POE: [*Slightly drunk.*]

Eddie, you know how Allan's letter about our sister Rosalie, that is, now, our half-sister, I guess, disturbed me. But I put our ideas to good use, and the *North American* has published it:

For the *North American*

In a pocketbook I have lately found three locks of hair, from which originated the following lines:--

My Father's--I will bless it yet--  
For thou hast given life to me.  
Tho' poor the boon--I'll never forget  
The filial love I owe to thee.

My Mother's too!--Then let me press  
This gift of her I loved so well,--  
For I have had their last caress,  
And heard thy long, thy last, farewell.

My Rosa's! Pain doth dim my eye--  
When gazing on this pledge of thine--  
Thou wert a dream--a falsity--  
Alas! 'tis wrong to call thee mine!

A Father! He hath loved indeed.  
A mother!--she hath blessed her son,--  
But love is like the pois'ning wee,  
That taints the air it lives upon.

W.H.P

EDGAR POE:

It is amazing how much our two poems were alike. Did you know--I will confess Henry, that before I went into the army in Boston, I was in the theatre a little-- and I played in something in which our own mother had had the lead role, as Rosa. It was the *Foundling of the Forest*. Still, I somehow do not believe she

named our sister after that character. Even though she did play it earlier the same year of Rosa's birth. John Allan has a playbook signed by our actress grandmother Elizabeth Smith Arnold--she got married again in this country--  
What was his name?

HENRY POE:

Charles Tubbs, Muddy says.

EDGAR POE:

And, anyway, I took the name of that play, *Tamerlane*, for my first published book. Henry, my brother, I am so glad I came here. You know many of both our poems express the feeling I've always had that life is just a dream within a dream.

*[Eddie walks away to get his book.]*

HENRY POE:

Yes, Eddie, You know, being several years older, I can remember Mother more than you. Sometimes . . . I can even imagine her being like our cousin Virginia here.

*[Henry, in a drunken stupor . . .]*

*Black out.*

*The Time: 1798 The Place: Charleston, South Carolina. City Theatre stage.*

*Present are Eliza Arnold-- a pre-adolescent girl of ten with black curls about her face, dressed as a boy, but with very melodic, feminine voice. Elizabeth Kemble Whitlock, Charles Whitlock, Mr. Edgar, Eliza's step-father--Charles Tubbs, John West, and young male Sullys.*

MRS. ELIZABETH KEMBLE WHITLOCK:

Eliza, look at me. It's this. [*Manipulates fan*]

ELIZA:

Like so?

WHITLOCK:

Yes. You see there is a language here.

[*John West is mounting a ghost vertical trolley in the higher reaches of a gothic stained glass window. Sullys are helping.*]

ELIZA:

Mr. John West, you are a way up to the spheres.

JOHN WEST:

Yes, Eliza, and we do too deserve it. When the *Castle Spectre* was first done in Edinburgh, we called in a machinest just to devise this contraption. And then, the ghosts got to be all they would have-- There was a shortage of white linen in Dublin. So it was boo-BOOOO, instead of boo-HOO.

[*Matthew Sully, Jr. does cartwheels. Other Sully children painting scenery.*]

ELIZA:

You can not get the circus out of the boy. Though it looks like Tommy has a quieter soul; maybe someday he will take my picture-- Lucky Matthew . . . he didn't have to run away with the travelers--he was born upside down-- His ma a dresser/ His pa a clown-- Miss Whitlock has some new music.

-----  
*The Green Room, Same Theatre. Same time. City Theatre, Charleston. 1798.*

Mr. Edgar *working on his lines*.

ELIZA: [*Out theatre door.*]

You don't want to buy a ticket. All the best players refuse to play. Because they aren't paid. You can see it in the newspaper.

MRS. WHITLOCK:

Oh, little 'Liza.

ELIZA [*in boy's clothes*]:

Oh, Mrs. Whitlock, I do like playing in the boy's clothes. I can do the somersaults so better. And now, I'm your son [*sits on her knee*] in this piece.

MRS. WHITLOCK:

Yes, dear. Do you know ladies could not even act not so very long ago. My father helped to change that. Now my brother John Philip Kemble has been Manager ten years for Drury Lane. Although he seems to be having a tiff with the owner, Richard Sheridan. --A strange man though excellent playwright. He did *The Priestess* . . .

[*Mr. Sollee, the Manager, enters, and is irritated.*]

ELIZA:

The one called *Peru*?

MRS. WHITLOCK:

Mr. Reynolds translated that. John, my brother that's in charge of Drury Lane, he played *Hamlet* but it was against my older sister, Sarah Siddons, in *MacBeth*, that he made his mark. No American has ever played Hamlet.



ELIZA:

And I get to be a girl, Julia, in Mr. Siddons' play *Sicilian Romance*. In Charleston I have been a boy in four plays: the boy in *Adopted Child*. And a dead boy prince in *Richard III* . . .

MRS. WHITLOCK:

Julia is a big, big, part, Liza. Mr. Sollee. My husband and I should ever so much like our pay. It's overdue. And before you pay the painters for the volcano and the Charleston writer for this wicked Americana, we have needs.

MR. SOLLEE:

Well now, Miss Kemble--uh. Whitlock. You shall see it soon enough. I am the manager here. Some of you still owe me for board in Hartford.

MRS. WHITLOCK:

I wasn't in Hartford, Mr. Sollee. And I shant work under this lack of a arrangements.

[*Charles Tubbs enters with hammer and posters, out of breath.*]

CHARLES TUBBS:

You owe me \$43 for Eliza and her mother.

MR. SOLLEE:

Mr. Tubbs, Miss Eliza kept the britches we made her--and you, you owe me for her harlequin suit and \$38. board and fare.

MR. TUBBS:

Why, I haven't had any decent parts from you. Just useful parts. Useful to you.

MR. SOLLEE:

You don't know nobody in Charleston. I'll sue for damages, and you go to the debtors' gaol.

MR. EDGAR:

Well, I shall not play. None of us shall play. You'll be the one to get hissed.

The children have been out already making the announcements, beyond our control. *[Begins to hammer notices over theatre bills outside door.]*

SOLLEE:

I knew it, Mr. Edgar, you drunk, a plan between you and Whitlock.

*[Exits, followed by others.]*

VOICES OF CHILDREN:

Do not come to the theatre. The best players refuse to play. They are not paid.

## Scene vi

*Baltimore 1829 and Norfolk 1811. Edgar A. Poe, composing.*

EDGAR POE:

I have reached these lands but newly  
 From an ultimate dim Thule  
 From a wild weird clime that lieth, sublime  
 Out of SPACE--out of TIME  
 .....  
 By the lakes that thus outspread  
 Their lone waters, ...  
 .....  
 For the heart whose woes are legion  
 'T is a peaceful, soothing region--  
 For the spirit that walks in shadow  
 It is --oh, 't is an Eldorado!

EDITOR OF *THE AMERICAN MONTHLY* [ Nov. 1829. *Reading letter from Poe*]:

I am not yet twenty. The greater part of my poems *Al Aaraff*, *Tamerlane* and *Minor Poems*, were written before I was fifteen.

[*Editor Writes:*] Now the flame flashes up in a broad blaze, and now it reaches a marked verse--let us see--the fire devours as we read:

They use that moon no more

For the same end as before

Videlicit, a tent,

Which, I think, extravagant--

It is quite exciting to lean over eagerly as the flame eats in upon the letters, and make out the imperfect sentences and trace the faint strokes in the tinder as it trembles in the ascending air of the chimney. There, for instance, goes a gilt-edged sheet which we remember was covered with some sickly rhymes on *Fairyland*--

EDGAR POE:

Fairyland. Oh, maybe it wasn't a wise idea. [*Holds head down between hands.*]

[*Norfolk, 1811*]

VOICES OF CHILDREN: [*Children doing acrobatics, standing on boxes, dancing, etc.*

*on a meadowland near a huge oak tree, suggestion of the sea nearby. Present are*

*Poe's mother, Eliza, twenty-three, Nancy Green, seven, William J. Grinson, six,*

Robert Sully, *nine*, *young* Henry Placide, *others* . . . Mother Tubbs.]

NANCY GREEN:

Hedgar! Hedgar! Fairyland. Look, we have a river. Lets do the part where I save you from the sea. [*She spreads out a large cloth, and motions that he come sit on it. He gets behind a little hill, and is pulled along on a piece of cloth. It is optional as to whether a child, or imagination is used.*]

ELIZA:

Will, Nancy-- Bring Edgar over here--, don't get near the real water! Anncy, Annie Green. Here, Mother Tubbs, take Rosalie. Annabel Lee. William J. Grinson! Let one of the other children show you before you try that! Nancy, Mother Tubbs calls Eddie *Hedgar* because she's Welsh. An actress needs to listen. But we just call him Eddie.

#### Scene v i i

*New York City. 1809. Park Theatre, America's largest. Noise of the two-thousand seat theatre. Twenty-year old Edgar Poe at stage left, dozing off.*

*Inside wing Eliza as Inca Cora, David Poe as Spaniard Alonzo. Mother Tubbs holding Edgar, the infant. Thomas A. Cooper to play Pizarro. If same actor plays twenty-year old Poe and his father David, he may leave sleep, place on appropriate garment and join Eliza. Characters Almagro, Orano, Rolla,*

THOMAS A. COOPER:

David Poe will replace Hopkins Robertson, who is indisposed, in tonight's

performance, as Alonzo.

ELIZA:

You did Alonzo before, David. With Payne and me in Boston.

*[Cooper becomes Pizarro on stage]:*

PIZARRO:

Where have you concealed your wives and your children?

ORANO:

In the hearts of their husbands and their fathers.

PIZARRO:

Knowest thou Alonzo?

ORANO:

Knowest him? Alonzo! Know him! Our nation's benefactor! The guardian  
angel of Peru.

PIZARRO:

By what has he merited that title?

ALMAGRO:

Who is this Rolla, joined with Alonzo in command?

ORANO:

I will answer that; for I love to hear and repeat the hero's name. Rolla, the  
kinsman of the king is the idol of our army: in war, a tiger chafed by the hunters'  
spear; in peace, more gentle than the unweaned lamb. Cora was once betrothed  
to him; but, finding she preferred Alonzo, he resigned his claim, and, I fear, his

peace, to friendship and to Cora's happiness; yet still he loves her with a pure and holy fire.

PIZARRO:

Romantic savage! . . . . I shall meet this Rolla soon.

*[Behind back of stage prop. Back of it to our audience.]*

DAVID:

Time to go. I'm getting it confused with another role I had in this play.

ELIZA:

We'll help you.

*[Eliza and David place themselves on stage.]*

*On Stage: Act II of Pizarro, Scene i--[A Bank surrounded by a wild wood, and rocks.*

*Cora is discovered playing with her CHILD. ALONZO hanging over them with delight.]*

ELIZA as Cora:

Now, confess! Does he resemble thee or not?

DAVID POE as Alonzo:

Indeed, he is liker thee--thy rosy softness, thy smiling gentleness.

ELIZA as Cora:

But his auburn hair, the colour of his eyes, Alonzo. Oh, my lord's image, and my heart's adored. *[Presses the CHILD to her bosom.]*

DAVID as Alonzo:

The little darling urchin robs me, I doubt, of some portion of thy love, my Cora.  
At least he shares caresses that til his birth, were only mine.

ELIZA as Cora:

Oh, no, Alonzo! A mother's love for her sweet babe is not a stealth from the dear father's store; it is a new delight that turns with quickened gratitude to him, the author of her augmented bliss.

DAVID as Alonzo:

Could Cora think me serious?

ELIZA as Cora:

I am sure he will speak soon: then will be the last of the three holidays allowed by Nature's sanction to the fond, anxious, mother's heart.

DAVID as Alonzo:

And what are those three?

ELIZA as Cora:

The ecstasy of his birth I pass; that in part is selfish: but when first the white blossoms of his teeth appear: breaking the crimson buds that did incase them, that is a day of joy; next, when from the father's arms he runs without support, and clings, laughing, and delighted, to his mother's knees, that is the mother's heart's next holiday; and sweeter still the third, whene'er his little stammering tongue shall utter the grateful sound of father! mother!

DAVID as Alonzo:

Heaven and Rolla!

ELIZA as Cora:

Yes . . . and are you not grateful to them, Alonzo? Art thou not happy?

DAVID as Alonzo:

Can Cora ask that question?

ELIZA as Cora:

Why then of late, so restless on thy couch? Why to my waking and watching ear  
so often does the stillness of the night betray thy struggling sighs?

DAVID as Alonzo:

Hasten then to the concealment in the mountains; where all our matrons and  
virgins, and our warriors' offspring, are allotted to await the issue of the war. Cora  
will not alone resist her husband's, her sister's and her monarch's wish.

ELIZA as Cora:

[*Shouts without.*] Does the king approach?

DAVID as Alonzo:

No, 'tis the general placing the guard that will surround the temple during the  
sacrifice. 'Tis Rolla that comes, the first and best of heroes.

DAVID: [*Off stage.*]

Oh, why did I have to get this part with no rehearsal, especially after the hateful  
memory of John Howard Payne is still in my head. He's just a lucky little pain  
with a big mouth. And Eliza plays against him, making him the first American  
*Hamlet*. Cooper is a much better Rolla than Payne could begin to be.

.....

*Scene ii. [The Temple of the Sun. High Priests, Priests, Virgins of the Sun, Peruvian  
leader and warriors, Alonzo, Rolla, Cora and CHILD.]*



ELIZA as Cora:

Farewell, Alonzo! Remember thy life is mine!.

ROLLA: [*As she is passing him.*]

Not one farewell to Rolla!

ELIZA as Cora: [*giving him her hand*].

Farewell. The God of War be with you. But bring me back Alonzo. [*Exit with CHILD*].

DAVID as Alonzo:

For the king and Cora!

ROLLA:

For Cora and the king. [*Exeunt severally. Alarms without.*]

*Side Stage: Eliza is in front wing with Baby Poe..*

ELIZA as Cora [*with her CHILD (little Poe) in her arms runs through the ranks.*]

Where is Alonzo? Give this child his father.

ROLLA: [*Turns away.*]

Alonzo has not been found.

ELIZA as Cora:

Is he not dead? Speak out. Is this child fatherless? Not found. What mean you.

Will not you, Rolla, tell me the truth?

ROLLA:

Alonzo is taken prisoner by the Spaniards.

ELIZA as Cora:

Yes, Yes, 'tis clear. He fell. At a distance, you looked on and smiled. You could have saved him--but did not.

....

SPANISH SOLDIER:

What shall we do with this child?

PIZARRO:

What is the imp to me? Bid them toss it into the sea.

[Pizarro dies; Rolla dies, and is borne off at end.]

DAVID *on side*: [Losing confidence, drinking.]

Ataliba. Ataliba. Altaliba. Aton.

*Final scene:*

DAVID as Alonzo:

Ataliba! think not I wish to check the voice of triumph, when I entreat . . . .

we . . .

[A solemn march. Procession of Peruvian soldiers, bearing Rolla's body on bier, surrounded by Military trophies. Priests and Priestess chant a dirge. Alonzo and Cora kneel on either side of Rolla's body, and kiss his hands in silent agony. The curtain slowly descends.]

ELIZA:

David. You were drinking with Robertson!

[Cast Bows.]

[Mixed reaction from audience. New York audiences could be very rude. Hissing. Food throwing.]

THE *RAMBLER* MAGAZINE CRITIC:

Mr. Poe was Mr. Robertson's substitute in Alonzo; and a more wretched Alonzo have we never witnessed. This man was never destined for the highwalks of the drama—a footman is the extent of what he ought to attempt; and if by accident like that of this evening he is compelled to walk without his sphere, it would bespeak more of sense in him to read the part than attempt to act it; —his person, voice, and non-expression of countenance, all combine to stamp him—*poh! et praeterea nihil.* [*Critic ridicules southern pronunciation of "Poe" to sound of French word for chamber pot.*] Pooh! Pooh!

On a Chamber Pot

Let us pay homage to the Editor of the *Rambler's Magazine*  
He can judge the talents of every actor by his face  
Following him everywhere/Never in good taste  
Mr. Pot/Poe bears the mark

His father was a pot/His mother was a pitcher  
His grandmother was a pint.

ELIZA:

David! David!

*Curtain*

*Intermission*

1849. *Front curtain down.*

MAN'S VOICE:

Edgar A. Poe's recent lecture was brilliant. But as he spoke of Virginia, his wife,

the tears ran in torrents. He described her in a most touching manner, as too beautiful for words, lovely as an angel. A visitor to her mother says she is spoken of as reverently since her death, as just that—as if she had been an angel walking on earth.

[*A young boy in front of curtain.*]

OTHER MEN'S VOICES:

*The Richmond Banner of Temperance:* Edgar A. Poe has joined our Sons of Temperance, and we welcome him in his pledge of abstinence from alcohol and spirits and to the good that his able pen might effect.

*The Raleigh Times:* Poe has joined the Temperance League.

*The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin:* Edgar Poe has joined the Sons of Temperance.

*The Boston Museum:* Poe has joined in a pledge to the Temperance League.

[*Edgar Poe crosses in front of curtain.*]

*The Dollar Newspaper* reports that Poe has pledged abstinence to alcohol.

*The Flag of our Union:* Edgar A. Poe is a member of the non-drinking league.

*The Richmond Whig:* *The Banner of Temperance* of Richmond reports that Poe has joined the Temperance union.

BOY:

Are you the poet?

EDGAR POE:

Yes. I will be leaving for Norfolk tomorrow, for a few weeks, where I am to lecture to the boys' academy there. Are you walking far?

## ACT II

### Scene i

*Hygeia Hotel. Old Point Comfort, by Fortress Monroe, Virginia. Sunday, September 9, 1849. Moonlight over the ocean. A long, columned hotel veranda. Some friends who have accompanied Poe from Norfolk, adults and some adolescent girls, among them almost nineteen year old Susan C. V. Ingram (dark hair, center part, pulled back), all in white dresses. A few young men, one with a guitar. A shooting star.*

MRS. FRENCH:

Oh, the songs were wonderful. Mr. Poe. It is a perfect night for poetry. We would so like to hear one of your famous orations. Would you do something for us?

EDGAR POE:

Yes, I have one I just sold to Sartain the engraver for his magazine in Philadelphia. And this is a very appropriate setting.

#### Annabel Lee

It was many and many a year ago,  
     In a kindgdom by the sea,  
 That a maiden there lived whom you may know  
     By the name of Annabel Lee--  
 And this maiden she lived with no other thought  
     Than to love and be loved by me.

She was a child and I was a child,  
     In this kingdom by the sea,  
 But we loved with a love that was more than love--  
     I and my Annabel lee--

With a love that the winged seraphs of Heaven  
Coveted her and me.

And this was the reason that, long ago,  
In this kingdom by the sea.  
A wind blew out of a cloud by night  
Chilling my Annabel Lee  
So that her highborn kinsmen came  
And bore her away from me,  
To shut her up in a sepulchre  
In this kingdom by the sea.

The angels, not half so happy in heaven,  
Went envying her and me:--  
Yes! That was the reason (as all men know,  
In this kingdom by the sea)  
That the wind came out of a cloud, chilling  
And killing my Annabel Lee.

But our love it was stronger by far than the love  
Of those who were older than we--  
Of many far wiser than we--  
And neither the angels in Heaven above  
Nor the demons down under the sea,  
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul  
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee:--

For the moon never beams without bringing me dreams  
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee:  
And the stars never rise but I see the bright eyes  
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;  
And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side  
Of my darling, my darling, my life and my bride,  
In her sepulchre there by the sea--  
In her tomb by the side of the sea.

*WHISPERING:*

It is about his wife Virginia, who passed two years ago.

*WHISPERING:*

He is almost engaged to his first attachment, Elmira Royster Shelton.

[*Soft clapping.*]

MRS. FRENCH:

We must ask him when we can get it and about his new magazine, *The Stylus*.

EDGAR POE:

I shall finish by reading to you a new poem, *Ulalume*. I have added a new ending.

### Ulalume -- A Ballad

The skies they were ashen and sober;  
     The leaves they were crisped and sere--  
     The leaves they were withering and sere:  
 It was night, in the lonesome October  
     Of my most immemorial year.  
     It was Hard by the dim lake of Auber,  
 In the misty mid region of Weir--  
     It was down by the dark tarn of Auber--  
 In the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.

Here once, through an alley Titanic,  
     Of cypress, I roamed with my Soul--  
     Of cypress, with Psyche, my Soul,  
 These were days when my heart was volcanic  
     As the scoriac rivers that roll--  
     As the lavas that restlessly roll  
 Their sulphurous currents down Yanek  
     In the ultimate climes of the Pole--  
 That groan as they roll down Mount Yanek  
     In the realms of the Boreal Pole.

Our talk had been serious and sober,  
     But our thoughts they were palsied and sere--  
     Our memories were treacherous and sere;  
 For we knew not the month was October;  
     And we marked not the night of the year:  
     (Ah, night of all nights in the year!)--  
 We noted not the dim lake of Auber  
     (Though once we had journeyed down here)--  
 We remembered not the dank tarn of Auber,  
     Not the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.

And now, as the night was senescent  
     And star-dials pointed to morn--  
     As the star-dials hinted of morn--  
 At the end of our path a liquescent  
     And nebulous lustre was born,  
 Out of which a miraculous crescent  
     Arose with a duplicate horn--  
 Astarte's bediamonded crescent  
     Distinct with its duplicate horn.

And I said: "She is warmer than Dian;  
     She rolls through an ether of sighs-  
     She revels in a region of sighs.  
 She has seen that the tears are not dry on  
     These cheeks, where the worm never dies,  
 And has come past the stars of the Lion,  
     To point us the path to the skies--  
     To the Lethean peace of the skies--  
 Come up, in despite of the Lion,  
     To shine on us with bright eyes--  
 Come up through the lair of the Lion,  
     With love in her luminous eyes."

But, Psyche uplifting her finger,  
     Said: Sadly this star I mistrust--  
     Her pallor I strangely mistrust:  
 Ah, hasten!--ah, let us not linger!  
     Ah, fly!--let us fly--for we must."  
 In terror she spoke, letting sink her  
     Wings till they trailed in the dust--  
 In agony sobbed, letting sink her  
     Plumes till they trailed in the dust--  
     Till they sorrowfully trailed in the dust.

I replied: "This is nothing but dreaming:  
     Let us on by this tremulous light!  
     Let us bathe in this crystalline light!.  
 Its Sybillic splendor is beaming  
     With Hope and in Beauty to-night:--  
     See!-- it flickers up the sky through the night!--  
 Ah, we safely may trust to its gleaming,  
     And be sure it will lead us aright--  
 We surely may trust to a gleaming,  
     That cannot but guide us aright,  
     Since it flickers up to Heaven through the night."



Then I pacified Psyche and kissed her,  
 And tempted her out of her gloom--  
 And conquered her scruples and gloom;  
 And we passed to the end of the vista,  
 But were stopped by the door of a tomb--  
 By the door of a legended tomb;  
 And I said: "What is written, sweet sister,  
 On the door of this legended tomb?"  
 She replied: "Ulalume--Ulalume!--  
 'T is the vault of thy lost Ulalume!"

Then my heart it grew ashen and sober  
 As the leaves that were crisped and sere--  
 As the leaves that were crisped and sere;  
 And I cried: "It was surely October  
 On this very night of last year  
 That I journeyed--I journeyed down here!--  
 That I brought a dread burden down here--  
 On this night of all nights in the year,  
 Ah, what demon hath tempted me here?  
 Well I know, now, this dim lake of Auber--  
 This misty mid region of Weir--  
 Well I know, now, this dank tarn of Auber,  
 This ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir."

Said we, then--the two, then: "Ah, can it  
 Have been that the woodlandish ghouls--  
 The pitiful, the merciful ghouls--  
 To bar up our way and to ban it  
 From the secret that lies in these wolds--  
 From the thing that lies hidden in these wolds--  
 Have drawn up the spectre of a planet  
 From the limbo of lunar souls--  
 This sinfully scintillant planet  
 From the Hell of the planetary souls?"

EDGAR POE:

The last verse is entirely new. I am not sure that it was clear to you.

SUSAN V. C. INGRAM:

Yes, I understand it perfectly.

MRS. FRENCH:

Mr. Poe, please write down for us the proper address and details for your new magazine—it sounds enthralling.

EDGAR POE: [*Sits hesitantly by Susan.*]

I am not sure I understand it myself. We shall have to talk more of it. I shall see you at my reading at the Norfolk Academy I do hope, Friday—

[*Stands.*] I have a whole week. Would you accompany me to see the cook?

SUSAN V. C. INGRAM:

The cook?

EDGAR POE:

Yes, I need some wheat flour for paste, and I have left my pen knife behind also.

Some of my essay lectures have gone askew, and I must reconstruct one tonight.

SUSAN :

Yes, I think I shall be able to come to your lecture. I will be in school nearby, and going home with my cousins— I stay over all the time. I almost live there. And since my father is a doctor, he gets paid in more vegetables than we can eat or trade, especially this time of year, he has to send the wagon in for both the Tuesday and Saturday market. Just like the Myers' sons can jump on almost any ship, I can always get on that wagon. Anyhow, its really easy to my house, by way of the Elizabeth River. You just keep on going up creeks til you get there. The newspaper man and historian, William J. Grinson, will be attending, I am sure. My family will trust me to him— Rather than the paraquets.

EDGAR POE:

The paraquets?

SUSAN:

Yes, an acting troupe of trained paraquets is to be your competition at the Avon Theatre.

EDGAR POE:

The Avon. I don't recall that one. There was another?

SUSAN:

Yes the Fenchurch Theatre. Its not there now. It was rented out to the Methodists--

EDGAR POE:

So, I am to compete with many, many voices--

*[Both exit and return with Poe carrying small jar and short brush.*

*She carries seagull feathers and large shells.]*

EDGAR POE:

Paraquets. One of the poems I published when I was barely twenty and which was placed in the introduction also of my 1831 edition uses that metaphor. It begins "Romance...

Romance, who loves to nod and sing,  
With drowsy head and folded wing,  
Among the green leaves as they shake  
Far down within some shadowy lake,  
To me a painted paroquet  
Hath been--a most familiar bird--  
Taught me my alphabet to say--  
To lisp my very earliest word  
While in the wild-wood I did lie,

A child—with a most knowing eye.

Are you saying your inspiration is from real life?

EDGAR POE:

*[No response.]*

You say your father is a doctor. I am looking for information on my Aunt Muddy's son, Henry Clemm, who went to sea, never to return. There is a retired ship's surgeon in Norfolk, but I shall need all the help I can find. My own brother Henry is deceased, and it makes me gloomy to think of Muddy being all alone. And, as, I suppose is often the case, I'm more and more curious as to the lives of my parents there, and the fate of my own father. Perhaps your father would recall something of use.

SUSAN:

My mother's father was a ship captain and he died at sea. He does have an interest.

EDGAR POE:

I am going to the rooms to work on assembling my Norfolk Academy lecture. I believe I will make a few changes in it. Could I be of service to you in any way beforehand?

SUSAN:

Oh, no. You have performed a great courtesy already with your reading of *Ulalume*. It spoke to me, in its beauty.

EDGAR POE:

I just realized it almost breaks my own rule about a poem not being able to sustain itself too long. Five pages— Now you understand why I need the glue. I like to paste them together end to end into a sort of scroll. I shall make you a copy.

SUSAN:

Oh, I couldn't infringe. But, I should go back to my friends to bid farewell. Some of them are at the last of their holiday before leaving for the university. I will be here tomorrow, and I could assist you in some copying, if any remains to be done. [Exits.]

*Next day, Monday, September 10, 1849. Scene of Edgar Poe and Susan Ingram sitting on veranda, cutting pens, copying, playing with shells.*

EDGAR POE: *[Susan is copying].*

I somewhat wrote a book on shells. I find fascinating the way their designs are organized. I have a collection at Fordham. This is my sister Rosalie's job. She teaches handwriting at Mrs. McKenzie's school, and she sharpens all the pens.

SUSAN:

My! look at that broad jump. I wish I could go in the water.

EDGAR POE:

You would love it. When I was a young showoff I swam up the James for seven miles. I once broadjumped, I believe it was actually twenty feet. Even more on a declivity.

SUSAN:

But, that's impossible.

EDGAR POE:

No. Not at all. I ruined my gaiters at Fordham jumping. And I lost a shoe in Philadelphia just recently. My friend Sartain had to lend me his shoes. Here, I'll show you.     *[Poe exits, removing a shoe. Susan stands up and runs behind.*

*Blackout.]*

*Point Comfort. Same day, Monday evening.*

POE: *[Poe returns to a desk, stands and writes.]*

Monday Evening, September 10. Dear Muddy, Hold yourself in readiness as well as you can, my own darling mother, for my marriage and your removal from Fordham. I think--that it will certainly take place--I have met many new friends in Norfolk-- Do not dispose of anything yet. There is many a slip between the cup and the lip-- I confess that my heart sinks at the idea of this marriage.

*[Seals letter, and finishes copying out a manuscript. Completes pasting from the wheat paste jar the five pages into a scroll and writes another letter:]* Monday evening.

I have transcribed *Ulalume* with much pleasure, dear Miss Ingram, --as I am sure I would do anything else at your bidding--but I fear that you will find the verses scarcely more intelligible to-day in my manuscript than last night in my recitation. I would endeavor to explain to you what I really meant, --or what I really fancied I meant by the poem, if it were not that I remember Dr. Johnson's bitter and rather just remarks--about the folly of explaining what, if worth explanation, would explain itself-- He has a happy witticism, too, about some

book, which he calls "as obscure as an explanatory note." Leaving *Ullalume* to its fate, therefore, and in good hands, I am yours truly, Edgar A. Poe.

*[Puts on his coat, takes the scroll and letter, possibly inserts it under door.]*

*Or passes to servant. A resort band is playing dance music. Exits.]*

### Scene i i

*Norfolk, Virginia. Wednesday, September 12, 1849. Discovered are Susan Ingram and William Grinson standing outside the wall of the burying ground of St. Paul's Episcopal Church. Enter Edgar Poe. He stops and buys buttonhole and another flower from child.*

SUSAN:

I don't understand, Mr. Grinson. Why is the street over from this corner of the Borough Church called Fenchurch? Is not a Fen a tarn or water area--a marsh? There is none. And this one where we stand is called Marsh or Cove?

GRINSON:

O, but yes. It was parallel to Church Street, but by the fen. The great inlet came to here from the east side--later as it filled, it became marshy. Here where we are was the only land crossover from the island of Norfolk to the rest of it, as Town Back Creek came up from this other side. Even here could be quite a bog. A man published a story the early part of the century--he lost his shoe in the mud right--right here in the street. Sent his help to look for it. But, it never surfaced. There, where your aunt Maxwell and cousins live on Bermuda Street is original, though. The nicest homes were built there. Oh, but yes, there were great waterways to

both sides. The one that came in the Town Back Creek entrance stretched almost to Freemason Street and over to the Wishing Tree Meadow. Boats used it. Here at the Borough Church, was the only way out of town, off the island of Norfolk--if you went straight ahead down to the Elizabeth harbor, that was where the witch ducking stool was--but I don't know that it was used for more than a threat-- Poe, hello. William J. Grinson--historian, fellow journalist and poet.

EDGAR POE: [*Extends hand*]

And good morning, Miss Susan V. C. Ingram. [*To Grinson*] You are in the publications business. I have a new four dollar magazine, to be called *The Stylus*. My partner lives in the midwest, but it will originate from New York, or another city. So this is the old Borough Church. It was bombarded the first day of 1776. I remember from a visit here when I was six.

SUSAN:

Yes, there were cannonballs about. There are some interesting stones.

GRINSON:

And for how long was that, that you were here.

EDGAR POE:

Oh, probably a week. Norfolk was the last American land I was on for five years. My step-parents, the Allans, my Aunt Anne Moore Valentine--we call her Nancy--and myself, went to live in London and Scotland from the time I was six until I was eleven. Right after the last war with England was over. Of course, we had to visit the relatives here--living in Norfolk, before going away. Both she and my step-mother Frances, who often was called Nancy, too, were from



the surrounding area. Their mother was a Thorowgood.

GRINSON:

Poe, we have a lot to talk about. Also, you are getting to be very well known in France. I have an appointment. I shall have to catch up with you later.

*[Grinson Exits.]*

EDGAR POE:

Before I came back to Virginia, I knew a wonderful woman poet, in Providence. We spent a lot of time in Swan Cemetery. It is strange that this is where much courting is done these days. But, here is one of our few histories. What is that marker? The headstone says the "Green Company of Fredericksburg, December 1811." That is about the time of my real parents' deaths. Is it a riddle? Did Fort Norfolk exist then?

SUSAN:

Perhaps the Green Mountain boys of the Revolution? There may have been a small epidemic. I lost my great-grandmother that very same time, I think. She is in Portsmouth. As I might have told you Monday, my dad knows all that. My mother's father was a sea captain and died at sea. But they must have been using the burial ground, if it says "1811."

EDGAR POE:

An Irish poet who wrote some of his best poetry here in Norfolk, Thomas Moore, fell in love with an actress. Actually, he married her sister, also a player. One of the family graves just said "Duff and Company."

SUSAN:

I have read him! I do wish we had a real library. The one that the Maxwells had on Wolfe Street closed--as did the Athenaeum. But there are a few places . . . .

R. C. Barclay has some good titles in right now.

EDGAR POE:

Susan V. C. Ingram--a long name. I know a poetess in Richmond, Susan Archer Talley, with Norfolk roots. Her uncle tended me when I was ill as a soldier at Fortress Monroe. She has some talents--Rufus Griswold has her in his *Female Poets of America*. And there was an older child, Susan Reynolds, in England. So now I have three special Susans. Susan Reynolds wrote my stepfather Allan "to please kiss Eddie for me." Foolishly, I still yearn for that.

SUSAN:

My cousin Mrs. Susan Maxwell and her family are expecting you today.

EDGAR POE:

There is a Captain Tubbs advertising trips to Baltimore, in the one of the newspapers. Do you know of him? My real mother's step-father was of that name, and he was last seen in Baltimore. Perhaps something happened to him, or he went on a whaling voyage. He was certainly familiar with ships, as the players moved continually up and down the coast. Of course, if I ask about that, I need to find out for dear Muddy what I can about her son Henry Clemm, who like my brother Henry went to sea. We have never known what happened to her son, my wife Virginia's brother. Perhaps I should visit your father.

[Grinson re-enters.]

GRINSON:

That did not take as long as I expected. We are setting to work on these streets. Some outside lights are going up now. [*Distant howling of dog.*] The newspaper has a campaign to get these dogs off the street. And to do something about the youngsters roaming at night. [*Mooing, and bell ringing of cow.*] These cows have always been here. [*They move aside for a coming cow.*] They just find their way home at night. But we rounded up twenty, and expect to solve the problem.

EDGAR POE:

Well, you know, Grinson, all cities have packs of dogs roaming about.

GRINSON:

Yes, but we hope to do better. Over there, I expect to plant fruit trees, and a piece of this land is reserved for mulberries. There is no reason for us to haggle with the Orient about silk. We can nurture silkworms right here.

EDGAR POE:

Did not George Sandys try that in Jamestown?

GRINSON:

He may have. But he was only investigating a great number of things in a shallow way. But did you know that besides setting up the iron furnace and being a glassmaker, he was a poet?

EDGAR POE:

Yes, I know he did a credible translation of the *Metamorphosis*. Imagine him

sitting in Jamestown Fort, translating the great classics. And his work with the couplet preceded the Neo-classicists.

GRINSON:

Yes, and Will Strachey was there. I write poetry myself. I shall have to show it to you. I have an *Athena* by Sully you have to see. First, let's visit William Wilson Lamb and Dr. Selden. [*Young boys run by. Two members of the Norfolk Light Artillery Blues walk by.*]

### Scene i i i

*Norfolk. Same day, Wednesday, September 12, 1849. Edgar Poe and Grinson in the Newspaper office, near the Marketplace, at the docks. Outside are shipmasts and dock sounds. Sounds of ships creaking, horses and wagons. French island patois, British, German accents, others.*

GRINSON: [*With map.*]

The lake originally came up to the Myers' house garden, from the now narrower channel called Town Back Creek. That, along with water from the other side, causing a virtual island of Norfolk. The cut off shallow lake remains. Between it and the sea is the tree called the Wishing Oak. That was there when you were a very small child, of course-- By the Governor Tazewell's, and the waterfront meadow by the sea. My father was the first Presbyterian minister and he established the church with the town's first churchbell. I was born across from it, catycorner from the Myers' home. Behind the Myers' house on Brewer

Street, is a boarding house where actors frequently stayed. It was adjacent to the lake, or tarn.

EDGAR POE:

Why did you say, when I was a child?

GRINSON:

Because we played together when we were children. Your mother was Scotch, was she not. No, your real mother. We lived around the corner from her. I am three years older you know. You lived here within a block of the Bell Church, behind the Myers' house--the summer after she had done *The Caravan* by Reynolds. I have the theatre bills in my office. What a show that was! And now we have--trained paroquets. I was six when you were close to three. As a six-year old--I knew everybody. A six-year old knows everybody.

EDGAR POE:

Then why did I not see you when I was here at six.

GRINSON:

Could be several reasons--it was summer and I was away. I was sick and inside reading, or, reading and writing, or because a nine-year old doesn't want to be near a six-year old. The theatre children were fascinating. But they did not live here anymore, after the 1811 Richmond theatre fire. I lost my father, here. Then my mother married another minister. [*Distant bell.*] Tell you what, Poe. I know you want to research. I have a key to the premises that I can give you. Of course, there is a lot of distraction down here at the marketplace docks. But you can even sleep here if you wish. [*Distant ringing of bell.*]

The bells, bells, bells,  
 What a world of merriment their melody foretells  
 How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,

In the icy air of night! [*Recites hoarsely*]

.....  
 Keeping time, time, time,  
 In a sort of runic rhyme  
 To the tintinnabulation that so musically swells  
 From the bells, bells, bells, bells--

That young medical student, Nash. He has got this down. He got a copy  
 somehow. I guess somebody copied it at Susan Maxwell's.

Hear the mellow wedding bells

Golden bells! [*The sound of a harmonium. Black out.*]

#### Scene i v

*Boarding House in Norfolk, Virginia. August 1811. Bells tolling. Present are Eliza Poe, ill abed, Edgar Poe, going on three, infant Rosalie with a Nurse, Mother Tubbs (Eliza's stepmother), and some perhaps lesser players of Placides and Green's Theatrical Company, who have come back from Richmond to take them there. Mother Tubbs is giving the children bread and a hanky soaked in gin to quiet them. Creaking ships.*

DRIVER/PLAYER:

That New Bell Church, Pastor Grinson's first Presbyterian, 's not the soun' of the bell what 're used to, is it Miss Liza? Remember the old Bell in Richmond, to call us to the market place, cause we did no' have a theatre. Well, we got a new

theatre there now--and we'll be catching up with that motley crew. Gode, Eddie, listen t' them things go. [*Church bells tolling.*] They're right on top of you here. I thinks I like the cannon they fire better. Well, we're going to get you to Richmond. They got a part for you, Eddie, a Cupid, like a little fairy, with wings--and mom Eliza, here. Who was it came to see you last year this time--the Governor's lady?--when little Rosalie was a new one. No' many skips out on Governor Mrs. Tazewell-- And remember they got the Wishing Oak and Fairyland right there at their house. Bells. And what for. Preacherman Grinson. Has his little William been over. I guess he's about six and to be going to Academy this year, Eddie. Unless he's still getting tutored. Did you teach him music, Eliza? [*Eliza turns, sits up, scribbles on paper.*] You to go by boat or wagon. Supposing Mr. David does come? What are you writing? A thank you to Mr. Myers?

*[Actual memory has come back to Edgar Poe of himself at almost three years of age. He does not have to appear on stage.]*

YOUNG EDGAR POE:

Where Annie?            Where Annie?    Where Anniebel Green?

Annie.            Anniebel Green.

MOTHER TUBBS:

Nancy--Annie, has gone with her momma and daddy to Richmond, Hedgar. Because they have to work at the playhouse. Her daddy Mr. Green is the boss now. We will go soon. After your mother gets a little rest. And we want to see

if your father gets back. Are we going by ship, or stagecoach? That would be fun wouldn't it. On a wagon you can see more things than on the ship.

Remember the big ship from Charleston.

#### Scene v

*Norfolk. Norfolk Academy for Boys Interior, Podium. Friday, September 14, 1849.*

*9:15pm. Poe has completed his talk on The Poetic Principle. Grinson and Susan Ingram attending.*

EDGAR POE:

"So quoth the Raven nevermore." No doubt there are some present who would prefer that I had used my original plan to write about a talking parrot and not a raven. [*Applause.*] In conclusion, those are the points that I wished to cover, using Moore, Byron, Shelley, as examples. [*Much applause.*]

GRINSON:

This varies somewhat from what I had read. Have you modified your views?

EDGAR POE:

No, even though I now feel that Truth may take its place in poetry, it would always be subservient to Beauty. [*Descends.*]

GRINSON:

Well, Poe, I must say, that from your reputation, I expected to see more fire in



your speech.

EDGAR POE:

Well, Grinson, we are not all Renaissance men. I disagreed, myself, thoroughly with your review on Lucian Minor.

GRINSON:

Aha: Here it is, the Poe I read about in the *Dollar Magazine*:

With tomahawk upraised for deadly blow  
Behold our literary Mohawk, Poe!  
Sworn tyrant he o'er all who sin in verse--  
His own the standard, damns he all that's worse.  
And surely not for this shall he be blamed--  
For worse than his deserves it be damned!

Who can so well detect the plagiarist's flaw?  
"Set thief to catch thief" is the ancient saw:  
Who can so scourge a fool to shreds and slivers?  
Promoted slaves oft make the best slave drivers!  
Iambic Poe! of tyro bards the terror--  
Ego is he--the world his pocket-mirror!

#### Scene v i

*Forrest House. 16 Brewer Street. Norfolk, Virginia. January 1811. Interior small colonial-style boarding house. Bells are ringing medium range from new Bell Church, a block away. Discovered are Eliza Poe, young Edgar Poe, Mother Tubbs, and newborn Rosalie. Aside is 1849 Edgar Poe. On stage is Young Poe's trunk cradle.*

MOTHER TUBBS:

Eliza, one of the Myers' sons, John, is here.

ELIZA:

Here, Mother Tubbs, take Rosalie and Eddie to the back. A new baby shouldn't

be introduced. Do you think it advisable to give such a young child spirits such as you have in the hankchief?

MOTHER TUBBS:

Well, it did Eddie no harm..

*[Enter John Myers, a well-dressed young man of twenty-four.]*

ELIZA:

My first husband, Charles Hopkins, spoke of your father's generosity.

JOHN MYERS:

Yes, I believe I heard him in concert here, as a child of almost his own age.

ELIZA:

Yes, he sang--although when we were together, he was mostly always a player of characters. And he managed with Mr. Green in Fredericksburg.

JOHN MYERS:

Is your husband David available?

ELIZA:

No, I'm terribly sorry, he's not.

JOHN MYERS:

Oh, how disappointing; you see I have a portrait that your friend Thomas Sully did of me two years ago in Philadelphia, and I wish to show it to him.

ELIZA:

Yes, he would want to see it, I'm sure. David modeled for Sully the first year he joined the theatre--in Petersburg, right before we worked together. One of his

first attempts at oils. But he didn't get to keep the picture. I only wish I had it for Eddie. He did this in small--oval miniature--of me just recently.

JOHN MYERS:

How absolutely lovely it is-- If you would give my sisters a few music lessons, we would pay well. Also, I would like these sheets copied out. My father was a subscriber to the original Fenchurch Theatre here in Norfolk; he gave several hundred pounds so that the Wests could buy the land from the Ingrams. If you do not have time, perhaps you can have Maryanne Whitlock copy out these pieces for me.

ELIZA:

Very well. But the lessons may have to wait until we return in late May. We have to leave immediately for Charleston, where I have a solo concert for the Saint Cecelia Society--a ball. And would you be so kind as to have your man deliver this note of regrets to the Mrs. Governor Tazewell. I almost forget they live here. And tell her that we all, especially Eddie, so much appreciate the meadow at the seaside, and especially the Wishing Oak. He talks continually about "Fairyland."

JOHN MYERS:

Do you know what roles you will be doing?

ELIZA:

Well, John Dwyer has extended with us, from the New York group I was with. Perhaps you saw him play here this trip. It has been thirteen years since I was in Charleston. We might open with the *Castle Spectre* and *Of Age Tomorrow*, as we did here and in Richmond. Eddie likes the ghosts and dungeons and sliding

doors in the *Spectre*, and myself especially as Rosa in Reynolds' *Caravan*--  
 because of the big dog that saves the child. I did four or five of Reynolds' plays in  
 New York last spring, and *The Caravan* was the the last one. I hope I will still be  
 able to do Priscilla Tomboy. For my concert, I'm doing Haydn, Kreutzer,  
 Cramer, and Pleyal.

[*Enter Mother Tubbs.*]

MOTHER TUBBS:

Eliza is just in her early twenties, and has almost three-hundred roles.

ELIZA:

Mother Tubbs married my step-father Charles Tubbs. My mother died when I  
 was eleven; and, for a long time I had no one except sometimes the Ushers.

Then I met her, and she has been helping me this year, as he is away--

JOHN MYERS:

Then I wish you all a safe voyage.

[*Exit John Myers. Almost immediately appears David Poe at the door.*]

MOTHER TUBBS:

David!

ELIZA:

David. We never heard anything. Where were you?

[*Mother Tubbs exits to next room.*]

DAVID:

All these admirers calling on you. And Dwyer extends and plays against you not

only in Richmond, but here! I see that John Howard Payne, America's "young Roscius," is having his problems now. Those Englishmen just aren't giving up those parts. I don't know whether I can ever forgive you for doing Ophelia with him. The way he rewrote the scripts had you lolling in his bosom for hours! So the Norfolk Theatre has just done that extravaganza *Cinderella*. Do you member, Eliza, when I played the Prince in that?

ELIZA:

Oh, certainly, David. With Charlotte Usher as Cinderella. And I played Venus, I was actually jealous. But, then I did get to whisk away into the sky in my rosebush that turned into a car. They had to close the theatre for a day to prepare for it this time—to get all of the contraptions in order.

1849 EDGAR A. POE [*reading his own poetry*]:

Hast thou not dragged Diana from her car,  
 And driven the Hamadryad from the wood,  
 To seek a shelter in some happier star?  
 Hast thou not torn the Naiad from her flood,  
 The Elfin from the green grass, and from me  
 The summer dream beneath the Tamarind Tree?

[*Mother Tubbs returns carrying two-year old Edgar.*]

ELIZA:

Eddie has been practicing and is not at all afraid of being swept up into the clouds.

DAVID:

[*Caresses Edgar.*] Edgar is a smart boy. Do you remember me, Eddie? Have you seen Tubbs?

MOTHER TUBBS:

No--

ELIZA:

David, we are leaving for Charleston.

DAVID:

I will try to find some money, and then see Green--since Mrs. West is passed on-- maybe now is the time to try to get back to managing here at the old headquarters. Chester Sully tells me that John Myers might be an investor-- Eliza, I'll be back--

[*Black out.*]

-----  
*Lights down. Norfolk, Virginia. August, 1811. Bell Church tolling.*

[*Discovered are David Poe, Eliza, almost three-year old Edgar, baby Rosalie, Mother Tubbs.*]

DAVID:

Did you have to put it in the newspaper that you were alone?

ELIZA:

But we knew nothing! And we needed some person to come forth-- I am married and yet, I am not married. How were we to be protected? [*coughing*].

DAVID:

My disappearance had to do with a British ship . . . [*coughing*]. And Myers--

Has he always had this interest in music?

ELIZA:

Yes, he has. The whole family does. And it is a matter of money--

[*coughing*]. He pays Mary Anne Whitlock through me, also. And she needs it.

You know we owe her relations a great deal.

MOTHER TUBBS:

You're ill. Be calm. My husband owns part of a ship now, but the embargo--

DAVID:

I'm sorry, Eliza. You've had four people to support-- If you accepted me back, it would be different. I have some prospects-- [*coughing*].

[*David Poe exits.*]

I must see William Green about a business matter [*coughing*].

[*Eliza reclines on daybed, obviously ill.*]

*Curtain*

### Scene v i i

*Norfolk. Saturday, September 15, 1849. Newspaper library. Edgar Poe on settle.*

*Awakes. Sits up. Grinson sitting in chair.*

EDGAR POE:

Grinson. Did I tell you that I went by that house yesterday, where you say my family lived when I was two or three. Where my sister Rosa was born.

GRINSON:

What's that on your shoulder, there. I have some brandy.

EDGAR POE:

Oh, an old scratch. Maybe even from Catelina, my cat at Fordham. I met a man was telling me about Mathew Sully. How he bought George Washington's beautiful, famous white horse.

GRINSON:

Yes. We do not know where he lies today. He bought him out of desperation. For his trick riding. But that exhausted all his funds. People would only come once to see an old man jumping on and over one old horse at Briggs Point.

EDGAR POE:

Did you know the Blow boys and their friends, or Arthur Smith, from here?

GRINSON:

I'm not sure. Why? What happened?

EDGAR POE:

It was at the University. There was a bad fight in front of my room there. A student, Wickham, from Kentucky, bit another all up and down his arm. Big chunks as big as my hand had to be cut out. Then after another brawl with the boys from Norfolk, your Arthur Smith, pulled a gun. I was no where near the incident. But when Arthur Smith pulled that gun, it ended my career at the University. I should not have shared those details with my stepfather, Allan. But, I was so proud to be at Jefferson's University, so anxious to please, and to be his peer, that I told him exactly what happened there. And he wasn't ready to be the peer of the child of players. At the same time harboring a great jealousy because he actually loved literature--he punished me even though I wasn't even



there at that fight. Like Will Selden, I was doing my Latin-- Though I wasn't even there. That and my life in England, I am afraid, in spite of my admiration for the poets who were freedom fighters, and all that my grandparents sacrificed, for the Revolution, I gained a contempt for democracy at Mr. Jefferson's university. The fact that a boy bit another boy, an uncouth act, changed my life. I, who have such perfect manners and decorum of Europe and the old South. Thus, I wanted only beauty--and there is so much of it. I love life.

GRINSON:

There is no doubt that we were like a frontier city, on the East Coast. Time and again, entire populations were shifted and lost. We lost the Tories, we lost the Quakers, we lost to the fever, we lose to the western expansion, we lost to the fires that we mainly lit ourselves. I regret that you lost your university education to this misunderstanding, partly certainly the responsibility of some of our boys. Whether you will find your gold here, I do not know.

I told Susan to meet us here. *[Leaves.]*

*[Poe completes his dressing. Begins to go through old journals and papers.]*

*[Knock at door. Susan appears].*

EDGAR POE:

Grinson had to step out temporarily. I hope you are well. I already began. Here are the theatre bills that Grinson was talking about. Why they're from the New York Park Theatre. That was the largest in the country. Someone must have been interested in my mother's career. Here is a whole stack. Why, she

was a major figure. She played Ophelia. Cordelia. Huh. Also, she was in five plays by Reynolds the last season--right before my sister Rosa was born. Here she is, as the character Rosa in Reynolds' *The Caravan, or the Driver and His Dog*, where she is the mother and her child is saved from drowning by a big dog, right on stage! [*Quietly.*] But [*looking through programs*] my father is not in the cast of any of these. [*Collapses into chair.*] *The Caravan* was her last play in New York City.

NANCY (ANNIE) GREEN:

Come on, Hedgar. William and I want to do the saved by the dog part.

You are smallest, so you are the baby saved. Hurry-- They are packed up for Richmond.

EDGAR POE:

"... my most memorable year."

[*Poe is standing behind Susan as she reads the spines of books. He begins to pull the hair from the front part and curl circle it about his finger, into the style such as his mother wore.*]

Ah, less--less bright  
The stars of the night  
Than the eyes of the radiant girl!  
And never a flake  
That the vapor can make  
With the moon-tints of purple and pearl,  
Can vie with the modest Eulalie's most unregarded curl--  
Can compare with the bright eyed Eulalie's  
most humble and careless curl.

Your two middle initials are the name of my departed wife. Susan V. C.

Ingram? Tell me is V for Valentine? Or is V. C. -- Virginia Clemm? Ing-ram means something too, I know. It means "Son of the Raven."

SUSAN V. C. INGRAM: [*startled*]

No, no, Edgar, --Mr. Poe, . . . it means none of those things.

YOUNG GIRL'S VOICE (SUSAN REYNOLDS):

Kiss Eddie for me, Mr. Allan.

NANCY (ANNIE) GREEN: [*dragging her big cloth*]

I will save you, Edgar!

SUSAN V. C. INGRAM:

I have to go soon.

*Curtain*

## ACT III

### Scene i

*Fordham, New York. September 18, 1849. The Poe Cottage. Aunt "Muddy" Maria Clemm.*

MUDDY: *[Reads letter from Edgar Poe.]*

Richmond, Virginia. Tuesday, September 18, 1849.

My Own Darling Muddy, On arriving here last night from Norfolk I received both your letters-- I cannot tell you the joy they gave me--to learn at least that you are well and hopeful. May God forever bless you, my dear dear Muddy--Elmira has just got home from the country. I spent last evening with her. I think she loves me more devotedly than any one I ever knew and I cannot help loving her in return. Nothing is yet definitely settled--and it will not do to hurry matters. I [lec]tured at Norfolk on Monday and cleared enough to settle my bill here . . . with two dollars over-- I had a fashionable audience, but Norfolk is a small place, and there were two exhibitions the same night. Next Monday I lecture again here and expect to have a large audience. On Tuesday I start for Philadelphia to attend to Mrs. Loud's Poems--and possibly on Thursday I may start for New York. If I do I will go straight over to Mrs. Lewis's and send for you. It will be better for me not to go to Fordham--don't you think so? Write immediately in reply and direct to Philadlphia-- For fear I should not get the letter, sign no name and address it to E. S. T. Grey Esquire.

If possible I will get married before I start--but there is no telling-- My poor

poor Muddy I am still unable to send you even one dollar--but keep up heart-- I hope that our troubles are nearly over. I saw John Beatty in Norfolk.

God bless you and protect you my own darling Muddy. I showed your letter to Elmira and she says "it is such a darling precious letter that she loves you for it already." Your own Eddy.

The papers here are praising me to death--and I have been received everywhere with enthusiasm. Be sure and preserve all the printed scraps I have sent you and and keep up my file of the literary world.

*[Richmond, Wednesday night, September 26, 1849. Edgar Poe visits the office of Dr. John Carter, the night before he leaves for Baltimore, by way of the boat to Norfolk. 9:30 p.m.]*

EDGAR POE:

Dr. Carter, Elmira thinks I have a fever. I'm to catch the early Richmond boat to Baltimore, by way of Norfolk.

DR. JOHN CARTER:

You are not warm. How do you feel?

EDGAR POE:

It is a wonder how having your name blazed over ten states as an abstainer does help in that regard. And, of course, Elmira, as part of her nature, would insist upon it.

DR. CARTER:

What are you reading?

EDGAR POE:

Oh, it's Thomas Moore--one of my earliest and remaining interests.

DR. CARTER:

Oh, yes--the Irishman. I am most familiar with his *Lady of the Lake*. I'd like to visit that locale of the Dismal Swamp to see what he describes.

EDGAR POE:

Do you know Dr. John Ingram of Norfolk?

DR. CARTER:

I believe so--a man a little older than yourself. Is out at Kemps Landing.

Married to a Livingston--daughter of a sea captain. They have several daughters about twenty, some younger sons. Perhaps they farm.

EDGAR POE:

What kind of a man is he?

DR. CARTER:

You are concerned about their local fevers. What we believe is that the Ague is somehow connected to freshwater swamps. You know almost everyone that can gets away from that area in the warm months.

EDGAR POE:

Yet my mother--my real mother--spent her last two summers there.

Became ill there. And its been rumored that my father died within a few days of her. But it wasn't of this sickness, I don't believe. I think she came down with the consumption--the same illness that plagued my darling Virginia, and the child

never spent anytime in the lowlands.. Perhaps I thought that someone so young would live longer-- Why, we had been married over ten years, and she still wasn't much older than Dr. Ingram's daughters.

DR. CARTER:

Perhaps your mother took advantage of the open housing of the summers.

Did she have family there?

EDGAR POE:

No-- Of course, she was from England or Scotland. And Norfolk was very English in its structure, in spite of all the commerce and diverse population. A lot of French from the islands, but always ships coming from England, bringing news, plays. She came over at nine and went immediately on the stage. But it is possible she knew people in Norfolk. Her mother died when she was very, very young. Her step-father Tubbs was lost track of--after giving up the stage. Last seen by the Poes in Baltimore. If he took to the sea, as many did, there may have been someone there in Norfolk. Perhaps he even remarried. Virginia's brother, Henry Clemm, seems to be gone also--we think at sea. I wish to find information of him for my mother-in-law, Muddy--Maria Clemm. She has no close family if I should succumb to something. I talked to a ship's surgeon when in Norfolk several weeks ago. If you do think of some methods to track down his history, names of doctors, etc. that might know of my poor brother-in-law Henry, save them for my return-- Of course, the theatre seems to have been headquartered in Norfolk. It had a lot of local support such as from

the Myers', who own most of the shipping. I left behind some of my books there--

DR. JOHN CARTER:

That I will certainly do. What are you going to do until 4 a.m. Did you eat? Saddlers' is there across the street. But beware of those dining this late. They may tempt you. The Augusta is a good steamer. [*Poe writes "Augusta" on a page of the Thomas Moore book. Puts it down.*] But you can find other means to go downriver at almost any time. That way you can get the sleep you need to fight anything. If you feel ill there, and don't get to Ingram in Norfolk, ask around the marketplace, of course, for the nearest doctor.

EDGAR POE:

Thanks John. I must have my trunk picked up. It's late, perhaps I shall have to go get it myself. [*Forgets the book--or lays it aside. Picks up Dr. John Carter's Malacca cane, walks to the door.*] Do you think this Ingram has literary sympathies?

DR. CARTER:

Poe, what kind of question is that? You have more doctors in your acquaintance as true friends than I shall ever know.

### Scene i i

*Boat on James River. Sometime after midnight, Wednesday, September 26, 1849.*

*Poe asleep on steamboat bench. Semi-nightmare of his mother Eliza/Susan as Biddy Bellaire in Miss in her Teens: or, The Medley of Lovers by David Garrick. Handsome*



Captain Rhodophil and *assistant*, Puff. *Biddy's helpmate* Tag. *Older gentleman* Fribble.

Edgar Poe *may play* Fribble. Guitar player *may play* Captain. *Enter* Captain and Puff.

PUFF:

But, pray, Sir, why did you leave the army so abruptly and not give me time to fill my knapsack with common necessities?

CAPTAIN:

When I left the university, which is seven months since, my father, who loves his money more than his son, would not settle a farthing upon me-- but before I joined the regiment, which was going abroad, I took a ramble in the country with a fellow collegian to see a relation of his lived in Berkshire. While there I became acquainted with her--

*[Exeunt. Enter Biddy, a miss in her teens, and Tag.]*

TAG:

When did you hear from your gallant?

BIDDY:

Never since he went to the army-- I was afraid the letters would fall into my aunt's hands. . . . But I had a better reason then. I thought if I should write to him and promise him to love nobody else, and should afterwards change my mind, he might think I was inconstant and call me a coquette-- When I parted with him, I grew melancholy; so, in order to divert me, I have let two others court me til he returns again.

TAG *[aside]* :

Is that all, my dear? Mighty simple, indeed.

BIDDY:

One is a fine blustering man and is always talking of fighting and wars; he thinks he's sure of me, but I shall balk him.

TAG:

And who is the other, pray?

BIDDY:

Quite another sort of man. He speaks like a lady for all the world, and never swears as Mr. Flash does, but wears nice white gloves and tells what ribbons become my complexion, where to stick my patches, who is the best milliner, where they sell the best tea, and which is the best wash for the face and best paste for the hands. He's always playing with my fan and showing his teeth, and whenever I speak he pats me--so--and cries: "The devil take me, Miss Biddy, but you'll be my perdition! ha, ha, ha!"

.....

... I find I love [the Captain] Rhodophil vastly, for though my other sparks flatter me more, I can't abide the thoughts of 'em now. I have business upon my hands enough to turn my little head, but, egad, my heart's good, and a fig for dangers. Let me see--what shall I do with my two gallants? I must at least part with 'em decently. Suppose I set 'em together by the ears? The luckiest thought in the world! For they won't quarrel (as I believe they won't), I break with 'em for cowards and very justly dismiss 'em my service. And if they will fight and one of 'em should be killed, the other will certainly be hanged or run away, and so I shall very handsomely get rid of both. I am glad I have settled it so purely.

TAG:

I have given the Captain one of your gloves to mumble.

BIDDY:

What shall we do when the next one comes?

TAG:

If Mr. Fribble comes first, I'll clap him up into my lady's storeroom. I suppose he is a great maker of marmalade himself and will have an opportunity of making some . . .

[Enter Fribble. Biddy bows to Fribble.]

FRIBBLE:

I protest, miss, I don't like that curtsy. Look at me, and always rise in this manner. [Shows her.] But, my dear creator, who put on your cap today? They have made a fright of you, and it's as yellow as old lady Crowfoot's neck. When we are settled, I'll dress your heads myself.  
.....

BIDDY [Motions toward door]:

In, in, in! So now let the other come as soon as he will. I do not care if I had twenty of 'em, so they would but come one after another.

### Scene i i i

*Norfolk docks and marketplace, Thursday, September 27, 1847. Early afternoon.*

*Grinson and Susan talking at dock marketplace. A wharf dock ramp to one side. Small mortarbox shaped flat boat tied up to front side of ramp. Two or three roughly dressed adolescent boys sitting on fruit stands, tossing or juggling fruits and vegetables.*

*Two men bring Poe's trunk ashore. Shadow of cow horns, dogs barking.*

BOY:

*[Pointing offstage to cow.]* That's not a bull. That's a gentleman cow! Susan!

What have you been doing. I thought you were going to help me with my lessons.

*[Susan goes over and talks to boys. Enter Edgar Poe from ramp.]*

GRINSON:

Those soaplocks and rowdies. They'd steal turnips. We have your books.

EDGAR POE:

Yes. Thanks, Grinson. Honestly, they look like my old river rats.

BOY:

Hey, Susan. Ask your new friend if he wants to go "wake snakes" with us on

Paradise Creek.

SUSAN:

No. He doesn't have time. *[To Poe:]* --Can you come to the October Fair?

EDGAR POE:

I can go. I plan to stay at least until I can get on Tubbs' ship to Baltimore.

SUSAN:

You don't want to go.

*[Poe lays his coat across trunk. Boys pull flat boat under the ramp to other side, take poles, they and Poe get in and push off. Darkens. Eventually a few lights appear. Susan sits by trunk with arm over it, etc., guarding it. Boat returns. Boy pulls it in by rope. Boys very rowdy. Poe is disheveled and disoriented from*

*shock and fever. They are carrying remnants relics from Potter's Field. Poe digs into pockets and finds a last coin and gives it to men standing near, believing they have guarded his trunk. He has a chill, and puts on his coat.]*

GRINSON:

Poe, you have a chill. This will help. [*Reaches inside vest and pulls out flask.*]

BOYS:

Ooh, what has Susan's friend got. It looks like a pint of lodimy.

SUSAN:

I assure you, he wouldn't have more than plain gin. We should have told you Paradise Creek goes between the two graveyards—Potter's Field and the old Alms House— It was *Ullalume*, wasn't it?

EDGAR POE:

I have to catch Tubbs' boat . . . to Baltimore. [*Stumbles down ramp, forgetting his trunk.*]

GRINSON:

We shall have to send it to the Swan Hotel in Richmond. He is supposed to be marrying a woman there.

*Curtain.*

#### Scene i v

*Norfolk. October 1849. Susan V. C. Ingram at her desk, writing. Bells toll. Poe's voice screaming out "Reynolds. Reynolds. Reynolds." Then "The Lord help my poor soul." A bird-like shadow swoops over her.*

*Fini*

## VITA

Myreen Moore Nicholson  
1404 Gates Avenue  
Norfolk, Virginia 23507

Born Norfolk, Virginia

B. A., English. Art minor. Old Dominion College, August 1962.  
M. S. in Library and Information Science. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill,  
North Carolina, June 1971.  
Various Museum art schools; Computer art courses: Graduate English and linguistics.  
Courses in The Citadel M. A. T. program, English, 1968-69.  
M. A. in Humanities. Old Dominion University, December 1996.

Three years paraprofessional librarian, archivist, staff artist, Old Dominion University.  
Steno-hearing reporter Norfolk Planning Commission, Fine Art/Design Review Board.  
Five years as English, art teacher, and high school librarian for the cities of Norfolk and  
Chesapeake, Virginia, and Charleston, South Carolina. Included stage sets.  
Four semesters as a junior college instructor in American literature and composition, art  
history and business. Virginia and Charleston, South Carolina. Department head.  
Teacher of dialect-speaking students, off-shore island of South Carolina, Summer 1968.  
Poet-in-the Public Schools, Virginia Beach, Virginia.  
Twenty years as assistant to Assistant Director, head of Model City and outreach art,  
literacy programs, visual fine arts, theatre and music librarian, humanities and  
general reference librarian, fiction librarian. Norfolk Public Libraries, 1970-90.  
Free lance researcher, writer, and artist. Publications in poetry anthologies, Poetry  
Society of Virginia's *Anthologies*, antique magazines, critical reviews, signed  
book reviewer for *Library Journal*. Participated in hundreds of juried art shows.  
1996: Artists in Virginia, Peninsula Fine Arts Center, Yorktown Small Artworks,  
Hampton's Taylor Art Center Portfolio Show, Hampton Bay Days Juried Show,  
Suffolk Museum Invitational Artists/Writers, and out-of-state shows.  
Tidewater Artists Association (350 members). Grantwriting chair, President 1990-92.  
Poetry Society of Virginia (300 members). Ten years as Vice-President, Corresponding  
Secretary and compiled and edited *Newsletter*, Director of Public Relations.  
Virginia Writers Club (300 members). Board West Ghent Civic League.  
Virginia Library Association. Personnel, PR; Public Documents Forum, Chair 1991-92.  
American Library Association, Poster Sessions Juror, 1986-1997. Various subsections:  
College and Research Library Forum, Bibliography, etc. Art Libraries Assn.  
Southeastern College Art Association. Southeastern Architectural Historians Society.

### Honors:

*Who's Who in American Art*, 1990-92, 93-94, 95-96. Bowker Publishing.  
*Marquis' Who's Who of American Women*, 1989-97; *Who's Who in America*, 1997.  
" " " *in the South and Southeast*, 1987-97.  
" " " " *World*, 1989-1997. Other honors and biographies.

Nicholson--continued.

Art Shows accepted into under other names: juried or judged by Nohra Haimés, Haimés Gallery, New York City; Sondra Freckleton, honorary doctorate, Hollins College; Retired Director of Exhibits, Library of Congress; Director of Penland Art Center; Curator of Phillips Collection; Senior Curator, National Museum of American Art; Director of Anderson Gallery; Chief Curator, White House; Retired Director of the Freer Gallery; Director of The Torpedo Factory; and Director, National Portrait Gallery.

Personal:

First woman to attend high school drafting classes in Hampton Roads.

First woman to be accepted into The Citadel M.A.T. program. Other Civil Rights opportunities.

Family is active in Hurrah Players, theatre, Virginia Opera, and the Governor's School for the Arts, Vocal division, under name of "McKinney."