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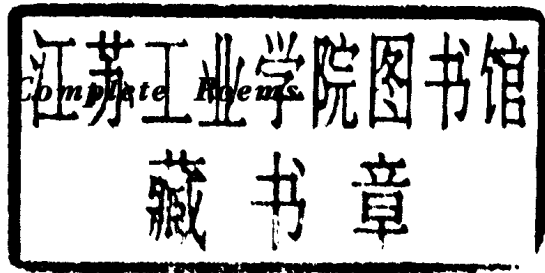
Edgar Allan Poe

Complete Poems



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Edgar Allan Poe



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Edgar Allan Poe



Complete Poems

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INTRODUCTION

Edgar Allan Poe's life was tragic and tormented. Not only was it short, but it was marked by almost unremitting misery and misfortune. The child of itinerant actors, Poe was born in Boston on January 19, 1809, the second of three children. Orphaned at an early age—both parents died of tuberculosis—he was adopted by Frances Allan, the childless wife of John Allan, a prosperous Richmond tobacco merchant. His childhood was relatively comfortable and stable; he was athletic and an excellent student with a promising future. In 1826, Poe entered the University of Virginia, but his excessive drinking and quarrels with his foster father about finances and his gambling debts forced him to leave after a year, whereupon he joined the army for two years. In 1830 he entered West Point, but left soon afterwards because of John Allan's continued lack of financial support.

Although Poe had published his first volume of verse, *Tamerlane and Other Poems*, in 1827, it gained little critical or popular notice. His literary career truly started some years later when he began to write short stories for magazines. He also worked for several important magazines where his outstanding skills as an editor and critic gained him some prominence and respect. But personal problems and poverty continued to plague him, and his alcoholism cost him several editorial posts. In 1836, Poe married his fourteen-year-old cousin, Virginia Clemm, but her ill health was a constant source of anxiety. Her death in 1847, of tuberculosis, led to Poe's complete mental and physical breakdown. When he recovered he joined a temperance society and became engaged to his childhood sweetheart, Elmira Royston Shelton. Then, on

October 3, 1849, he was found beaten and unconscious in an alley and was taken to a Baltimore charity hospital where he died four days later without ever regaining consciousness. The exact circumstances of his death will forever remain a mystery.

Part of the popular fascination with Poe is his image as a tortured genius. The novelist D.H. Lawrence said that Poe was "doomed to seethe down his soul in a great continuous convulsion of disintegration, and doomed to register the process." But this view undermines the full extent of Poe's brilliance and his enormous influence. The poet W.H. Auden said, "No one in his time, put so much energy and insight into making his contemporary poets take their craft seriously."

Poe is considered the father of the detective story and the modern gothic horror tale, as well as a great lyric poet. He was the first modern writer to explore the darker recesses of the human psyche in poems and stories, which seem to take place in the surreal landscapes and situations of nightmares. Although considered one of the great writers of short fiction, Poe had an affinity for verse. "With me, poetry has been not a purpose but a passion," he wrote. His poetry is rich with musical phrases and sensuous, evocative imagery. Poems like "The Raven," "The Bells," and "Annabel Lee," remain among the most popular and technically accomplished in the English language.

Collected in this volume are the complete poems of Edgar Allan Poe, arranged in reverse chronological order, except for the scenes from his play, "Politan," which are placed last. A constant editor of his own work, his final versions are used, except in the instances where an earlier version is of interest.

CHRISTOPHER MOORE

New York
1992

ANNABEL LEE

It was many and many a year ago,
 In a kingdom 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 wingéd 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 sepulcher
 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 nighttide, 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.

TO MY MOTHER

Because I feel that, in the heavens above,
The angels, whispering to one another,
Can find, among their burning terms of love,
None so devotional as that of "Mother,"
Therefore by that dear name I long have called you—
You who are more than mother unto me,
And fill my heart of hearts, where Death installed you,
In setting my Virginia's spirit free.
My mother—my own mother, who died early,
Was but the mother of myself; but you
Are mother to the one I loved so dearly,
And thus are dearer than the mother I knew
By that infinity with which my wife
Was dearer to my soul than its soul-life.

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.”

FOR ANNIE

Thank Heaven! the crisis—
The danger is past,
And the lingering illness
Is over at last—
And the fever called “Living”
Is conquered at last.

Sadly, I know
I am shorn of my strength,
And no muscle I move
As I lie at full length—
But no matter!—I feel
I am better at length.

And I rest so composedly
Now, in my bed,
That any beholder
Might fancy me dead—
Might start at beholding me,
Thinking me dead.

The moaning and groaning,
The sighing and sobbing,
Are quieted now,
With that horrible throbbing
At heart:—ah that horrible,
Horrible throbbing!

The sickness—the nausea—
The pitiless pain—
Have ceased, with the fever
That maddened my brain—
With the fever called “Living”
That burned in my brain.

And oh! of all tortures
That torture the worst
Has abated—the terrible
Torture of thirst
For the naphthaline river
Of Passion accurst:—
I have drunk of a water
That quenches all thirst:—

Of a water that flows,
With a lullaby sound,
From a spring but a very few
Feet under ground—
From a cavern not very far
Down under ground.

And ah! let it never
Be foolishly said
That my room it is gloomy
And narrow my bed;
For man never slept
In a different bed—
And, to *sleep*, you must slumber
In just such a bed.

My tantalized spirit
Here blandly reposes,
Forgetting, or never
Regretting, its roses—
Its old agitations
Of myrtles and roses:

For now, while so quietly
Lying, it fancies
A holier odor
About it, of pansies—
A rosemary odor,
Commingled with pansies—
With rue and the beautiful
Puritan pansies.

And so it lies happily,
Bathing in many
A dream of the truth
And the beauty of Annie—
Drowned in a bath
Of the tresses of Annie.

She tenderly kissed me,
She fondly caressed,
And then I fell gently
To sleep on her breast—
Deeply to sleep
From the heaven of her breast.

When the light was extinguished,
She covered me warm,
And she prayed to the angels
To keep me from harm—
To the queen of the angels
To shield me from harm.

And I lie so composedly,
Now, in my bed,
(Knowing her love)
That you fancy me dead—
And I rest so contentedly,
Now, in my bed,
(With her love at my breast)
That you fancy me dead—
That you shudder to look at me,
Thinking me dead:—

But my heart it is brighter
Than all of the many
Stars of the sky,
For it sparkles with Annie—
It glows with the light
Of the love of my Annie—
With the thought of the light
Of the eyes of my Annie.