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This special edition is for readers for whom English is a second language. It can be read by anyone who has learned 2,000 words of English.

Edgar Allan Poe by Irwin Porges

LADDER EDITION

# by Irwin Porges

A LADDER EDITION at the 2,000-word level

Adapted by Jacqueline Klat Cooper

#### A LADDER EDITION

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This LADDER EDITION has been especially prepared for the beginning reader. It is printed from brand-new plates made from newly set, clear, easy-to-read type.

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# THE LADDER SERIES



The Ladder Series books are specially prepared editions of well-known American books. They have been

made easier to read for the enjoyment of readers for whom English is a second language.

The Series is built on a "ladder" of five steps—from 1,000 to 5,000 different English words. Although the books have been shortened, they keep the ideas and facts found in the originals.

This book uses 2,000 English words. Some words in the book are above this step and will be found written in boldface letters when they first appear. They are explained in the Glossary at the back.

The publisher hopes the reader will enjoy this Series, while going up the ladder to more difficult reading.

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## Chapter 1

## THE YOUNG VOYAGER RETURNS

The boy who stood on the ship Martha watched eagerly as the distant shapes on shore slowly changed into the buildings of a great city. The Martha was entering New York Harbor after a voyage of 36 days from Liverpool, England. Now

she inched her way toward the landing place, while eleven-year-old Edgar held the rail, his eyes searching and fixing in memory every detail of the busy streets along the water.

He was a boy with an unusual mind that collected details, experiences, and impressions of people as though he already knew he would have use for them later. The five years spent in England were behind him. Edgar's school days, however, especially at the ancient Manor House School with its narrow halls and dark rooms, would never be forgotten.

Also, the happenings on his ocean journeys would stay with him forever. He had sailed from Virginia, a southeastern state of the United States, to England, and now he had sailed back to the United States.

Although Edgar was only six when he had first been on a ship, he had stored in his mind the memories of his voyage to England: the busy landing place at the James River in Virginia, where the strong smell of tobacco hung like a cloud over everything; the tall ships with their large square sails; and the moment of fear and wonder when he said good-bye to the town of Richmond and the ship moved easily down the river toward the sea.

Now Edgar was returning home. Standing next to him, John Allan, his foster-father gazed at the huge city that stretched beyond the harbor.

"You will find that Richmond and New York are very different," John Allan said. He was a

man whose voice could be rough, but toward Edgar he had been kind and thoughtful. Allan and his wife had taken the boy into their home when he was only two years old. As he turned around to watch Edgar, Allan smiled and his hand pressed the boy's arm.

His mind completely occupied by the movement of the ship toward its landing place, Edgar looked up at the man he had learned to call "Father." Allan's mention of Richmond had started old memories stirring. The warm Southern city was not Edgar's birthplace, but it was the only home that he could remember. In his mind, he began to see half-forgotten pictures of the white houses, the streams, the broad farms, and the black slaves.

Although he often tried, Edgar was unable to remember clearly the days before he had lived in Richmond. He had been born in the city of Boston, in the northeastern United States, on January 19, 1809. It was there that his mother, Elizabeth Arnold, was appearing in the theater with her husband, David Poe. His parents had been in Boston only six months, before moving to New York to appear in theaters there. Of Edgar's first two years, all that remained in his memory was a strange, shadowy impression of always moving from place to place and of a long period of unhappiness and discomfort.

Some memories of his mother-her large dark eyes or the curly black hair which he, too, possessed—flashed through his mind. But he could not remember his father, who had left his mother less than a year after Edgar's birth. Now, at the age of 11, Edgar was too young to understand his mother's suffering and illness. She was already a sick woman when his young sister, Rosalie, had been born. On December 8, 1811, his mother had died.

The *Martha* had now reached its landing place after the long voyage. Edgar and Mr. Allan held the rail as the ship came to a final stop.

In a cabin below, Mrs. Allan, Edgar's fostermother, with her older sister, Anne, were waiting. With so little to remember of his real mother, Edgar looked to Mrs. Allan for the love and understanding he needed. They had become very good friends since that day when Mrs. Allan had come to the home of Edgar's dying mother and had seen the two-year-old boy and his sister Rosalie. The small boy had his mother's delicate features and showed the same charm that had made Mrs. Poe so popular in the theater. The two children were taken into different homes, but they were never to be really separated. The Mackenzies, who lived in Richmond, took Rosalie, and Edgar was able to visit his sister often. An older brother, William Henry Poe, born two years before Edgar, was given a home with his grandfather, David Poe, who lived in Baltimore.

The passengers were now preparing to leave the ship. Mr. Allan took Edgar's arm. "We must go

below and get your mother and Aunt Nancy," he said.

Edgar turned away from the rail. "Is Mother feeling better?" he asked.

"She is still a little weak," Mr. Allan replied.
"Women are often seasick." He looked at Edgar
and smiled. "Even some of our young men have a
little trouble with the sea!"

Edgar smiled, too. He still remembered how seasick he had been at the beginning of the 34-day voyage to England five years ago.

A short while later, the Allan family went ashore. It was a pleasant, sunny day in July of 1820, and Edgar was excited at the thought of seeing New York City. Mr. Allan had planned to spend only a few days in New York before going to Richmond, but it was not until July 28 that the family was able to travel again. Mrs. Allan had become so ill that a doctor had to come. During this period, Edgar spent much time with Mrs. Allan's sister, Anne, whom he lovingly called Aunt "Nancy."

Edgar's travels abroad and his sea voyages were ended. Never again would he go on a ship and sail across the ocean. But to a boy as sensitive as he, the details of these interesting experiences were already being shaped and put away in his mind for his future writing. He had been taken by his foster-father to Mr. Allan's native Scotland and had seen its green fields and its crowded cities. Later, the family had gone to London where Edgar was sent to Miss Dubourg's school.

The Atlantic Ocean, the ships and the seamen that were like helpless toys in its grasp filled Edgar's imagination. His foster-father and his associate, Charles Ellis, were traders who did business in a great variety of things: wheat, teas and coffees, wines and liquors, and the famous Virginia tobacco. These were carried to and from other cities and shipped abroad. To Edgar, all this was very exciting.

Years later, in 1838, a strange horror narrative appeared in print. The title of it was *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*.

Beneath the title was the explanation that the story contained the details of a revolt and terrible murders on the American ship *Grampus*, on her way to the South Seas, in the month of June, 1927. Using his childhood experiences to make the story seem real, Edgar Allan Poe made his story happen in the South Seas. He began by saying: "My name is Arthur Gordon Pym," and that his father was a trader in supplies for ships at Nantucket Island, in the northeastern United States.

In telling the story, he showed surprising knowledge of how to load a ship. The young boy who spent his time with the merchant-traders Ellis and Allan, and saw their ships being loaded at the docks, was a good observer. Poe was able to write about the correct way to pack a load of tobacco or flour into a ship—tightly, but not too tightly. He explained the danger of shipping grain. He had seen enough of ships to know that they could sink

if the grain, incorrectly loaded, all moved to one side of the ship.

On August 2, 1820, with the sights and sounds of New York City behind him, Edgar arrived home in Richmond. To a boy who had been only six when he had sailed on a ship for England, and had been away for five years, everything looked new and strange. As they traveled by carriage to the house of Charles Ellis, where they planned to live for a short time, he tried to remember the city he loved.

How different Richmond now appeared, surrounded by its rich southern life, big homes, the river and trees, and the broad farms! How different from the London that Edgar remembered so well, with the thick, black smoke of its factories darkening the skies, its narrow, dirty streets, and its ancient houses.

When Edgar, the Allans, and Aunt Nancy arrived at the Ellis' home, he found nothing in the house itself to excite his imagination. It was an ordinary house, built of wood. But across from the house was a beautiful garden that Edgar loved. With its tall trees, flowers and walls covered with climbing plants, the garden offered him a place for romantic thoughts and poetic dreams.

He renewed the friendships he had made in Richmond years before. One friendship, however, was to disappear with his young, pleasure-filled days: he had known lovely little Catherine Poitiaux who had written to him when he was in England.

She was now forgotten, but Edgar began to associate with other boys and girls of his age. As a young child Edgar had spent much time with Ebenezer Burling; the two boys had played in the streams and Ebenezer had taught Edgar how to swim.

In the autumn of 1820, the Allan family moved to a new home on Fifth Street. Ebenezer lived not far away, and the two boys, who enjoyed the same things, became very good friends. Sometimes they spent their days in a small sailboat on the James River. But best of all, Edgar loved the evenings when they sat together by the firelight, reading adventure books and talking about journeys to strange, distant lands.

One evening the boys turned the pages of a book that was 100 years old and yet so exciting that they imagined they were experiencing its dangers.

"What is it called?" Ebenezer had asked when Edgar began to open the book.

"The Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe," said Edgar.

They read Defoe's exciting adventure story together slowly, line by line, with their heads close together, while the flames from the fire threw light over the page.

Edgar never forgot those evenings, and later described them as those wonderful days when he and his friend first found the spirit of wild adventure burning within them. They were fascinated

when Defoe described "the terror of the storm," with Robinson Crusoe falling into the high waves after his boat overturned, and finally reaching the shore.

As a man, with all those happy days of youth gone forever, Edgar expressed his sorrow that the days of desert islands were ended.

Often Edgar would spend the hours at the house of the Mackenzies', where his sister Rosalie lived. Although only a year younger than her brother, Rosalie depended on Edgar for guidance and wanted to be with him as much as possible. The Mackenzies made their place a second home for Edgar, and he became a good friend of their son, Jack.

In these happy Richmond days, Edgar was popular with all the boys and made many friends. He was a leader and the others gathered around him. Rob Sully, whose father had acted in the theater with Edgar's mother and whose uncle was the painter Thomas Sully, was one of Edgar's best friends. Tom Ellis, a little younger than Edgar, would follow him around. Edgar not only had imagination, he also had a strong body, and he learned quickly to swim and shoot. He patiently taught these skills to Tom.

Edgar went to Joseph Clarke's school where he studied Latin, Greek, and mathematics. But often he remembered the old Manor House School in the little town near London. His memories later provided the scene for a strange story of two

students named William Wilson, both at the Manor House School. The bad William Wilson has a lifeand-death struggle with the other William Wilson, who represents his better self.

Using his wonderful ability for remembering details and for adding ideas from his own imagination, Edgar described the Manor House School.

The grounds, he said, were large. A high and solid wall, topped with pieces of broken glass, surrounded the whole place. This prisonlike wall was as far as the boys could go. Only three times a week were they allowed to go beyond it. In the wall stood a heavy gate and at the top of it were pointed iron bars, which filled the boys with terror. But the house was a delightful place, full of narrow halls which went this way and that way, up steps or down.

In remembering the strange, ancient building in England where he had been to school, Edgar created the Manor House in his own special way. He saw it as a beautiful place of mystery, with its secret corners, its dark hallways, and its pointed windows.

The fearful, secretive surroundings of the old Manor House made such a powerful impression on Edgar that 20 years later he was to write about it. In the fierce battle at the end of his story between William Wilson and his conscience, the "bad" Wilson wins the fight by pushing the other Wilson against the wall and plunging a sword through his heart.

The dying Wilson tells the other one that now he, too, is dead, "dead to the World, to Heaven, and to Hope!" In destroying his better self, William Wilson had really killed the only part of himself that could have saved him; all hope was now dead and he was dead with it.

The fascinating days in England had given precious memories to Edgar which would appear in other stories to be written in the future. But in 1822 he found himself being pulled, as if by some powerful force within him, toward a new and exciting activity. Edgar had always loved to read poetry and to hear it read aloud. Now the first attempts at creating came without effort, he had begun to write poetry.

Sitting in the office of Ellis and Allan, breathing the strong smell of the tobacco leaf, and gazing out of the window at the workmen on the docks, Edgar wrote his poetry on little bits of paper. Once he found a torn piece of paper on which someone had added a bill totalling \$30,000. Edgar turned the paper around and in a small blank space wrote:

## -Poetry by Edgar A. Poe-

and followed this with the beginning of a poem.

Often Edgar would think of a pretty girl whom he liked, and write a poem about her. But, even at this early period, he was fascinated by thoughts of horror and death. The frightening, gloomy

words he used now were the same ones he would use later. He wrote of eyes that stared, of screams, of blood-freezing cries.

At home, however, he was often filled with romantic ideas. Coming into his room, Mrs. Allan would stand silently behind him as he wrote, watching the lines of poetry appear.

"What are you writing about this time?" she would ask, putting a hand on his shoulder. "Another girl?"

Edgar's face became red at the laughter in his foster-mother's voice. He liked her very much and would show her his poems as soon as they were written.

She felt that Edgar had unusual ability, and she was proud of him. "You must read it aloud," she would tell him, when he had completed a new poem. "I would like to hear it."

In the months that passed, Edgar began to show interest in the young ladies who went to one of the fashionable schools in Richmond. The school was managed by Jane Mackenzie, the sister of the William Mackenzie in whose home Edgar's little sister lived. Edgar not only wrote poems to the girls he liked, he also showed surprising skill at painting their pictures.

With Rosalie eager to do anything he asked, Edgar had no trouble getting her to be his messenger. Happy to join in the romantic game, she passed her brother's poems and pictures secretly to the young ladies at school.