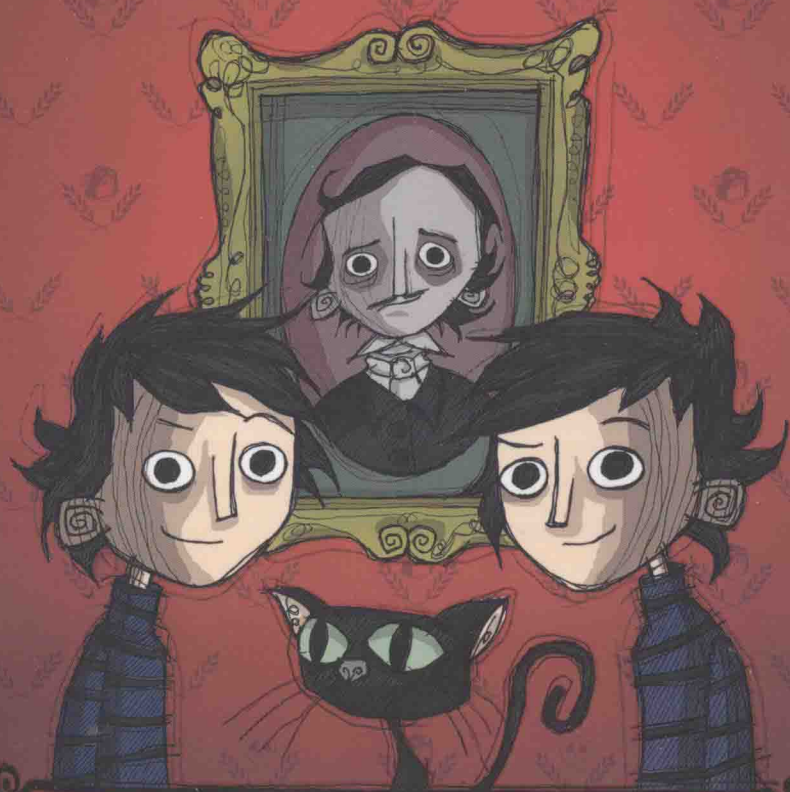




THE MISADVENTURES OF
Edgar & Allan Poe

BOOK ONE



THE TELL-TALE START

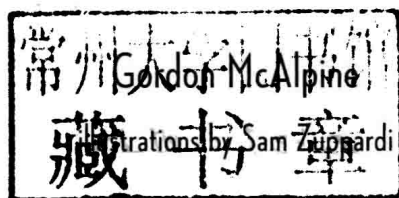
by Gordon McAlpine

illustrations by Sam Zuppardi



THE MISADVENTURES OF
Edgar & Allan Poe
BOOK ONE

THE TELL-TALE START



VIKING

An Imprint of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.

VIKING

Published by the Penguin Group

Penguin Young Readers Group, 345 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014, U.S.A.

Penguin Group (Canada), 90 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 700, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4P 2Y3 (a division of Pearson Penguin Canada Inc.)

Penguin Books Ltd, 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England

Penguin Ireland, 25 St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2, Ireland (a division of Penguin Books Ltd)

Penguin Group (Australia), 250 Camberwell Road, Camberwell, Victoria 3124, Australia (a division of Pearson Australia Group Pty Ltd)

Penguin Books India Pvt Ltd, 11 Community Centre, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi – 110 017, India

Penguin Group (NZ), 67 Apollo Drive, Rosedale, Auckland 0632, New Zealand (a division of Pearson New Zealand Ltd.)

Penguin Books (South Africa) (Pty) Ltd, 24 Sturdee Avenue, Rosebank, Johannesburg 2196, South Africa

Penguin Books Ltd, Registered Offices: 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England

First published in the United States of America by Viking,
a division of Penguin Young Readers Group, 2013

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Text copyright © Gordon McAlpine, 2013

Illustrations copyright © Sam Zuppardi, 2013

All rights reserved

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA IS AVAILABLE
ISBN 978-0-670-78491-2

Printed in the USA

Set in Stempel Schneidler

Book design by Eileen Savage

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, scanned, or distributed in any printed or electronic form without permission. Please do not participate in or encourage piracy of copyrighted materials in violation of the author's rights. Purchase only authorized editions.



THE TELL-TALE START

To my Dad—G. M.



To Jade—S. Z.



A black cat crossing your path signifies
that the animal is going somewhere.

—Groucho Marx



THE TELL-TALE START



CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: No Ordinary School Day	1
CHAPTER TWO: A Treacherous Fix	12
CHAPTER THREE: Home School	24
CHAPTER FOUR: Lessons in Horror	48
<i>Mr. Poe in the Great Beyond</i>	64
CHAPTER FIVE: On the Road with the Poes	72
CHAPTER SIX: Tales of Mystery and Imagination	86
<i>Mr. Poe in the Great Beyond</i>	100
CHAPTER SEVEN: Tourist Trap	105
CHAPTER EIGHT: Monkeys.	121
CHAPTER NINE: Stage Fright.	131
CHAPTER TEN: Underworld.	143
CHAPTER ELEVEN: Stars.	158
<i>Mr. Poe in the Great Beyond.</i>	175



NO ORDINARY SCHOOL DAY

EDGAR and Allan Poe sat beside each other in the back row of their homeroom class, asleep. They'd been up late the night before, reading the latest in their favorite series, True Stories of Horror, and now they leaned shoulder-to-shoulder, head-to-head, together in dreamland. Like little sleeping angels. . . .

Well, maybe not angels.

The Poe twins bore an uncanny resemblance to their famous great-great-great-great granduncle Edgar Allan Poe, the author of gothic tales so horrifying that for close to two centuries they have kept readers awake long into the night. Edgar and Allan were proud of their great-great-great-great granduncle and happy to look like him. Nonetheless, the resemblance ensured they would never be mistaken for run-of-the-mill boys.

The author Edgar Allan Poe as he looked in the 1840s



The Poe twins today



Edgar



Allan

It wasn't just external similarities that the boys shared with their great-great-great-great granduncle—they also shared his taste for the thrilling and unexpected.

Intrigue, coded messages, dark secrets . . .

And in at least one way, the boys' minds were even

more unusual than their famous uncle's. If at this moment you could observe the insides of their sleepy heads rather than just the outsides, you'd discover the following:

Edgar was dreaming he was Allan.

Allan was dreaming he was Edgar.

The boys were jolted awake when their homeroom teacher, Mrs. Rosecrans, slammed her stapler on her desk (inadvertently squashing an unlucky ant that happened to be making its way toward the glazed doughnut Mrs. Rosecrans had set beside her attendance book). Now Edgar was no longer sure he was not actually Allan, as he had been in the dream, and Allan was not sure that he was not actually Edgar. They looked at each other and saw only their own faces looking back. It happened to them all the time.

No big deal.

No one could tell the difference between them because there *was* no difference—not even to Edgar and Allan. One moment one was Edgar, the next he was Allan. Same boy, different identity; same identity, different boy. Their thoughts and actions were not identical but coordinated, like moving parts in a single fine Swiss watch. Each always knew what the other was thinking, feeling, experiencing. Sometimes, they wondered if they

were actually one boy with two bodies. Or two boys with one mind.

"So sorry to have disturbed your beauty sleep, boys," Mrs. Rosecrans said.

"Oh, that's all right," Edgar said, rubbing his eyes.

"You can just pick up your lecture where you left off and we'll get right back to sleep," Allan added.

The rest of the class laughed.

Mrs. Rosecrans didn't think the matched set of Poes was funny, even if they *were* the most knowledgeable students she'd ever had. "So you two didn't hear a word of what I just said?"

They shook their heads no, in unison.

She waved a note from the main office. "The principal wants to see you both, immediately."

The boys' classmates looked concerned.

But Allan and Edgar just yawned and ruffled their own already unruly heads of hair. "Why?" they asked.

"When it comes to you two, I can't even begin to guess," she answered.

The boys stood and gathered their books.

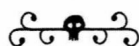
"Maybe Principal Mann needs our help planning the school's curriculum," Allan said.

"Either that or he wants our help writing his memoirs," Edgar added.

Mrs. Rosecrans pointed to the door.

"Good luck," the boys' classmates whispered.

Edgar and Allan nodded appreciatively, though they didn't think they'd need luck. The principal had always been putty in their hands.



The long hallway that led from Mrs. Rosecrans's classroom to the main office of Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin Middle School was empty aside from a scattering of other students who were excused from class for one reason or another.

"Hey, Edgar and Allan, are you guys going to the principal's office again?" asked perky Sherry George, who was on her knees painting LUNCHTIME PEP RALLY on a ten-foot-long strip of paper.

The boys nodded.

"Does he want to see you about the skeleton?" she continued.

"Could be."

A few days before, the boys had slipped into the

biology lab during lunch period and artfully rearranged all the bones on the human skeleton. The result was a grotesque form that so startled and wrecked poor Mr. Parker's nerves when he returned that he had to postpone that afternoon's exam. The Poes' less academically prepared classmates had been very grateful.

Another voice called from across the hallway, "Pssst, guys!"

It was Stevie "The Hulk" Harrison, one of their best friends, perched uncomfortably on a tiny chair outside Ms. Jenkins's ("No talking will be tolerated!") classroom. He motioned them over. "Does the principal want to see you about the rockets?"

The previous Thursday night, Edgar and Allan had stolen onto their rival school's soccer field and dug half a dozen holes. Into these holes, they deposited six small rockets, covering their handiwork with a thin layer of turf. Late in Friday's game, with the score tied 1-1, the six rockets simultaneously launched, ripping into the sky and bursting at their apex into a spectacular shower of red and gold sparks (Aldrin Middle School's colors). Naturally, everyone gazed skyward—or almost everyone. When the wide-eyed fans, referees, and players eventually returned their attention to earth, they discov-

ered that Stevie “the Hulk,” who’d been in on the plan, had just kicked the ball into the net for his first-ever goal, a game-winner, unopposed.

Who knew the two most valuable players weren’t on the field but in the stands, putting away their remote launchers?

The twins continued down the hall to more questions: *Could it be this? Could it be that?*

“Could be,” the Poes acknowledged every time.

Edgar and Allan had a lot of school spirit.



Mr. Mann stood beside his cluttered desk, his eyes narrowed to slits, his broad chest puffed out like a rooster. “Close the door behind you and don’t give me any of your guff,” he snarled.

“‘Guff’?” Edgar asked.

“It’s what you’re both full of,” Mr. Mann said.

“That’s funny,” Allan answered. “Last time we were here you told us we were full of ‘baloney.’”

“And before that it was ‘beans,’” Edgar added.

“And before *that*,” Allan said, “you actually told us we were full of—”

“Stop!” Mr. Mann demanded, pointing to two chairs.

They had often seen his face grow red with anger, but at this moment it was a brighter shade than the boys had ever witnessed—something like the color of a baboon's butt. "Sit down."

Allan and Edgar sat.

"Do you boys know the meaning of the word 'incurrrible'?"

"Of course," Allan said.

"'Incurrrible' means to be incapable of being corrected or reformed," Mr. Mann said, ignoring him.

"Yes, it's Middle English from the late Latin," Edgar said.

"*Incurribilis*," Allan added. "From *corrige*, meaning 'to correct.'"

The principal's mouth opened slightly. "You know Latin?"

The boys looked at each other. "Sort of."

"But we don't teach Latin here," Mr. Mann said. "Have you studied it at home?"

"I wouldn't say 'studied,'" Allan said.

"More like 'played around with,'" Edgar added.

"Dead languages are one of our hobbies," Allan explained. "You know, ancient Greek and Sanskrit . . ."

Mr. Mann was flabbergasted (as usual). Then he

gathered himself. "Never mind about the languages! Your cleverness has never been in question. You two are descended from one of our country's great literary geniuses, so maybe you've inherited something of his proficiency with words, to say nothing of his—"

"His madness?" The corners of Allan's mouth turned up in a slight grin.

"Now, I didn't say that," Mr. Mann countered.

"But you thought it," Edgar said, with an identical smirk.

Mr. Mann shook his head. "You two may know Latin, but you don't read minds."

"That's true," the boys said. Excluding each other's mind . . .

They stood.

"Well, it's been a very pleasant visit, Mr. Mann," Edgar said. "But we should be getting back to class now."

"Yes, it's important we attend to our studies," Allan continued. "But thanks for inviting us to your office. We always enjoy discussing etymology."

The principal's face reddened from the shade of a baboon's butt to that of French teacher Mme. Guimont's lipstick. He clenched his fists. "Sit down right now and behave!"