Dominick Argento

THE VOYAGE OF EDGAR ALLAN POE

Opera in Two Acts

Text by
Charles Noble

LIBRETTO

BOOSEY & HAWKES
Inscription on the stone marking Edgar Allan Poe's original burial place in the rear of Westminster Church, Baltimore:

"Quoth the Raven Nevermore"
Original Burial Place of Edgar Allan Poe
from
October 9, 1849
until
November 17, 1849

Mrs. Maria Clemm, his mother-in-law, lies upon his right
and Virginia Poe, his wife, upon his left under the monument erected to him in this cemetery.

(From by Head's) (verse)

"in a dream I once had, I saw a vessel on the sea, at midnight, in a storm... now flying uncontroll'd with torn sails and broken spars through the wild storm and winds and waters of the night. On the deck was a slender, slight, beautiful figure, a dim man, apparently enjoying of the terror, the wrath, and the disquiet of which he was the centre and the victim. That figure of my wild dream might stand for Edgar Poe, his spirit, his fortunes and his poems."

—Walt Whitman

Edgar Allan Poe was buried ignominiously in 1849 behind Westminster Church in Baltimore. On November 17, 1875, an imposing grave marker in front of the church was dedicated, and Poe's body was reinterred along with those of his mother-in-law and wife with an appropriate recognition ceremony. Walt Whitman, the only major literary figure to attend, according to the Washington Star of the next day, did not speak officially, but was heard to say these words after the ceremony.

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THE STORY

ACT ONE

Prologue. A doctor recalls his last encounter with Poe. Poe, whose young wife Virginia died two years earlier, appears ill and feverish, his creative drive at an end. He plans to sail to Baltimore that night, despite the doctor’s belief that no ship is scheduled to depart. Poe insists, for his literary executor Griswold has told him of one. The doctor warns him against Griswold, but Poe is determined to embark on his voyage of discovery.

Scene I. A room in Poe’s house. Poe is lying on his bed, his mind racing. Griswold enters and finds Poe pacing the room.

Scene II. The same. Poe is sitting at a desk, writing a letter. Griswold enters and finds Poe pacing the room.

Scene III. The same. Poe is standing at the window, gazing out. Griswold enters and finds Poe pacing the room.

ACT TWO

Scene VI. The same. Poe is pacing the room, muttering to himself. Griswold enters and finds Poe pacing the room.

Scene VII. The same. Poe is sitting at a desk, writing a letter. Griswold enters and finds Poe pacing the room.

Scene VIII. The same. Poe is standing at the window, gazing out. Griswold enters and finds Poe pacing the room.

Scene IX. The same. Poe is sitting at a desk, writing a letter. Griswold enters and finds Poe pacing the room.

Scene X. The same. Poe is standing at the window, gazing out. Griswold enters and finds Poe pacing the room.
THE VOYAGE OF EDGAR ALLAN POE

WORLD PREMIERE CAST

Unit (in order of appearance):
DOCTOR (also Wadding Grant, Passenger, et al.)
EDGAR ALLAN POE
GRIMNARD (also Captain, Mr. Allan, et al.)
MRS. POE (also Ballad Singer, et al.)
MRS. CLEW (also Aunt Nancy, et al.)
MRS. ALLAN (also Granny Poe, et al.)
THEATRE DIRECTOR (also M. Daguin, et al.)
VIRGINIA POE
MOBY
WILLIE
CHORUS OF PASSENGERS (also Jarves, et al.)

The action takes place on a dock at Richmond and aboard a vessel sailing from there. September—October, 1849.

ACT ONE

PROLOGUE

(The opera begins in darkness. The figure of the DOCTOR is gradually revealed in a pool of light)

DOCTOR

I saw Poe alive in Richmond here, a week before he died. He wished to sail for Baltimore that night, and came to beg my help and seek advice.

(The figure of Poe was known under. He carries a manuscript in his hand, and is obviously in a disturbed frame of mind)

POE

I am distraught. I stag in the darkness. Help me! Help me! I beg you! Give me peace of mind. They mock me with silent whispers all around. The air is poisoned with their jealous lies. My wife is dead. She is dead, dead gone. And worse than that, my genius too! I cannot write, and yet I must! I am haunted!

(at table, writing)

"Dearest Mother Clemm, . . ."

(de drink)

A single glass . . .

You cannot know . . .

What seems my vice is but my woe.

(spitting)

"Dearest Mother Clemm: since our dear sister's death . . ."

MRS. ALLAN (passing over to POE,listening to scene CHORUS)

POE

Elmira! . . . See! See! Radamantus gams the night-dark sky.

Tenor

Tenor

Baritone

Dramatic Soprano

Mezzo

Alto

Bass

Soprano

Bass

SSAATTBB

His wife was dead.

DOCTOR

He seemed distraught.

He seemed haunted. I see him now, sitting there, a drink in his hand, writing to his dead wife's mother . . .

(to POE)

You should not drink.

Excites the brain.

Recall your pledge.

No more to drink!

He did not seem as other men, He did not hear as other hear . . .

FEMALE CHORUS

Helen, thy beauty is to me
Like those Nereus lacks of yore
That gently o'er the perfumed sea
Like silver dipped in light . . .

(he sings)

"I have found again my lost Eliza. She is a vision now. I think she loves me more than life itself, and I cannot help but love her in return. O, despair!"

Mother Carter, I am filled with darkness.

(reaches for bottle)

"Tonight departs a ship . . ."

And I must sail

To seek the secret knowledge of the heart, the cause of all my present pain.

A voyage of Discovery.

A voyage of the heart . . .

Yet! My friend and colleague, Mister Griswold, says there is.

He waits for me.

He is the guardian of my work.

The fancies of my brain.

I must take ship!

A voyage of Discovery.

A voyage of the heart.

I must hurry on to seek . . .

POE

I cannot help but hurry on to some peculiar knowledge of the self. Hidden eyes beyond a veil, and secrets whose attainment is . . .

DOCTOR

There is no ship . . . . . . not tonight . . . . . . No ship departs . . . . . . secrets whose attainment is . . .

POE

Give me Eliza this ovular brooch. It has within a lock of my own hair. I am ill.

Dangerously ill . . .

("The light ghostly falls on POE and the DOCTOR")

SCENE ONE

(The dark. The stage is momentarily in darkness. The CHORUS is heard off. Slowly a dim green sea-light bathes the playing area. POE is revealed above)

POE

I am feverish . . . I hear voices in the dark. Who calls? Who calls?

I cannot see! I cannot breathe!

Where is the ship?

CHORUS

The sea, the sea, the sea . . .

. . . . the sea, the sea.
We wait bring you none.
The infinite sea.
Our port of birth.
Onward to the sea.
The sea.

To sea. Discover, infinity. The sea.

(The figure of GRISWOLD vanishes out of the darkness beneath POE. He is dressed as Ship's Captain)

GRISWOLD
Patience, friend. She losers there in darkness. See her not?

POE
My eyes . . . . I cannot see. Who are you?

GRISWOLD
Friend. Pervel! Your captain and your guide.

POE
I am ill, sir, and must hear at once.

GRISWOLD
I know, I know. I know your mind: sense suffer much, tortured by rough cloth against your skin. Pervel's notes exceed your nerves. I know. All this you understand. But here all is still, all is dark. Every breath of wind has died away, and now there prevails a perfect calm.

A ghostly ship gradually materializes out of dark dancing mist. On her deck, musing charades can be seen, strange and bizarre shapes shifting as in slow motion. These phantasms suddenly become more discernible, a couple of actors and actresses. Several are dressed as MRS. ALLAN, MRS. POE, MRS. CLEM. Present among them is the THEATRE DIRECTOR.

GRISWOLD
Slowly, slowly the vessel drifts... silence. Blackness. The only sound a ghastly lapping on three shaky pilings buried to the harbor's guttering throat. But see! Where she appears, looming slowly, slowly, pale-white rigging, a blackened hull, a ghost on the swell. And with a ghostly rising wind, like voices calling, loudly calling . . .

There'll be a storm tonight, and laughter on the wind. Shadows going unseen into the whole illusion. Now form fantastic white, indistinctary memory begins to move, and away. A ghostly shipshape glides down the way, reflections shimmering in black and viscous waters. And there until the shrouding the clearest fantasy of all yourself.

You yourself?

(The members of the acting troupe now become particularized and sing in an exaggerated theatrical style)

THEATRE DIRECTOR
I saw am fond of enigmas, puzzles, charades . . .
Dear friends, this night poor Mrs. Poe lies dying. Pay her bates . . .

You were that all is to me, love, for which my soul did pine . . .

My mother's garments as she lay dying.

GRISWOLD


POE

Where am I going? Where are you taking me?

GRISWOLD

On a voyage of discovery. A heart that bears ambonation like the tomb must gather the past into hallucination.

Where life is sweetest to behold.

. . . it is there that we should die.

GRISWOLD

There is a land

all rich and gold

where life is sweetest

so to behold

it is there that we should live

Land of dreams and dark dark sorrow.

A city in the sea.

(The sound blends as the PASSENGERS, POE, now among them, retreat up the gangplank and into the vessel which itself begins to dematerialize into darkness. The echoing sounds diminish. GRISWOLD remains on the deck in a pool of light. The DOCTOR is heard calling from off.)

DOCTOR (appearing)

Mrs. Poe . . . Mr. Poe . . . Who is there?

GRISWOLD

Ship's Captain.

DOCTOR

Mr. Poe? Where has he gone?

GRISWOLD

Never heard of him.

DOCTOR

I must find him. He is dangerously ill. He wished to sail for Baltimore sometime tonight.

GRISWOLD

No ship will sail tonight. The wind is rising. She's rising fast.

DOCTOR

Where can he be? He took my fine malacca cane. He is ill. (disappearing into the darkness) Dangerously ill . . .

GRISWOLD

A heart that bears ambonation like the tomb now gathers the past into hallucination.

(The sound rises as GRISWOLD is swallowed up in darkness. The sound of the wind blends with and ultimately disappears into the voices of the CHORUS singing and tugging on the light rope on the following scene)

SCENE TWO

(The interior of the ship's passenger lounge. There is a small makeshift stage at one end with curtains hiding the platform. Various tables and chairs are grouped with passengers seated, drinking, gambling, etc. The THEATRE DIRECTOR attempts to get their attention)

THEATRE DIRECTOR

Ladies and gentlemen. Your attention. Ladies and gentlemen, if you please. An entertainment for our distinguished special guest. (The THEATRE DIRECTOR bows in the direction of POE, now entering escorted by GRISWOLD)

CHORUS

THEATRE DIRECTOR
We beg your kind indulgence. . . .
(An actress, garishly made up as MRS ALLAN, pushes her head through the curtains of the make-shift stage)

MRS ALLAN (to POE)
A small charade.

CHORUS
Charade, charade. Come see the play! (laughter)

(POE is led forward by GRISSWOLD. He appears confused and disoriented)

POE
My value! Where are my papers?

GRISSWOLD
Your sword-case firm in hand. Come, sir. We are late.

THEATRE DIRECTOR
Now set the scene, Mrs. Allan, if you please.

Allan?

POE
Come set!

(MRS ALLAN pulls aside the framed curtains of the make-shift stage to reveal POE, MOTHER, lying on a tray set. The DOCTOR and AUNT NANCY are nearby. The lighting is garishly surreal, as if for a Grosvenor melodrama created by candlelight)

MRS ALLAN
Dear friends, here on this rainy day, lingering on a bed of pain lies poor Mrs. Poe. An actress, (she makes an exaggerated face of despair)

CHORUS
An actress-
No better than she should be!

GRISSWOLD
But who among us is without sin?

(POE) You like the play?

THEATRE DIRECTOR
Let the piece proceed.

MRS ALLAN
Here on this dismal bed of pain we show the dying pauper, her neighbors gathered round. Surrounded by her three little babies, she begs your help. Pity her poor children. Please help her little ones. Her pretty dolls . . . .

MRS POE (to led)
My dolls, my pretty, precious children. My dolls. My pretty dolls . . . She snatches among the bed Clothes for the dolls which are missing. Frantic voices are heard from off: "The doll, the doll!" (flag doll) falls through the air. MRS ALLAN and AUNT NANCY catch them and hurriedly tuck them beneath the covers next to the dying MRS POE. The last doll, child-size, is clearly resembling the maker POE. complete with black hair, mustache and fur coat, is placed next to MRS POE.

MRS ALLAN
Here's simple Baby Bebe.

MRS POE, MRS ALLAN
You are all to me, poet.
For which my soul does pine.
A green island in the sea, love,
A fountain and a shrine.
(On the make-shift stage, the performance continues)
POE
I must not drink.

(POE drinks)

MRS POE (to dear)
You are that all to . . . the gaps for air)

DOCTOR (stepping forward)
to take her pulse. She cannot breathe. The gaps for air. Pulse very faint.

AUNT NANCY
The sickness nowhere to be found! Who will care for her orphaned children?

POE (as if remembering
by the word) What dream is this!
Who lies these dying? (moves onto stage)

GRISWOLD
Your love Ululume. Her death is nothing but a dream, a shadow in the dark. Time eats all things.

POE (moving to foolish)
Where am I? What demon has brought me here?

(POE, at the bedside, gazes at the form lying there. There is a gradual change of lighting. The passenger lounge seems to disappear into shade. The garish candlelit stage becomes more realistic as the sound of the CHORUS diminishes in volume. The other PASSENGERS are lost in darkness.)

GRISWOLD
Candles sink and glimmer low.
DARKNESS supervenes.

MRS POE (very weak)
My precious Eddie . . .

GRISWOLD
She calls to you. The plaintive voice, the work-worn hands, the love-worn eyes.

AUNT NANCY
Such a sweet smile.

MRS ALLAN
Seen but on the face of death.

GRISWOLD (whispering
to POE) She lies in slumber.

POE
Ah, what demon has trapped me here?

DOCTOR (peering MRS POE's
face with dead)
Dead
And the fume called 'living' is
ever at last.

POE (at bedside)
You were that all to me, love
For which my soul did pine.
A green island in the sea, love,
A fountain and a shrine.

FEMALE CHORUS
The skies they were ashes
And silver,
The leaves they were crisp'd
And sire.
It was night in the lonesome October
Of my most immemorial year.
It was hard by the dim lake
Of Auber,
In the ghost-haunted woodlands
Of Wirth.

CHORUS
Ululume.
Ululume.

MRS ALLAN
Poor woman, she is dying. She will not last another night of pain.

CHORUS
Ululume.
Ululume.

WIS POE
Eddie, are precious Eddie!
My innocent Eddie! Eddie!

CHORUS (set to wax)
Ululume.
Ululume.
Ululume.
SOIL (GRISWOLD, DOCTOR, MRS. ALLAN)

Now shadows come unbidden. Sad visions fill the air. A whirl of haze in a stifling room. To the vault of thy love. The vault of thy

ULAHANE.

POE. GRISWOLD

You were that all to me, love.
For which my soul did pine.
A green island in the sea, love.
A fountain and a shrine.

Griswold

Now shadows come unbidden. Sad
visions fill the air, with faces
glowing in the candlelight. A
whirl of haze in a stifling room.

POE. GRISWOLD

You were that all.
The all to me, love.
For which my soul did pine.
You were that all.

And now all my hours are trances
And all my nightly dreams.

Griswold

Are of faces glowing in the candlelight.
A whirl of haze in a stifling room.

POE.

Are those your dark, dark glances
And where your footsteps gleam.
You were that all to me, Ulahane.

Soli

And the fever called 'loving' is
ever at last.

(Mood suddenly shattered. The light abruptly becomes garish again, reviving the original melodrama tone of the passenger lounge. The

ULAHANE comes to life and resumes dialogue. On the small stage, MRS. ALLAN uses the POE DOLL, throw it swiftly through the air to

AUNT NANCY. With breath of laughter they try to stir the doll back and forth and dance around the doll POE in their tiny. GRISWOLD and the THEATRE DIRECTOR disappear behind the stage)

AUNT NANCY, MRS. ALLAN

The toy is ours! We have a child! A child at last!

MRS ALLAN (using the doll's voice)

This one simple... (throwing down a second doll) This one sick... (POE stands confounded as the toy doll is used through the air around hand)

POE

My sister? My brother? Where am I? My mother dying dead...

AUNT NANCY, MRS. ALLAN

But the boy is ours, a child at last! We will take him home.

(POE swings toward the red, where the DOCTOR has been standing. MRS. ALLAN and AUNT NANCY, garish and somewhat larger than life, seem to

surround POE on the toy stage. They have thrown away the Poe Doll and now dance around POE himself)

AUNT NANCY

Our Eddie is so well made.

MRS. ALLAN

In height almost six feet.

AUNT NANCY, MRS. ALLAN

A face most handsome, and hair so black and soft...
DOCTOR
I heard he drinks and holds it poorly.

AUNT NANCY
A nose quite sufficient.

MRS ALLAN
And eyes large and gray.

AUNT NANCY, MRS ALLAN
With thick long lashes. As twirly, such a gentleman indeed.

DOCTOR
He gambles, too. Such a gentleman!

POE
Where am I? Who are you? My head is spinning!

DOCTOR
They say he has an eye for girls. The fayer sex.

AUNT NANCY (reprovingly)
A classic education.

MRS ALLAN
In England and at home.

POE
I have no name!

DOCTOR
He drinks too much.

MRS ALLAN
I don’t believe! Not you!

DOCTOR
And gambles too.

AUNT NANCY
It can’t be true!

POE
I have no funds, I beg for bread!

(GRISWOLD, now continued as POE’s step-father ALLAN, suddenly pops up from beneath the sheet formerly covering the corpse of MRS POE, dressed in a nightcap and gown and with a sooty facial makeup)

GRISWOLD
Then go to work and earn your keep!

POE (wading to him)
Who are you?

GRISWOLD
Your foster-father, sir. Quack, quack.

AUNT NANCY, MRS ALLAN, DOCTOR (addressing the audience)
Dear friends, here on this dismal bed of pain we show the ailing father, his loved ones gathered round.

GRISWOLD (to POE)
Who are you?

POE
I am a poet, sir!

GRISWOLD
Quack, quack. Then poet me some poetry.
POE (singing)
"I have a burning and a fever which cling to me forever. 
I have thoughts I cannot banish! Visions which will never vanish!"

GRISWOLD
Quack, quack, quack, quack, quack, quack, quack. Is that the best you offer?
POE
O God! Is all we see or seem but a dream within a dream?

GRISWOLD
You failed in school?
POE
I was in debt.

GRISWOLD
And kept bad friends.
POE
I could not work, I could not sleep.

GRISWOLD
You drank too much.
POE
My nerves were raw!

GRISWOLD
Woozle! Goomph! Frawnd! Drooakar!
POE
Forget! Lie! Cheat! Quack, quack!

SOLI
He was not made
as others were.
He did not hear
as others heard.
He did not see
as others saw.
From childhood's
ear,
all he loved, he loved
alone!

GRISWOLD
Not one red cent!

POE
Beg for pence? Fiendish miser!

GRISWOLD
Not one red cent! My eye is on
you, Edgar Poe! Quack, quack.

AUNT NANCY, MRS ALLAN
Darling Eddie, kiss me! Kiss me!

DOCTOR
The fever called Living,
be careful! be careful!

(There is a wild shrill from POE as the two women begin to embrace him while GRISWOLD ALLAN rises in the beadle's role. POE snaps upon GRISWOLD and they grapple amidst the swirling sheets while the GUNS are in the passenger lounge springs to animation, showing orgiastic and interruptions. As the lights come up full POE is revealed writhing with a large rag doll of VIRGINIA. He almost seems to be walking around the tiny stage with it. GRISWOLD has disappeared. The herdphantomspareus in frenzy, then gradually the scene is wrought upon in darkness)

SCENE THREE

(Dark of darkness there now becomes visible, emerging as it out of mist, a still body of water, and on it a small boat moving slowly forward. A woman — VIRGINIA — is seated in the boat. The former frenzy of the preceding scene is now replaced by a dream-like quality as the boat drifts slowly into view)

POE (still disoriented and confused)
What is this place? Where are we?

GRISWOLD, once more in his role as Captain, emerges from the mist, speaking soothingly to POE who becomes more calm under his ministrations)

GRISWOLD
On a lake that thus expands
Its bounds. Waters base and deep.
In black rock shore with dark pines round.

A voyage of discovery.

(The stage is now dark save for the boat moving slowly across the black waters with the lone figure of VIRGINIA in it. She turns her head and gazes toward the shore)

POE

VIRGINIA

You are all to me, all love. For which my soul does pine.

A green island in the sea. A fountain and a shrine.

POE steps into the boat with VIRGINIA as it glides the shore and takes his place next to her. The vessel moves slowly across the water ever more)

POE

VIRGINIA

Ah, dream too bright to last.
Ah, starry hope that did arise
But is to be overtaken.
A voice from out the future cries...

(GRISELWOLD is now seen in a second boat with another woman whose face is hidden from view. The second boat glides past the first, the woman's face still unseen)

GRISELWOLD

Some things there are that have a double life, in light and shade, the future and the past, human memories, lonely places, tearful love.

And then the watchman stands agast, mute and motionless...

(The woman in the boat with GRISELWOLD turns her face toward POE and is now recognizable as POE's dead MOTHER, but rather more subterranean and unliking than remembered. She turns to smile indicatively at GRISELWOLD. POE shrinks back, appalled)

POE

VIRGINIA

You are all to me, all love.
For which my soul does pine.
A green island in the sea.
And now all my days are trances.
And all my nights are dreams of you. Dreams of you.

GRISELWOLD

And now all his days are trances.
And all his nights are dreams.
There where her grey eyes gleam.
And where her shining gleams.
By what ethereal serenade.
A voice from the Future cries,
"Observe, still onward!"
But o'er the Post a spirit flies.
Mute and motionless, aghast!

(The voice rises on the wind as the figures in the two smaller boats are enveloped in gloom)

SCENE FOUR

(From the opposite side of the stage, to the accompaniment of ringing bells, a wedding party is now visible, moving in ghostly slow motion. There is a gradual shift of lighting to reveal the process of the wedding party, now doled out in a wedding. The guests white-robbed, blue-jacketed green gown and flowers of ribbon. The wedding guests include MRS. CLEM, a Neighboring Lady, Theatre Director, the Doctor, and two clogs representing SISTER ROSA and BROTHER WILLIE. An old lady, GRANNY POE, in a wheelchair, is pushed forward. The sound of wedding bells (crescendo)

POE

CHORUS

Hear the mellow wedding bells! O! hear the golden bells!

GRISELWOLD (BASS, MRS. CLEM, GRANNY, DOCTOR, WILLIE, THEATRE DIRECTOR)

Happiest day, happiest hour, his blighted heart has ever known!
CHORUS
What a world of happiness their melody foretells.
SOLI
Happiest day, happiest hour, highest hope, highest power.

*MRS. CLEMM (speaking numbers into position forGrowans)
Where's Eddie dear? He must be here. His bride-to-be is coming near. I am the mother of his love, and dearer than the one he scarcely knew. Never miss you, you sit there.

ROSY (in rag-doll speech by chorus number, solo/blique-style)
Brother Eddie, he'll be married, he'll be married. There is a stain upon us all!

*MRS. CLEMM
Now bus-child. Hush! (to the others) She's mad, you know. (to Willie-doll) Naught Willie. Drunken, drinking, on a day like this!

*YLLE
I'm sick. I'm sick, I'm...

CHORUS
Willie! For shame! Willie! For shame!

*MRS. CLEMM
He's drunk, you know. Bring Granny near, poor lamb, where she can see and hear. She's deaf, you know.

GRANNY POE
Our house is near as was. What for? What for?

*MRS. CLEMM
A wedding, dear.

GRANNY POE
A what?

*MRS. CLEMM
A wedding.

GRANNY POE
But where?

*MRS. CLEMM
Our lodge, M. Poe, and darling daughter Guia are going to be married today.

CHORUS, SOLI
Happiest day, happiest hour!

GRANNY POE
Virginia! Too young!

*MRS. CLEMM
Ah, the groom arrives.
(POE is poked into the wedding scene, confused by what is taking place)

POE
What scene is this? What place?

*MRS. CLEMM (adjusting his tie, mothering him)
Your wedding, dear.

POE
Wedding! But to whom?

GRANNY POE
Little Guia, so they say. But she's too young!

POE
Virginia... Emily! Yes, now I remember... I have an understanding with Emily.

CHORUS (whispered)
Helen...

Emily...

Annabel...

Sarah...
MRS CLEMM (expressively)
Virginia, dear. You won't need this.
(With some difficulty)
What ails you, a fine malaria case.

POE (giggling)
I am not dressed, I have no funds . . .

MRS CLEMM
Then beg or steal.

POE
No. I am ashamed, a pauper still.

MRS CLEMM
And now a foolish kid.
(The childlike VIRGINIA appears, appropriately dressed but clearly only twelve years old. She is accompanied by GRIWOLD, now costumed as a minister in sober black. There are shocked whispers at the bride's extreme push together with some stifled giggles as the wedding procession forms)

CHORUS
Virginia!

CHORUS (to Minstrels)
Hear the mellow wedding bells!
Hear the mellow golden bells!
O, the rapture that impels!

CHORUS
Through the hazy air of night
How they ring out their delight!

CHORUS
O, the ringing, chinning of the bells,
Bells, bells, bells, bells, bells, bells!
Hear the mellow wedding bells,
Bells!

CHORUS
What delights their harmony forth!

CHORUS
O, golden bells!

CHORUS
How it swells, swells, swells!
How it dwells, dwells, dwells!

ROSY, MRS CLEMM, GRANNY,
DOCTOR, WILLIE, THEATRE DIRECTOR

POE
So young a child. He must be mad.

GRIWOLD (as Minstrel)
Minstrel must have called you mad.
But madness is the highest gift.

MRS CLEMM
Come, we must commence.

ROSY, MRS CLEMM, GRANNY
DOCTOR, WILLIE, THEATRE DIRECTOR
Bell! Bell! Bell! Bell! Bell!
O, see him on his bridal day, a burning blush
comes o'er him. All happiness around him lay,
The world all love before him.
And still a burning blush comes o'er his cheek!

GRIWOLD
"Deity beloved, we are gathered together here
in the sight of God, and in the face of this
compny, to join together this man and this woman
in holy Matrimony, which is an honorable estate,
instinct of God," etc. (the speaker continues but his words are inaudible)

ROSY, MRS CLEMM, DOCTOR,
GRANNY, WILLIE, THEATRE DIRECTOR
And in her eye a kindling light (whene'er it may
make there).
Is it on earth his aching sight of love;
then can be there:
And still that burning blush comes o'er his cheek!

GRIWOLD
"I require and charge you both, as ye will answer
at the dreadful day of judgment when the secrets
of all hearts shall be disclosed, that if either
of you knows any impediment, why you may not be
freely joined together in Matrimony, ye do now
confess it," etc.
"In sickness and in health, and forsaking all

CHORUS
O, golden bells!

CHORUS
How it swells, swells, swells!
How it dwells, dwells, dwells!
Twelve, sir.

**POR**

How can I marry now? I am a beggar!

**MRS CLEMIM** (pushing him forward)

**THEATRE DIRECTOR**

They say he's rich.

**DOCTOR**

He's very rich!

**GRANNY**

We'll all live snug as bugs in rugs.

**ROSY**

There is a stain upon us all! There is a stain upon us all!

**MRS CLEMIM**

Granny dear and Willie here and simple sister Rosy. Appeal to Mister Allan.

**WILLIE**

I'm sick, I'm drunk! I'm sick! I'm drunk!

**THEATRE DIRECTOR**

A burning blush comes to his face.

**DOCTOR**

He must be mad, so young a child!

**POR**

I must have funds. I beg you, Mister Allan! Please!

(There is an abrupt flattering movement of all those on the stage together with a rapid change of lighting, GRIEWOLD MINISTER with a sword, appears solemnly as GRIEWOLD ALLAN! From behind him, peeping up like a puppy, comes POR'S MOTHER, but gently made up, in action and attitude obviously a sitter. ALAN here befriends her and takes her into his arms)

**GRIEWOLD** (to POE'S MOTHER)

You fubs, you mubs, you fubs, you mubs!

**POR**

I beg you!

**GRIEWOLD**

Not now, sir. Can't you see? I am engaged! (to POE'S MOTHER) You fubs, you mubs! Quack, Quack!

**POR**

I must have funds!

**GRIEWOLD**

Not one red cent! Quack, quack! You fubs, you mubs!

**MRS POE** (to GRIEWOLD)

My precious lover, I am dead.

**POR**

Who is the painted woman here? What is her name?

**GRIEWOLD**

You fubs, you mubs, you know that you shall sail to love again.

**POR**

What haunted angel has led me home again?
You were that all to me, my love, and I arise to love again!

GRISWOLD

You were that all to me, my love, and I arise to love again!

(A SILENCE for MRS. POE. POE struggles to separate them)

POE

Lester? Where?

GRISWOLD

I disguised you, I dismembered you!

CHORUS

Bells! Bells! Bells!

(Adapted from the scene in Act I of the wedding party as before, with violent emotion and a swift change of light. GREISWOLD/ALLAN wheels around to emerge again as GREISWOLD/MINISTRANT)

ROY

There is a storm upon us all!

MRS. CLEMM

Granny dear, and still here, and simple squire Roy.

GRANNY

We'll all live snug as bugs in rugs.

DOCTOR

He must be mad, so young a child!

WILLIE

I'm sick, I'm drunk...

THEATRE DIRECTOR

A flower blushes comes to his face.

GREISWOLD

Not one red soul! Quack, quack!

POE

Downed! Dismembered?

ROY, MRS. CLEMM, DOCTOR, GRANNY, WILLIE, THEATRE DIRECTOR

And now the ring on her finger
And the wreath upon her brow?

POE

O, would to God I could awake,
For I dream I know not how!

GREISWOLD (to Ministrant)

I now pronounce you Man and Wife,
(you kiss a rose and kiss MRS. CLEMM)

CHORUS

Hear the mellow wedding bells.

VIRGINIA

My cherished kins he loves me well.

CHORUS

Bells! Bells! Bells!

MRS. CLEMM, ROY, GRANNY

I feel my bosom rise and swell.

WILLIE

What delight their harmony forswore!

POE

My soul is shaken.

DOCTOR, WILLIE, THEATRE DIRECTOR

An evil step is taken.

GREISWOLD

And now the ground must kiss his bride.
CHORUS
How it swells, swells, swells! How it swells, swells, swells!
O, the swaying and the ringing of the bells, bells, bells!
(There is an abrupt blackout as the wedding party goes into feverish confusion. A spotlight illuminates POE and GRISWOLD, who now appear as himself.)

POE
I must exorcise my work. I start today. I shan't put off.

GRISWOLD
And yet you do.

POE
What is the cause? Can you explain? What is the cause?

GRISWOLD
Perversely, I suppose POE a drink

POE
I must not drink. I made a pledge. (He drinks)

GRISWOLD
You're out of the brink and peer below.

POE (nodding drunkenly)
Frenzy, fear and dizzy sickness. Rush to annihilation.

GRISWOLD
Fling yourself into the void. Rush to annihilation.

POE
Falling, falling, falling to my doom!

GRISWOLD
Falling, falling, falling to your doom! The very end you so desire.

(Stays bent over, accompanied by a rising wind and a sense of impending storm)

CHORUS (from off)
Time, time, time, time, time, time . . .

GRISWOLD
How they spill your peace of mind.

POE
Satan! Begone! I must work! Let me work! I must create! I must create!
(There is a sudden shift in lighting as a moment-of-utter-loss of reality)

GRISWOLD
Too late. Drunkard.

POE
You have taken my place!

GRISWOLD
And you are fired. Your job is mine.

POE
Moments!

GRISWOLD
Drunkard!

POE
Who are you?

GRISWOLD
Griswold's the name!

(Around rising pills of laughter, GRISWOLD and POE are swallowed up in darkness)
SCENE FIVE

(Light gradually diminishes the house as before. Passengers are seen drinking, laughing surround. A sense of fluttering and violent storm grows throughout the curtain. As the scene progresses, some passengers fall in tears continue. The monotonous atmosphere is enhanced by the feeling that the deck is constantly under foot. Ship's voice and sounds in the sound of the sea. Confused and disoriented, POE wonders about among the passengers)

THEATRE DIRECTOR (to POE) We meet again, sir. Come join the fun! A masquerade.

CHORUS (in chorus) Fantastical, as the wind howls down on us. Charade! Bells, bells, bells!

POE (sighing to pass) I am Edgar Poe, a gargoyle. What can I do?

(The DOCTOR, a man in a dress, appears suddenly just before he sings, wearing a costume from Poe's masquerade tale, "King Poeb")

DOCTOR We would, we could before the wind.

POE Help me, please! I beg you! I must work. I must earn my daily bread. I must create!

DOCTOR The wind, the wind (offering POE a drink)

Pump ship, pump ship!

THEATRE DIRECTOR (in sudden inspiration) You could lecture, my boy. For a fee, of course. A modest sum, but nevertheless . . .

CHORUS Some few remarks to pass the time. Bravot us from the storm.

DOCTOR The storm, the rain, the wind!

CHORUS The ship is a-rolling, howling in the wind!

THEATRE DIRECTOR A howl of vastly before you speak. He offers POE a drink in a shell

POE (confused) No, no, no! I cannot drink. I scarce can stand.

DOCTOR The motion of the ship, the storm, the wind!

CHORUS The wind is up! We run before the wind!

POE My name! I've lost my notes. I am dangerously ill.

(MRS CLEMM, a woman in a dress from Poe's masquerade, appears suddenly just before she sings)

MRS CLEMM Ill, and mad to boot. As mad as . . .

POE (sighing to her) Not mad. Never really mad, except where my heart was touched.

MRS CLEMM So you are Minor Poe?

POE And who are you?

MRS CLEMM Your own imagination. Your own creation, round of face, drooping in shape. And see my dress! (She slowly spreads out her garment)

POE (aghast) is it a shroud!

MRS CLEMM Newly starched and ironed. (She holds POE a large sheet box) O take this suffer, my lord, for you are king of poets!
THEATRE DIRECTOR (insisting POE to be heard)
And teach us all your gift; the secret of your art. (to the assembled PASSENGERS) And now for your instruction, our King of Poets, Rufus Griswold!

POE
No, no! I am Poe. No one but Poe.

CHORUS
Rufus Griswold! King of Poets!
Griswold is the name! etc.

(MRS ALLAN, now an anonymous passenger wearing a 'King Poe' costume, emerges suddenly)

MRS ALLAN
O, King of Poets, receive your urch of office. (she hands him a staff)

POE
You wear a funeral pall.

MRS ALLAN (drily lifting her veil)
To hide my saffron yellow skin.

(GRISEWOLD enters, wearing a 'King Poe' costume)

GRISEWOLD
Your subjects wait.

CHORUS
Give us a speech! Teach us your art! Speak to us, King! We want a speech!

(GRISEWOLD signals for silence)

POE (at lectern, facing his audience)
I see you in a baffling dream . . .

GRISEWOLD
A nightmare.

POE
All costumed . . .

GRISEWOLD
For a wake . . .

CHORUS
In corpse cloth.

POE
Exuding . . .

GRISEWOLD
A canite stench.

CHORUS
. . . the smell of death. (they hunt like hags)

POE (following)
A nightmare . . .

THEATRE DIRECTOR (now in 'King Poe' costume)
Go on.

POE

. . .

THEATRE DIRECTOR
Continue, Mr. Poe.

POE
Yes, yes, I must. I am being paid six dollars.

GRISEWOLD
I beg your pardon. Only four.

THEATRE DIRECTOR
Just four.
POE

Four...
I cannot speak. I have forgotten.
I am ill...

What voice is that?

GRISWOLD

No voice at all. A dream. Go on.

POE

Yes, yes, I must. I must...

GRISWOLD

Speak! The mystery of creation!

POE

Creation? You hear? You hear? (listening)

I cannot...

POE (collecting himself, continuing his lecture)

Tonight I shall discuss the 'poetic principle,' the rationale of verse. (The mystery of mystery which blinds me still.)

And so I ask you then, when is poetry most potent? When attuned to beauty pure and holy. And what is purest beauty then?

That voice again!

THEATRE DIRECTOR

An echo merely, nothing more. Go on.

POE

What of that?

Jealous last.
Let me finish, let me speak!

... when attuned to beauty pure and holy...

You hear that voice?

SANDERS! Lies! Let me go on.

The poetic principle... Sanders, Lies!... When attuned to beauty pure and holy. And what is purest beauty then? The death of a beautiful woman! The death of a beautiful woman! That alone is truth in verse! That alone! That alone! The death of a beautiful woman.

Again that sound, a human cry...

GRISWOLD

Beyond the grave. Calling you, calling you.

POE

My wife, my love, Virginia!

DOCTOR

The wind, the wind, the wind.

POE

I hear you!

THEATRE DIRECTOR

No, no, my son. No, no. Only one of my little troupe of players. A singer of ballads and such. My wife, in fact, preparing for her role.

CHORUS

No more.

OFF-STAGE VOICE

It was many and many a year ago
In a kingdom by the sea.

GRISWOLD

Speak! The mystery of creation!

CHORUS

By the name of Annabel Lee.

OFF-STAGE VOICE

A kingdom by the sea...

GRISWOLD

Speak! The mystery of creation!

CHORUS

What about "The Raven?"

OFF-STAGE VOICE

I was a child and I am a child
In this kingdom by the sea...

GRISWOLD

Speak! The mystery of creation!

CHORUS

Nevermore.

THEATRE DIRECTOR

No, no, my son. No, no. Only one of my little troupe of players. A singer of ballads and such. My wife, in fact, preparing for her role.
POE
She sings that song as she lays dying; my darling Virginia, my love, my life, my being.

THEATRE DIRECTOR
You double my woe! A father’s woe! See there, she comes.

(‘The BALLAD SINGER’ appears from behind the drapes. She bears a striking resemblance to POE’s MOTHER, and wears a ‘King Peru’ costume. POE goes back, distracted and confused.)

THEATRE DIRECTOR
Come here, my love. Our dear son Poe appears to think you are his late deceased wife.

MRS POE
His wife? I, his wife? Ha, ha, ha. No, more like a mother to him than a wife, my dear. But I am alive and she is dead.

POE
But see, you wear a wedding sheet!

MRS POE
The very finest muslin cloth. You think it somewhat disgraceful (which about is displayed by your going)

POE
I feel an icy numbness in my heart.

THEATRE DIRECTOR
And so consider, Mr. Poe. You spoke of death, I believe.

POE
The death of a beautiful woman . . .
Ah, yes . . .

THEATRE DIRECTOR
The death of a beautiful maiden, no doubt, by the name of Annabel Lee.

POE
Ah, yes. And who can speak of this? Whose are the lips that best can speak, whose lips alone best speak this holy, this melancholy verse? For honored lover’s lips. The honored lover’s lips alone.

no, no, no, no! No!

(The voice of VIRGINIA is now heard from off. POE listens to the disordered sound as the others crowd round him, ultimately crowning him with apple branches)

POE
No! (he listens) Again that voice! Virginia! Do you not hear that voice?
HER voice?

No! No! Shame! Vicious beast!”

Virginia! I tell you she is there!

(POE listens intently to the distant voice as the other PASSENGERS dance and sway with the motion of the ship)
POE
Virginia!
My bride...!
You surely hear it now!

Virginia!
Matron, I tell you it is her voice!
My bride!

CHORUS
A toast to Edgar Allan Poe! A song for his coronation. Gone, more wine! A drinking song for the maddest of the mad! "Ride, boldly ride," she thrice repeated, slurred.

SOLI
Gaily bedight, A gallant knight, In sunshine, and in shadow, Had journeyed long, Singing a song In search of Eldorado. "Where can it be?"

POE
Virginia! My life! My muse!
SOLI
He searched and searched, But he grew old, This knight so bold, And found no spot of ground That looked like Eldorado. "Where can it be?"

And as his strength failed him at length, He met a ghastly shadow. "Shadows," said he, "Where can it be, that land of Eldorado?"

SOLI
She is here! She is here! She lives! My darling, my sister, my bride! She lives!

GRISWOLD
Beast! She's gone!

POE
She lives! She lives!

GRISWOLD
Her shadow you hear: Her ghost beyond the tomb.

POE
She stands outside that door!

GRISWOLD
Above the sodden rising wind, her voice is calling you...

POE
She lives! My sister, bride!

GRISWOLD
Beyond the tomb... By the sounding sea...

POE
Virginia! (ff)
And thee madmen all fired
With no other thought
Then to lose and to be loved by him.

CHORUS
What about the women, Mr. Poe? Were they not young enough for you? Will only children do? Why do they call to you? Even now there is someone calling.
The drawing of a cork is your poetic principle; Then come drink more wine, the better to hear your muse calling.

SOLI
Virginia! (ff)
I was a child...

CHORUS
Where can it be, this Eldorado? Where can it be?

Virginia! (ff)
By the name of Arabella...

CHORUS
Where can it be?

Virginia! (ff)
His darling, his life, and his bride.

CHORUS
Over the mountains of the moon,
Down the valley of the shadow,
"Ride, boldly ride" The shade replied,
"If you seek for Eldorado,
Ride, boldly ride."

SOLI
Where can it be?
Where is this land
All rich and gold,
Where life is sweetest
To behold?
And wild delight! Strange sights and sounds
Egress! Chorus!

CHORUS
Ride, boldly ride...

Beyond the tomb...
By the sounding sea...
ACT TWO
SCENE SIX

(Brightness: There is a crash of thunder and a driving force of wind and rain, inclining as the light come up to reveal the scene as before, except that the PASSENGERS are now dressed in normal clothing, and are seated at tables, playing cards and gambling in leisurely fashion. There is no suggestion of hallowiness. The PASSENGERS regard POE with curiosity as he is seated at a table, clinking a brandied stiffed cork. There is no other trace of VIRGINIA. As POE, obviously disoriented and baffled, struggles in an upright position, the BALLAD SINGER is heard performing, accompanied by a violin and cello, on the small stage)

BALLAD SINGER (Mrs Poe)

Lo! 'tis a gala night tonight
Within the lovesome latter years;
An angel, wheel, besouled, bedight
In silv'ry light, down to ears.

It is a theater to see
A play of hopes and fears
While the orchestra sounds effulently
The music of the spheres.

Lo! 'tis a gala night!
And the angels all applaud and war!
Unrav'ling, a dream that one day
Is the tragedy "Mac!"

Our hero the Conquering Wimp!
GRISWOLD (in the role of Mep's) (Captains)

We must excuse our friend's behavior. He is not himself as you can... .

POE

I dreamed such dreams. Do I address imagined things? Or are you real?

MRS ALLAN

Luminous, I say he's muttered than . . .

MRS CLEM

He frightens me! It's my belief he's had too much to drink.

MRS ALLAN

I think he's mad. It runs in his family, they say.

DOCTOR

He should be shut away! Locked up! His eyes are staring. You must be careful how you speak to him!

MRS CLEM

I know he's had too much to drink!

MRS POE

He interrupted our rehearsal.

THEATRE DIRECTOR

He did, my dear. So like our long lost son.

POE

I dreamed such dreams . . . A dark and sated sky. Thunder and rain. A ship on the track of the sea, flying down the wind, with salt tears, twisted and broken spars. Plunging uncontrolled through the wild waves of the sea. Midnight, bells striking midnight in a raging storm. And laughter, ghoulish laughter, carried on the wind. And in this place, a lonely man; I myself. I alone, the centre of a marsh in where Tine每一个人 and melancholy my soul. And who shall know where this dark bloom will find its soul? Then phantoms, foolish phantoms swarmed in humming madmen, while all around I felt the frame and smell of crushing seas! The sea! The sickly yellow moon sank down into this hurrying man. Eternal night reigns. Still onward and onward the roaring vessel plunged and rose, plunged and rose. Oh, God! Onward, ever onward, ever onward! Further, ever further, ever farther, ever farther, ever farther, wild and strange wanderings of my unfurl world, and bearing me in madness toward all emerald journeys primordial, the shrouding darkness of the soul! Oh, Lord, help my poor soul! I dreamed such dreams and saw myself the centre of that madman, whirling, whirling diabolically, round and round. Stoking down and down. And then suddenly appeared before my eyes . . .
MRS POE
Your wife. You called her name.

POE
Virginia. It was her dying day. A dream so real and strange. I reached across where she stood to pull her back from death. But then it all dissolved, and I awoke.

THEATRE DIRECTOR
And thus you impersonate the performance of our little play, this midnight presentation.
(The musicians on the stage resume upon a signal from the THEATRE DIRECTOR)

POE
What play is this?

THEATRE DIRECTOR
Adventue. Discovery. A cry to the sea. Where death has reared himself a throne. And where the past is gathered into hallucination. Our play is the tragedy, "Man." Our hero the Conquering Worm.

POE
What place is this? Hostiels? Bredel? Prison?

GRISWOLD
Shipboard, sir. We make a voyage . . .

POE
To hell! Where evil rises solely like a flower.

GRISWOLD
Indeed an underworld wherein you seek what you have lost, that flower of youthful love and beauty which you destroyed forever. Your own Eurydice.

POE
My bride. My love. I beg you, pity me. Give me relief from all this misery. Grant absolution for my crimes.

GRISWOLD
Judgment here on earth? For crimes as great as yours?

(CHORUS and SOLI

SOLI
He is mad, his mind unhinged.

CHORUS
No, no, he's mad and damned forever.

(The THEATRE DIRECTOR steps between POE and GRISWOLD, assuming the role and costume of AUGUSTE DUPIN. Poe's detective creation. The CHORUS and SOLI begin to plot on black robes.

THEATRE DIRECTOR
Perhaps the mad have pleasures we vulgar sane can never comprehend. Is Poe? May I not plead your case before the bar, my dear Poe? A simple trial to judge your life?

POE
I welcome it! I beg you pity me. Give me relief from all this misery.

CHORUS
He's mad! And yet must answer to the charge.

(The change of setting, the outlaws of the stage become indistinguishable. THE PASSENGERS, now wearning black robes, arrange themselves as a jury. GRISWOLD, in scarlet and wearing judicial wig, mounts the bench. THE THEATRE DIRECTOR, dapper and identified as Poe's defender, DUPIN, addresses GRISWOLD/JUDGE.

THEATRE DIRECTOR

CHORUS
Madman, monster, Poe, Poe, Poe, Poe, Edgar Poe!
GRISWOLD
The accused will face the court and answer to the charge. But let me warn you here and now: in this game the stakes are high and I hold all the winning cards. I am the eye into your mind, your anima and animus, seeing all and knowing all, observer of your secret heart even as it wilds like some dark bird high in the crouching of the wood, or sinks in horror, as the black bull saunters beneath your feet. No matter how the voyage starts, no matter where the journey leads, it always ends in discovery of the self.

CHORUS, SOLI
And so begins. Moisette Dubois, Detective.

THEATRE DIRECTOR
The charge is madness. How say you, Poe?

POE
A state of being, but so is health, only more curious, and surely more mundane!

THEATRE DIRECTOR

CHORUS, SOLI
Quite clearly mad. He has visions. Insane hallucinations!

THEATRE DIRECTOR
Hallucinations? Can this be true, my dear Poe?

POE
I welcome visions! I cast out reason.

THEATRE DIRECTOR
And give yourself to madness, then?

CHORUS
You see? He condemns himself!

POE
Is this a crime? To go into the private world of visionary art?

THEATRE DIRECTOR
Aha! All atoms, then, are mad?

POE
They are! And choose the pain and shadows as others do the light. They choose the pain and shadows . . .

GRISWOLD
You condemn yourself?

POE
As others do the light. I choose the pain, I choose the darkness. I do not see as other men. I see no being passing from a common spring. I look into the human soul, the human heart, and do not flinch to tell the dreadful truth. I find, the dreadful truth . . .

THEATRE DIRECTOR
Enough, enough, enough. You condemn yourself.

POE
I have a burning and a fever which cling to me forever.

THEATRE DIRECTOR
No more! No more! My dear Poe, no more!

POE
I have thoughts I cannot banish. Visions which will never vanish. I look into the human heart and do not flinch to tell the dreadful truth.

CHORUS
You degrade us, Poe! Is that your aim? You murder for your art! You murder for your vile art! Worst crime of all, you murder all that we love to make a sacrifice to your muse!
THEATRE DIRECTOR
You see, they say you murder for your art, that death itself is your true muse.

POE
Not so! I deny it!

THEATRE DIRECTOR
Nor do, you say? Eh, approaches POE, draws from his pocket the bloodstained bridal veil.

My Lord, observe this piece of evidence. See this bloodstained bridal veil.

It was his wife's?

GRISWOLD
His wife's? in POE Can you deny the crime?
Can you deny it?

POE (in agitation)
I feel on her violation! She marred my creations.

GRISWOLD
And love forever is your art?

She had to die for you to live?

POE
She died. But I never killed her. No, never.

THEATRE DIRECTOR (pleadingly)
But what means her death, my Lord? Surely, all is life. Life within life. Life within the greater.

POE (seemingly降落)
And all within the heart divine!

The heart, the heart!

All is life within the heart divine!

GRISWOLD
And now condemned forever to a house of woe.

THEATRE DIRECTOR
But wait, my Lord. We act too hastily. In his defense, his only fair we see the truth as it took place. Let us invoke the pact, and reconstruct once more the simple cottage in which his childlike bride lies dying . . .

SCENE SEVEN
(The light begins to change, gradually revealing the Poe cottage at Westham with Virginia lying on her deathbed. The Doctor, Mrs. Clemm and a Neighbor Lady stand by the bed. Briefly, Poe and Griswold appear on the periphery of the scene, watching but not yet a part of the action. Griswold is now drawn as a priest.

VIRGINIA (muttering) Is it done yet?

MRS. CLEMm
Not yet, my love. Want you your doll? The cat for warmth?

VIRGINIA
What is it like outdoors?

MRS. CLEMm
There is a mist. A day of days . . .
To die.

MRS CLEM
You must live, my love. You must live.

VIRGINIA
For his sake, yes. If I but can. I dreamed once more.
It was many and many a year ago.
In a kingdom by the sea
That is hidden there lived whom he did know
By the name of Annabel Lee.
This maiden she lived with no other thought
Than to love and be loved by him.

(The light dies around the figures grouped at the balustrade and grows brighter on the figures of POE and GRISWOLD PRIEST. GRISWOLD whispers excitedly into POE's ear)

GRISWOLD
You did not love her.

POE
I loved her!

GRISWOLD
Could not love her. Never loved her.

POE
I loved her!

GRISWOLD
Really loved her.

POE
I loved her! I loved her! My bride!

GRISWOLD
But the woman, the bride-child you ashore, now in death shall be adored.

POE
Speak not of this to me! I loved her! Who gives you leave to speak of this?

GRISWOLD
I am your priest. Ah! Ah! Ah! Judge. The eye into your mind.

(GRISWOLD walks back into the shadow as POE, vividly shaken, steps into the scene and stands behind the DOCTOR as he minister to the dying VIRGINIA)

VIRGINIA
With a love that the winged seraphs
of heavens covered her and . . . (as coughs, gasps for air)

CHORUS
Ulalume.

DOCTOR
She cannot breathe, she gasps for

MRS CLEM
She turns her eye to heaven's gate.
MRS CLEM
May it receive my poor child . . .

VIRGINIA
Eddie, my dear heart, Eddie! O, God!

DOCTOR (using her pulse)
Fever very fast. Failing rapidly.

VIRGINIA
Where is my Eddie?
Poe (crying down beside her)
Beloved wife, I'm here beside you.

Mrs. Clemm
Here on the bed of pain, surrounded
by her family . . .

Virginia
Eddie, my gentle Eddie! My love!

Poe
My darling wife, my bride.

Virginia (taking his head in
her arms) Eddie! Darling! Brother!
And thus we say the treason that long ago
In this kingdom by the sea.
A wind blew out of a cloud.
Gripping and killing his Artemis Lee.
Neither the angels in heaven above,
Nor the demons down under the sea . . .

Doctor
We can do nothing more. She is drowning. This is her dying day.
(The Doctor and Mrs. Clemm step back into shadow, leaving Poe alone heading at the bedside)

Virginia
Take this kiss upon thy brow.

Poe
My life, my bride!

Virginia
And in parting from you now . . .

Poe
My only love!

Virginia
Thus mocketh me anew;
That all I see or seem, is but a dream.
That all my joys and sorrows, have been a dream.
And hope too self has flown away.

Poe
You are that all to me,
An island in the sea,
For which I pine:
A fountain of a shrine.
Yet I too am
All we see or seem is but a dream,
A dream within a dream.
And hope too self has flown away.

Doctor (stepping to bedside)
She is gone. The fever called living is conquered at last.

Poe
Dead.

Mrs. Clemm
Sleep in peace.

Poe
My love has died.

Mrs. Clemm
And the spirit of love rules all.

Neighbor Lady
O, holy Mary, Mother of God,
pay for us in thine hour . . .

Doctor
Nothing now can save her . . .

Griswold
Your lost Lilianan. Her death is
nothing but a dream . . .
a dream within a dream.

Female Chorus (off)
Then his heart is gone ashen and sober,
As the leaves that were crispened
and were.
And he cried, 'T was surely October
Upon the very night of last year
That I brought a death benediction
Here to this legend-tomb by the sea'

Griswold (as Priest)
Sons of Man...
He stands amid the rear
Of a turf-walled shrine.
Sons of Man...
He holds within his hand
Grains of the golden sand.
O, Sons of Man, How few!
Yet how they creep
Through his fingers to the deep,
While we can but weep!

Sons of Man...
How precious few!
Can he not grasp them
With a tighter clasp?
O, Sons of Man, few before . . .
Can he not save one
From the golden wave?
Sons of Man
Is all we see or seem
But a dream?
Is all this nothing more:
Than a dream within a dream?
Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.
et vobis, et omnibus, et in omnia saecula
saeculorum. Amen.
POE

Am I to blame?

MRS CLEMM

You are absolved.

GRISWOLD

Not so. He bears the guilt for her untimely death! And the funeral pall comes down with a silent, solemn rush.

Let the funeral bell toll!

Let the iron-hearted bell toll!

(Chorus: His love lies dead, and his the blame. Dark angels veil the scene.

In the silence of the night . . .

(The black-robed choristers accompany their music with appropriate action, draping the room with funeral cloths, embalming the body on a bier)

POE

She died too young, and I am left alone.

GRISWOLD

And yet you longed with all-consuming thirst for this moment of her death.

POE

No, never.

GRISWOLD

You wished her dead.

POE

Not!

GRISWOLD

Confess it. Confess.

POE

I see her on our bridal day, a world of love . . .

GRISWOLD

Or death. And here she lies, your holy bride, your one and only true gift! And at last you have your secret wish. Your lifeflows muse.

POE

Let her but live again! My bride, my life!

GRISWOLD

Your cup over, your feast!

The long-imprisoned secret bursts from out your soul! The hidden knowledge of the heart:

POE

My one and only true gift, Creation!

GRISWOLD

Your one and only true gift, Destruction!

From this time on you'll seek another muse, and kill that too.

POE

No! There is no other! She is my life, my soul!

GRISWOLD

You can't deny a power greater than yourself!

POE

I do! I do deny it!

GRISWOLD

Ah, no! You'll seek a second bride, another

CHORUS

The spirit flown forever more!
muse, and then a third, a fourth, a fifth . . .

POE

Never! I am not mad! She is my life, my soul,

GRISWOLD

SOLI

Let the funeral bell toll!

POE

GRIJUST WOULD

Come on your future course. Admit the truth

ECHO CHORUS

. . . forever more . . .

GRISWOLD

SOLI

More! More!

GRISWOLD

CHORUS

The sea, with dark unfathomed side,

POE (as husband) at the balustrade of VIRGINIA in the light dim down to blackness)

SCENE EIGHT

On the opposite side of the stage we see a small platform with PASSENGERS grouped around a large mirror-frame. Before it are seated the THEATRE DIRECTOR and the DOCTOR, who is also dressed as POE. GRISWOLD, in the point of an advance, prompts the action of women as possible mate for Poe's imagination. The PASSENGERS assume the roles of women on Poe's final works, including Mrs. Richmond, Mrs. Shaw, Mrs. Ogden, White, Arment and Mrs. Whitney. Each scene in turn behind the mirror-frame, then steps through the frame to POE. The curtain, stage, and make-up are garish and expressionless in the extreme. (Several of the chief passengers impersonate women. There is aoid and terror among them.)

GRISWOLD (as Sh ve)

Step up! Step up! Step up, good ladies, one by one. Step up! Let us show our merits. The poet's muse is dead, and he must find her another. Step up!

MRS POE (supposing Mrs. Richmond)

DOCTOR (as Poe)

Will I suffer, dear Edgar? (as Mrs. Richmond) Dear Edgar, will I suffer?

GRISWOLD

Yes, take her. She's rich, they say.

MRS POE

I'll be your slave. But Misses Richmond, not Morella, is the name.

GRISWOLD

Very rich.

DOCTOR

T'o take this kiss upon thy brow.

MRS POE, GRISWOLD

Is all we see or seem

(A dialogue spoken, Mrs. Richmond takes through the mirror-frame and steps to embrace POE. DOCTOR. He takes her and her hands in the manner of a simple, then moves her with, she shrugs a wild, irregular around him as the others pass and step in regular)

THEATRE DIRECTOR

What ho! What ho! This lady is darling mad! She has been bitten by the Tarantula! What ho!

CHORUS

Take her, take her, take her, take her. The wedding bays! Ah!

(A SECOND WOMAN - Mrs. Green - appears in mirror-frame)

MRS CLEMENS

Let us have a conversation, Miss Poe: Is it true your wife is dead, and now you seek another muse? Will I suffer!

DOCTOR (unconcernedly)

You suffer? You are the very world to me. Ligeia, my love!

MRS CLEMENS

You are mistaken, I believe. I am Morella, not Ligeia.
DOCTOR
Oh do forgive me. I saw thee but once, once only, all clad in blue.

MRS CLEMM
I trust you, Minor Poe, for I have cherished you these many happy years.

CHORUS
All clad in grey.

GRISWOLD
Take her! Take her, he'll inspire you!

DOCTOR (now more and more confused)
I saw thee once, once only, all clad in grey.

GRISWOLD
'Twas green.

(To SECOND WOMAN leaps through the frame and dances wildly around POE as a THIRD WOMAN — Mrs Allan — replaces her)

MRS ALLAN
Please judge my theme, dear Edgar Poe. "The Dying Rosebud's Lament."
"Ah me! Ah, no (e) o (m) me, than I should perish now;
With the dear sunlight just lit in upon my holy brow.
My leaves, innocent with glowing life, were quivering to unclose:
My happy heart with one ray stale, I was almost a rose.
And pressing up and peeping through to sip the precious veins.
Sighed for the lovely light and dew that blessed my elder sisters.
Ah, me! Ah, no me a me, that I ere yet my leaves unclose,
With all my wealth of virtues must die before I am a rose."

GRISWOLD
Eureka! She'll do! You've found your Muse!

DOCTOR
I am suddenly ill, I have a chill. No more of this, I beg you.

GRISWOLD
But what of Elmina?

ELMINA
Ah, Helen, the beauty was to me
Like those Nerean barks of yore!

DOCTOR
And so?

(THE FOURTH WOMAN, the Theater Director, gesticulating, struggles for attention)

THEATRE DIRECTOR
My beauty was to you! My beauty was, did you say? My beauty is!

GRISWOLD
Take her! Take her, lovely Helen!

(The scene becomes progressively more hectic as various women struggle to be noticed. Passengers involved are beginning to change costumes and wigs)

ANOTHER WOMAN
You'd not forget your own darling Annie, now would you, Mr. Poe?

DOCTOR
I saw thee once, once only, all clad in pink.

GRISWOLD
Boo! All clad in red! But take her, take her, your own darling Annie, Take her!

ELMINA
"The beauty was to me
Like those Nerean barks of yore."
DOCTOR
I saw thee, all clad in brown . . .

GREYWOOLD
Gold! Grey! White!

THEATRE DIRECTOR
Which of us, Mister Poe? Which?

MRS. POE
Which of us, Mister Poe, which?

SOLL
Which will you favor? Which muse?

You must choose!

DOCTOR. SOLL
Now all my days are wearisome,

Now all my nights are wearisome,

Are where you! O cast your glances,

And where your footstep gleams.

(The WOMEN, dancing wildly, surround POE, sidling this rapidly from one to another. GREYWOOLD observes the scene, laughing merrily.)

DOCTOR (turning wistfully)
I love you! I have said! And said etc.

SOLL
Then marry me! Marry me! Then marry me!
And me! And me!

DOCTOR (solely)
Ghost! Phantom! Revenant!
More! Liars!
Evlues!

DOCTOR
I see thee once, but only once.
Just once. All clad in blue...

In white. Which? Which one?

Which of you? I'll take you all!

A lot of each!

I'll have you all.

(SOLL, CHORUS
All clad in green! In pink!

In black! Gold! Blue!

Which muse? Which muse?

A slice of her. O one half of this!

A piece of me! A part of me!

(The WOMEN begin divining themselves; of their "poes", handling POE a wig here, a leg there, an arm, a arm. The cries and shouts laughter rise as POE, utterly madly from one to another)

DOCTOR
What is this? An arm? A hand?

A pinned face? A wig?

You bag! Your limb! This leg!

A heart?

Away!

Away! Away! Away!

Away!

(Poem of boulders, fly through the air as the scene climaxes in frenzy. POE takes a terrifying final shriek as the scene dissolves into blackness and the phantom women disappear. GREYWOOLD, hissing-like laughter's board in the dark)

SCENE NINE

(The light gradually returns to the bedroom scene. VIRGILIA lies on a bed. The room is draped in black cloth. POE still breaths at her side, with GREYWOOLD, as Peter, seated him, half hidden in shadow.
POE
Show me no more, I beg you! No more. No more.

GRISWOLD
You wished her dead. And she is too. You lusted for it with all-consuming lust, and caused the hours she lived. The hidden secret out at last!

POE
I am possessed.

GRISWOLD
You need the dead to nourish that dark stain within your soul.

POE (almost whispered)
I must not think, I must not remember!

GRISWOLD
And she was conscious of that wish.

POE
The memory of her voice, her face... No more! Please, no more!

GRISWOLD
And pinned away. In time the crimson markings grew upon her cheek.

POE
Oh God, forgive me!

GRISWOLD
The veins stood out, a milky blue, against her marble skin and coal-black eyes. You gazed upon her as she lay...

POE
I must not think, must not remember!

GRISWOLD
And lusted after death!

POE
No! No more, no more!

GRISWOLD
Lie down by the side of your darling, your bride.

POE
My life, my art...

GRISWOLD
Now dare to wake her, take her in your arms.

POE
Dead and gone.

GRISWOLD
Embrace your love, sad cripple.

POE
Eyes so lifelike, glassy white. Shrunken lips.

GRISWOLD
But strain to hear the slightest sound, detect the slightest breath...

POE (bending over her)
None, nothing.

GRISWOLD
No sob, no sigh! No tinge of color growing on her cheek!

POE
No!
GRISWOLD
No eyelid moves along the sunken vein?

POE
Wait! A sound! You hear? ... There is a sound! The heart! The heart! The heart within her heart!

GRISWOLD
At the seal within you shakes!

POE (with rising exultation)
She lives! She lives again! My life! My soul! Her heart is beating, beating. My bride! My bride! Virginia! Alive!

GRISWOLD

Virginia! Now sudden her senses come to her brain.
Ye gods, ye gods, your voice, your voice, your trust is true, your trust is true!

POE
My bride, my life, my trust's gift, my trust's love!

GRISWOLD (mournfully)
But there not her of that other land beyond the grave. Never seek to know!
(The body of VIRGINIA slowly returns to life in POE's fevered dream. She rises in his arms)

POE
You are my own once more!

VIRGINIA (with an ethereal quality)
Why have you called me from beyond, my dearest love? And broken my voyage...

POE
Because I seek to know the deepest mystery of all. And you must speak, and tell me now. I will not be denied...

GRISWOLD
You must not ask, nor seek to know.

VIRGINIA (hesitantly)
The land beyond...

POE
Yes, yes! The land beyond!

VIRGINIA
The land beyond... where gold and silver fish swim through the river of silence; and the tall flammings flaunt its scarlet plumage, and unseen glowing birds drift slowly in the quiet wind, in the valley of the many-colored grass... You cannot follow, you must not ask.

POE
I must and will! I must! I must!

VIRGINIA
Across the river of all... (she falters)... of...

GRISWOLD
Silence.

VIRGINIA
I must not speak.

POE
I must know more! I must know more!

VIRGINIA
Wee strange star-shaped blossums burst out upon fantastic roses, creating a Wildness of dazzling dreams. And tremendous flowers, be it green and ruby red, bend and sway in the genic serpents, bowing like a million silken serpents paying homage to their sovereign, the blushing sun... I must not speak!

POE
You must!

VIRGINIA
I am afraid.
POE
You must tell all! You must tell all!

VIRGINIA
And clauds all gorgeous crimson gold float out and settle down amid the glory of the hills about the valley of the many-colored grass . . . (again faltering) No more! No more! The pain . . .

POE
I will hear all! No matter what!

Virginia (continuing)
Hand in hand we will walk across the river of . . . (she falls, choking her death) Where gold and shag fish swim through the river of silence. Unseen glowing birds drift in the wind. In the valley . . . in the valley . . . in the vale . . .
(Her voice slowly rises, then abruptly vanishes as she clutches at her throat and falls back tilting in POE's arms)

POE
My love! My life! Dead! Twice dead. And it is I who have killed her. Myself alone.

GRISWOLD
A rupture in the throat.

POE
She had to die for me to live!

GRISWOLD
And you have surely killed her!

POE
My nose, a phantom lost to me!
My heart, a lure suspended . . .
(The disembodied voice disappears in darkness)

SCENE TEN
(The scene of Poe's trial ensues, with DUPIN speaking in Poe's defense. He is reading the inscription in "The Fall of the House of Usher")

THEATRE DIRECTOR (Dupin)
"Sans cesse est ton hale beugle; ain gen't embouche a temoigne." Ah, poor Orphée, ever searching the unknown land for his dead Eurydice, and finding her only to lose her again. And with that loss, creation, too, is lost. His hate falls silent. Pay him, I beg you, pity him.

GRISWOLD (judge)
You ask an act of charity for this sick mind? Let goodness flow from evil? And all for art? For what? What art? The works of his imagination are sickly blooms of darkness! Expose them to the light!
(The PASSENGERS, as burns, circle POE like dark harlequins, taking up manuscript, and as quickly throwing them aside)

SOLI

GRISWOLD
He looks into the human soul and finds all black! Through murder, hate and madness, he seeks his fame! His fame! What fame! Then strip him bare of reputation. Douse him now of greatness. Let this be his abolution.
(The PASSENGERS turn POE, with earnest)

GRISWOLD
Edgar Poe, you stand condemned. Now before judgment, have you taught to say?

POE
Have mercy on my life. For all I touched turned in rout in my hand. My youth, a fragile vessel caught upon the waves of a savage sea. My heart, my heart a ravaged garden without a single bloom. Look upon this ruin mocked by starsless skies. How else shall I speak, how shall I speak my soul's pain? The berried loves of these sad eyes! I lie within the storm. Pay me! I cannot write. I cannot think. I cannot love as others do. It is true. It is true! I murdered for my art! I killed all that I most loved, and sacrificed remembered bliss to feed my muse. It had to be. Have mercy on my life.

GRISWOLD
Mercy for such crimes as these! It can never be!
POE
I search the unknown land . . .

GRISWOLD
Of sighs and demons!

POE
In the secret voice, whispering, "whispering . . ."

GRISWOLD
Of all our nightmare tears, our most forbidden fantasies and dreams.

POE
I shape the other world . . .

GRISWOLD
Of dark desire and lust.

POE
Yes! And I forget it too soon!

GRISWOLD
Destroying all you touch! And now you must be destroyed, lest you go on to hell again.

POE
I am Edgar Poe! I have no equal!

GRISWOLD
You are insane!

POE
Who dares judge me then!

GRISWOLD
Myself. The ghost fan of your fame. Your anima and nemesis. The eye into your mind. I am your soul. Your secret self.

POE
My secret self. Now at last I know you.

(DOCTOR, in POE and wearing POE face-mask, moves directly behind GRISWOLD, hidden from POE for the moment, but revealing GRISWOLD's act.)

GRISWOLD
And from you judge yourself. You are guilty.

POE
I am guilty.

DOCTOR (mocking)
Guilty.

GRISWOLD
And thus your voyage ends in Discovery.

{ DOCTOR
Discovery.

(GRISWOLD has abruptly disappeared, replaced immediately by the DOCTOR as POE in the mirror-frame so that POE [as himself]

DOCTOR
The secret knowledge whose unutterment is Destruction.

POE
[Dreams]

(As a sudden unutterable joy of realization, POE rises up the mirror mirror-wise and with a vicious fangs scowl at the image of himself in the mirror-frame)

POE
[whisper]
Then die. Die. Poe! My Absolute! Die!
(With a welcoming gesture, the DOCTOR/POE stretches out his arms to receive the lines. There is a sudden blackout.)

CHORUS
To sea. Discovery. Infinity. The sea.

EPILOGUE

(As the light gradually reveals the deck as is Act I, scene 1. It is dusk. Mist rolls from the tower. POE is discovered wandering alone, was strayed in GRISEWOLD's gray capes coat, unable to sit, clutching manuscript in his hand. There is an illusion of a ship. The deck is empty. Bringly, on the ground is the Doctor's weathered case. A business man's chalk is heard distinctly, indistinctly.)

MALE CHORUS (off)
Gally breasting, a gallant knight,
In sunshine and in shadow,
That journeyed long, singing a song,
In search of Eldorado. "Where can it be?"

POE (clenched)
I am safe, safe at last.
(GRISEWOLD emerges from the shadows, seizes by POE, shortens him carefully)

GRISEWOLD (into roar)
Where gold and silver fish swim through the river of silence...

POE (groping at his garments)
Wherever clothes are these I wear? They are not mine. If only Mother Clemm would come...I must take ship! Must take ship.
(The disembodied voice of VIRGINIA is heard from afar. POE listens intensely.)

VIRGINIA
It was many and many a year ago
In a kingdom by the sea
That a maiden there lived
Whom she loved she loved
In the name of Adrian Lee...

POE
For the most serene dreams without bringing me dreams...Hand in hand we'll roam, where silver fish swim through the river of silence...

MALE CHORUS (off)
A shadow fell as he found
No spot of grassland
That looked like Eldorado.
"Where can it be?"

POE
Where can it be?
Where can it be?
"Can it be?" by the side
Of my darling, my darling,
My sky and my bride,
In her sepulture by the sea.

VIRGINIA
And sold all the day's hire,
Lie down by the side.
Of your darling, your darling,
Your life and your bride,
In her sepulture by the sea.
(The manuscript falls from POE's hands as he falls lifeless on the deck. GRISEWOLD steps forward, looking down at the body. The DOCTOR is heard calling from off.)

DOCTOR
Mister Poe...Mister Poe... (the DOCTOR enters, see GRISEWOLD) You're there?

GRISEWOLD
Friend.

DOCTOR
Have you seen Poe? A man all dressed black! Dangerously ill. He must be helped.

MALE CHORUS (off)
"Shadow," said he. "Where can it be? This land of Eldorado?"
GRISWOLD

all clad in black! (pointing to body) Here is a man rather the worse for wear.
(To DOCTOR: looks down to show an arm for a wrislet)

DOCTOR

Cold as ice.

GRISWOLD

The canoe? Variation by Gad!

DOCTOR (showering at Griswold)

He wished to take a ship last night.

GRISWOLD

A ship last night?

DOCTOR

To make a voyage.

GRISWOLD

But no ship sailed. Of that I'm sure.

DOCTOR

Those voices there!

GRISWOLD

A gang of double-voices, Election thugs. Filled with drink, and doubtful seeing derelicts like thin along the riverfront. (Be indicates Poe's body)

DOCTOR

And you, sir! Were you ever?

GRISWOLD

A friend! Guardian of his fame? (He steps to pick up Poe's mausoleum and cane) Griswold is the name.

DOCTOR (nervously)

I believe you have my cane, sir.

GRISWOLD

Why, so I have. The moon is broken off.

With a源于 how to the DOCTOR, GRISWOLD bends him the male at came, then disappears into the shadows with an ironic smile. The DOCTOR

stares after him, then bends down to the body of POE as the curtain falls

The End