Edgar Allan Poe's

The Raven

designed and illustrated by Kevin Keaney

A pocket full of Poe!

Edgar Allan Poe

(January 19, 1809 ~ October 7, 1849)

Published in January 1845 by the Evening Mirror in New York, "The Raven" was, and still is, hugely popular and truly an American classic. People would crowd into lecture halls to hear Edgar Allan Poe recite the poem in dramatic fashion, causing fright and suspense to the audience ~ many later admitting to having nightmares of visiting ravens!

This model of sharing and reciting "The Raven" inspired me to create this "pocket full of Poe" with hopes that you will share it with others.

Edgar Allan Poe carried within him a deep sadness from his mother dying of tuberculous when he was two and later his step-mother when he was twenty. While writing "The Raven" Edgar witnessed the love of his life, his wife Virginia, slowly dying of tuberculous.

Two years after the poem was published, Virginia died.

"The Raven" hauntingly illustrates Poe's sadness, despair and abiding sense of loss for his love. After Virginia died, Edgar sank into a deep depression, and would find happiness ~ Nevermore!

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A Poe Vocabulary Primer

Volume (of Forgotten Lore): A large book of ancient magic

Lore: Knowledge

Surcease of sorrow: An end to sorrow or sadness

Lenore: The name of his lost love

Visitor entreating: Someone wanting to come in the room

Window lattice: A wooden structure of crossed strips put in front of windows

Yore: Many, many years ago

Obeisance: A gesture of respect, as a bow

Mien of lord or lady: One's manner, acting like a king or queen, a lord or lady

Bust of Pallas: Pallas is the Greek Goddess of Wisdom, (Pallas Athena), Bust is a sculpture of the chest, shoulders and head the raven is speaking from a position of great wisdom

Ebony: Black

Beguiling: To engage the interest

Stern decorum: a serious look or appearance

Plutonian: Referring to the Greek God of the Underworld, Pluto

Dirges: The first words of a prayer

Melancholy: Sadness and depression

Ominous: Implying an evil nature

Fowl: A Bird

Censer: A container used to burn incense

Seraphim: An Angel

Respite and Nepenthe: Relief from pain and sorrow

Quaff: To get a lot of relief, to drink heartily of relief

Prophet: One who can foretell the future

Balm in Gilead?: Is there safety and security anywhere from this pain?

Aidenn: An Arabic word for Paradise

Black plume as a token: A feather as a reminder

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore,

While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
"'Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door ~

Only this, and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December,
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor

Eagerly I wished the morrow; ~ vainly I had tried to borrow,
From my books surcease of sorrow ~ sorrow for the lost Lenore ~
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore ~

Nameless here for evermore.

And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me ~ filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;

So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating
"Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door ~
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door;

This it is, and nothing more."

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
"Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;

But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you."~Here I opened wide the door;

Darkness there and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before;

But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, "Lenore!"
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, "Lenore!"

Merely this, and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,
Soon I heard again a tapping somewhat louder than before.

"Surely," said I, "surely that is something at my window lattice;
Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore.
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore;

"Tis the wind and nothing more!"

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,
In there stepped a stately raven of the saintly days of yore;

Not the least obeisance made he; not an instant stopped or stayed he;
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door.
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door~

Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,

"Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou," I said, "art sure no craven,
Ghastly grim and ancient raven wandering from the Nightly shore ~
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!"

Quoth the raven "Nevermore."

Much I marveled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,
Though its answer little meaning ~ little relevancy bore;

For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door ~
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,

With such name as "Nevermore."

But the raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only that one word,
As if his soul in that one word he did outpour.

Nothing further then he uttered ~ not a feather then he fluttered ~
Till I scarcely more than muttered "Other friends have flown before.
On the morrow he will leave me, as my hopes have flown before."

Then the bird said "Nevermore."

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,
"Doubtless," said I, "what it utters is its only stock and store.

Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore.
Till the dirges of his hope that melancholy burden bore ~

Of "Never ~ nevermore."

But the raven still beguiling all my sad soul into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust and door;

Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore ~
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt and ominous bird of yore

Meant in croaking "Nevermore."

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core;

This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining
On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamp-light gloated o'er,
But whose velvet violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o'er,

She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer
Swung by Seraphim whose faint foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor.

"Wretch," I cried, "thy God hath lent thee ~ by these angels he hath sent thee
Respite ~ respite and nepenthe, from thy memories of Lenore;
Let me quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!"

Quoth the raven "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil! ~ prophet still, if bird or devil!
Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore,

Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted,
On this home by horror haunted ~ tell me truly, I implore,
Is there ~ is there balm in Gilead? ~ tell me ~ tell me, I implore!

Quoth the raven "Nevermore.

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil ~ prophet still, if bird or devil!
By that Heaven that bends above us ~ by that God we both adore.

Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore ~
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."

Quoth the raven "Nevermore."

"Be that word our sign in parting, bird or fiend!" I shrieked, upstarting~
"Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore!

Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken! ~quit the bust above my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!"

Quoth the raven "Nevermore."

And the raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;

And his eyes have all the seeming of a demons that is dreaming,
And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor

Shall be lifted ~Nevermore!

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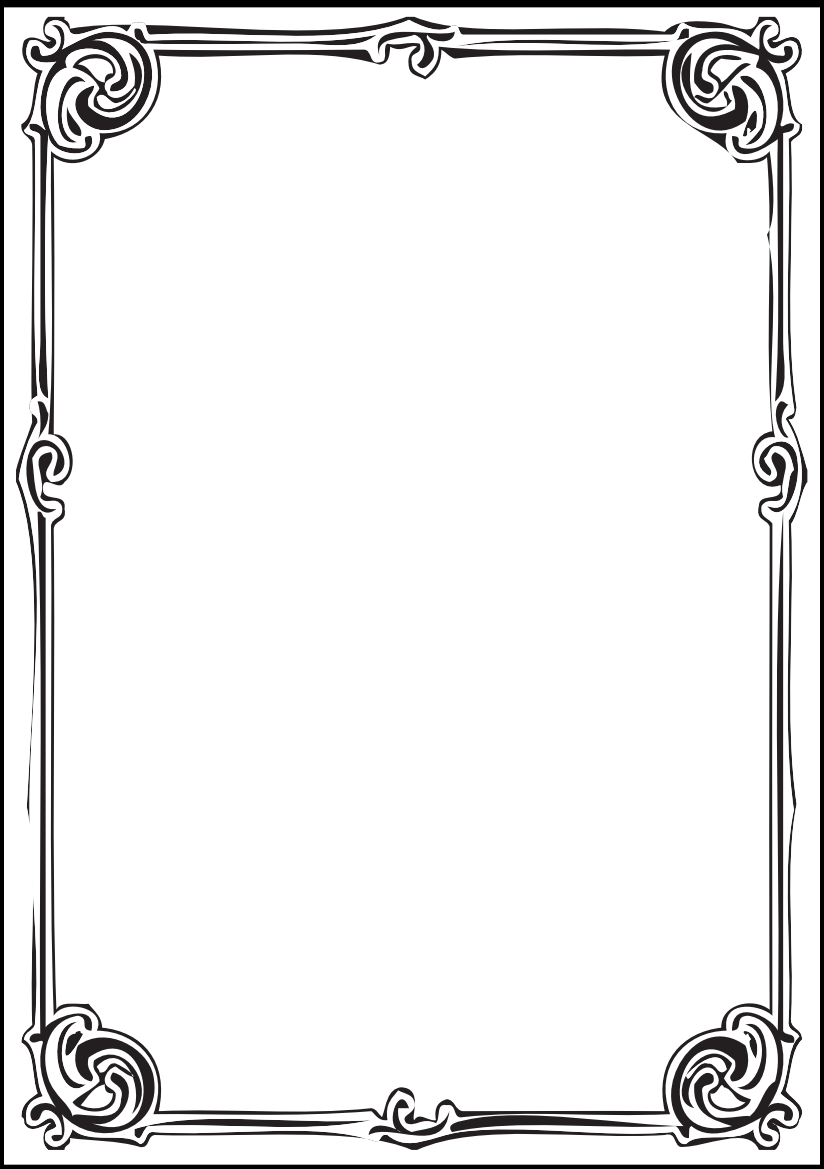

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