

## Edgar Allan Poe

My blue jeans graze the ground before my feet do, clad in blue, mushroom-covered converse. My shirt was cream, a sorry endeavor at white. I would occasionally trip over my jeans, the right leg especially, on account of the jeans being two sizes too big. Behind me birds chirped on windowsills of houses I passed while I walked home. Looking ahead, I saw my favorite house on this block, a gorgeous baby blue house with dark violet silk curtains flowing from the windows. I loved those curtains. Even though it was September, the day was unbearably hot. Maybe it was because I was wearing long pants, or maybe it was actually hot. It's hard to tell. Suddenly, I heard a twig snap above me from the tree cover. I stopped walking and looked up, only for a twig to land directly on my face. It whipped over the bridge of my nose, then fell harmlessly to the ground. I shook my head, then grabbed my face, hot, fresh pain traveling like ripples in water through my body. Funny how something so small could cause such a problem. A scratch was forming where the twig hit me just moments before, but it was bleeding and I didn't think it would leave a bruise. There were more sounds of twigs snapping, so I took a few steps backward to avoid being hit in the face again. Then, a most unbearable *creeeaaaak* whispered through the branches of the trees, then a large crash, and a man started falling directly out of the branches. I did the unwholesome thing and ran, and as soon as the man hit the ground I turned around in the other direction to see if he was alright.

"Virginia?" A voice groaned, so light it was nearly inaudible. I guessed it came from the strange man, but his face was concealed by branches covering his face

The man was plain, there was nothing particularly extraordinary about him, except how familiar he looked. I thought he would at least have some sort of magic, saying he just fell from a

tree. His eyes were sunken in hollows, and he looked rather annoyed at his situation. He stood up and gestured to me to come closer. How did he survive the fall?

“Virginia,” He croaked, his voice heavy and thick like he was talking underwater, “Where are we?”

“Who do you think I am? My name is Zoey, and we are in Virginia, yes, but I am not Virginia.” So I turned away from him and ran.

“Wait, Virginia!”

The whole situation was awfully strange - a man falls out of a tree, then calls me Virginia. The first thing that was drilled into me from the beginning was: DON'T TALK TO STRANGERS. Stranger danger was real, kidnappers were real! So why did I feel like I wanted to help this strange man - after he called me a false name? Why did I stop running and turn around to face him? Why did I slowly walk towards him, then watch as he brushed twigs off his black shirt?

“Who are you?” I said, hoping he hadn't heard my voice crack. “I think you have the wrong person.” It seemed as though my speaking confidence ebbed with every word.

“Why, it's me, Edgar,” He said, looking as confused as I felt. “Where are we, anyway?”

Then it hit me - no one in this time period would be wearing such strange clothes. He was calling me *Virginia*, which was confusing enough, and he said his name was Edgar. Where have I heard that before? While all of this is confusing, the man did just fall from a tree, so my conclusion seemed possible enough. How was he not hurt from the fall?

“You ... are Edgar Allen Poe.” I said slowly, watching him cautiously.

“Well, of course.” He said, his eyes meeting mine. Then something in his face changed. “You aren't Virginia,” He said, sounding repulsive, “You have brown eyes!”

“If you really are Edgar Allen Poe, then you must be very old.” I said boldly, not minding that I was technically being rude. But, he wasn't the kindest so far either, so that made me feel at least a bit better.

“No, I'm not.” He said, almost spitefully. For what he lacked in looks he made up for in character, that's for sure.

“You speak so... strangely... Yet you produced many great books and short stories. Have you seen how amazing you have become?”

He snorted at this. “Am I not amazing now?”

I looked him up and down. “Not particularly.”

“You are not Virginia. She is so quiet, so... Sweet.... And you are... Well, you are just...” He then looked at me and sneered. “No one will ever marry you.”

I wish I could be as witty as the characters I read about in books. I wish I could pull them out from between the pages and ask them what to say. But, I am not very good at defending myself, so I sniffed and looked in the other direction. Then, a thought occurred to me.

“How did you die?” I asked him, my back still turned, gesturing to follow me as I began walking down the street again. He started to follow me, but then stopped, his mouth wide open like a fish when a car flew past us. Whoever the driver was, they did not acknowledge speed limits. He noticed me watching him and asked me what the car was. I explained that cars are machines, like horseless carriages. A raven squawked and landed a few feet ahead of us, staring right at me. No, behind me, behind Edgar Allen Poe, to the house behind us. It was my favorite on this block - the blue one with the purple curtains. Someone had painted suns on the fences that looked like they were rising out of the wood. Every time I pass this house, the first thing I see are the suns, and

they make me smile. Someday, I'll be so good at something that when people see it, they'll smile. Edgar seemed to remember my earlier question.

"I'm not dead, I'm alive and well." He looked honestly confused this time, overwhelmed by this strange city and the raven a few feet ahead of us. "I've always hated ravens." He practically muttered, but I still heard him.

"That's funny. You published a poem about him. I heard it was quite the rave."

"I did?" The joke went right over his head.

"Yeah. A poem about a raven that flew into your house. They named the Baltimore football team 'The Baltimore Ravens' after you." He looked so confused, but I didn't stop to explain. "Come on, let me show you."

I grabbed his hand and started to run, then severely regretted it. His hand was cold and clammy, like someone with a fever. I pulled him in front of a local bookstore, so tired from running at this point that I put my hands on my knees and bent over. Edgar looked fine, so I was embarrassed at being so out of breath. I walked into the store and bee-lined for the 'classics' section. There I found all of Poe's works, in one section.

"Look!" I called from across the room. He was watching the tv, then pointing at the person behind the cash register. They were on their phone, scrolling through something, and he was yelling at them. "OVER HERE!!" I called to get his attention, and he walked over.

"You really do look like Virginia." He mumbled to himself. I pretended I didn't hear him.

"These are all of your books." I said, my eyes roving over the titles. I passed them so fast that the words started to blur.

"Wow." He breathed, his eyes starting to tear up. "Am I really this important? You didn't make this up?"

“No, I didn’t.” For the first time all day, I felt like he was opening up. “Now it’s your turn to show me something,” I said, pulling him away from the books. “Where did you - I mean, where do you live? Where is your favorite restaurant? Where do you go after a long day’s work? Show me around the city, tell me what is new and what is old. We can both learn something new today.”

He smiled as we walked out of the bookstore.

If I ever met Edgar Allen Poe, I would call him Edgar. I would love to meet an Edgar, for one, and two, well, I don’t have another reason. I would love to learn about his life, from the source. I think that history revolving people’s individual lives is akin to gossip - it gets watered down unless you hear it directly from the person. Of course we can’t talk to Poe anymore, but if I could, I would learn everything from him. How did he die? Where did the inspiration for his writing come from? Who did he love more, Virginia or Elmira? Did he prefer Baltimore or Richmond? What is his favorite food? I’d of course tell him about the modern world, and who knows, maybe if I told him about the state of the climate he could go back and educate people. Based on his writing I’m assuming that his outlook on the world is rather dreary, so I don’t think he would help, but still. It would be so interesting to learn about what it was like to live back then. I hope Edgar Allen Poe falls out of a tree next time I walk home.

**Sources:**

<https://poemuseum.org/poe-timeline/page/3/>