

A DESCENT into the



MÆLSTRÖM

Edgar Allan

POE

PROSPECTUS

NAWAKUM PRESS

GIG HARBOR

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A New First Edition from Nawakum Press

Edgar Allan Poe, the architect of the modern short story, published 'A Descent into the Maelström' in Graham's Magazine in late 1841. George R. Graham had just hired him that year, as both a critic and editor for the magazine. Poe considered this story of loss and survival to be one of his best tales. Wiley and Putnam published it in a collection of Poe's stories in 1845 simply titled *Tales*.

The story draws its inspiration from the raging waters that surround the desolate Lofoten Island archipelago in the North Sea, off the coast of Norway. Three fishermen, all brothers, are caught in a windstorm and strong tide, then pulled into the swirling tumult that creates one of the largest whirlpools in the world. Poe had learned about this deadly sea phenomena from several sources, which included an account in Fraser's Magazine in 1834. The primary narrator of Poe's tale, the surviving brother, tells how the others lost their lives when they were sucked into the liquid abyss and perished, while he alone managed to escape death.

Much of what Poe is known for lies in evidence here. There is darkness, chaos, and terror, yet unexpected clarity of thought. The acquisition of real knowledge in Poe's tale brings into perspective his view that, despite the chaotic mysteries of Nature, man's own intuitive sense often breaks through, and when needed, comes to his rescue. It is the fisherman's sense of awe, and acute observational skills, that in the end enables him to make the difficult choice that ultimately proves to be his salvation.

Included in the edition is a facsimile map of the Norwegian whirlpool, created by Vincenzo Coronelli in 1696. A sea cyanotype print, created by Lynda Laird of St Leonards on the Sea in the UK, is an inset on the cover of the deluxe clamshell box. The cyanotype was created by coating watercolor paper with light sensitive chemicals, submerging it in the sea in a light-proof box, and then exposing it to an incoming wave.



THE ARTIST

Gary Alphonso is an artist and illustrator from Toronto, Canada. He attended the Ontario College of Art and Design in the early 1980s, where he chose scratchboard as his preferred media. It is an illustrative technique that uses line and shading tools for scratching into a thin white China clay, coated with black India ink. This method was well suited to the expression of those things he found so appealing in nature: stark contrasts, strong shapes, and open spaces. After years of perfecting his scratchboard style, Gary adapted it to the digital realm, where he now works entirely on a computer. For this Nawakum edition his work was plated for letterpress.

THE PRINTER

Joel Benson, proprietor of Dependable Letterpress, began putting ink on paper in 1987 at the University of California in Santa Cruz. At the time he was studying philosophy and ancient Greek. He apprenticed at The Yolla Bolly Press, a former trade book publisher working with Sierra Club Books, who in 1983 began designing, printing and publishing fine press limited editions. Joel started his own Press in 2002 in a basement in San Francisco's Mission District, later moving his shop to the base of Potrero Hill, and then to Vallejo, California. Dependable exclusively prints letterpress on Heidelberg and Vandercook presses.

THE BINDER

Lisa Van Pelt of Cloverdale, California specializes in designing and producing limited-edition fine press books, artist books, boxes and paste papers. She was a student of architecture at Hampshire College in Massachusetts, obtaining her BFA there. She then trained as a hand bookbinder with Claudia Cohen, in addition to working in collaboration with Mark Tomlinson. Her individually crafted bindings are rooted in the traditions of bookmaking, and further inspired by modern materials and innovations. Lisa bound the Nawakum titles *Trading Eights*, *The Sea Fogs*, and *A Kerosene Beauty*.

ABOUT THE EDITION

A Descent into the Maelström was designed and published by David Pascoe of Nawakum Press in Gig Harbor, Washington.

Sixty copies measuring 7 x 13 inches are published at thirty-two pages. Four illustrations have been created for the edition by Gary Alphonso, and were printed on Joel Benson's Heidelberg cylinder press, along with the text. The typefaces are Centaur, and Huron for display. Papers are Somerset Book from the UK, Bugra from Germany, Lotka from Nepal, and Kozo Fibers from Thailand. Paste papers and bindings were created by Lisa Van Pelt.

THE BOOK IS PUBLISHED IN TWO STATES:

Deluxe Edition: 26 copies. The quarter leather binding has blue paste papers over boards on the covers. A gold, foil stamped whirlpool adorns the cover, with a gold foil stamped leather spine label. Housed in a clamshell enclosure of charcoal book cloth, with a sea cyanotype print inset into the box cover. All copies are signed by the artist and are designated by letters A-Z.

Slipcase Edition: 30 copies. Designed with blue paste papers over boards on the covers. Printed paper label on the spine, bound with black Japanese book cloth. Housed in a white, pearl colored book cloth slipcase. All copies are signed by the artist and are designated by numbers 1-30. 4 copies are *hors de commerce*.



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