



## The Company

*Arabella Edge*

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*"I, Jeronimus, am a man of phials, a measurer of powders on bronze scales, a potion brewer, an opium and arsenic merchant. The primped and perfumed Amsterdam burghers came to me in droves requiring cures for fevers, love balms, the miscarriage of a bastard child, and, of course, poisons. Ah, poisons."*

So speaks Jeronimus Cornelisz, a thirty-year-old apothecary who transforms before our eyes into a murderous madman.

*The Company* is a novel based on the 1629 voyage of the Dutch East India Company flagship Batavia, bound for the colonies with a cargo of untold riches. Among the passengers is Cornelisz, a man ousted from polite society by sordid rumors of necromancy. Corrupt to the very marrow of his soul, Cornelisz considers himself God's equal, the rightful heir to gold, silver -- even another man's wife. So twisted is he by lust and greed that he incites a mutiny, running the ship aground on a reef.

All is lost -- the ship is wrecked, its passengers dying, the treasure trashed at the bottom of the sea. "The apothecary will heal us," the survivors pray, believing themselves lucky to be alive. In the name of benevolence, Cornelisz seizes command of their island refuge. The brave castaways stir with hope -- until the killing begins. For forty frenzied days, Cornelisz decides who shall live and who shall die, leaving his victims with just one wish -- that they had gone down with the ship.

Soaked with the blood of the innocent and the wicked, *The Company* plunges, with the weight of history, deep into the heart of darkness.

## The Company Details

Date : Published 2002 by Picador (first published 2000)

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Author : *Arabella Edge*

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## From Reader Review The Company for online ebook

### **Lisa says**

In 1692, the Dutch East India Company ship, *Batavia*, was wrecked off the coast of as-then undiscovered Western Australia. Stranded on an island with no fresh water, things looked dire. When the senior officers, including the captain and the commandeur, left to find drinking water a man called Jeronimus Cornelisz took charge and began a reign of terror where murder and rape came to be the norm.

*The Company* retells of this dreadful time through the eyes of Cornelisz himself, which is tricky to pull off. With a story so dark, told with the voice of such a disturbed and depraved individual, it could really be an incredibly off-putting book. Who, after all, wants to read about these vile acts as narrated by the man who caused them all?

Yet there's a deftness of touch there. Edge lets us know how awful Cornelisz, his "council" and his actions were, but never rams in the knife to make us see it in vivid technicolour. Most acts are mentioned, only briefly described, if ever – which would normally be seen as a bad or weak writing, but works here because a vivid description would be nauseating. It also makes some sense for Cornelisz to describe these atrocities in sparse terms.

I was not expecting to find this a decent read, was drawn to the book by the possibly accidental aged appearance of the book and the cheap price tag. I would never call this an enjoyable or pleasant read, but I will say it is a decent read, albeit dark and grim and not for the faint-hearted.

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### **Owen says**

Very much enjoyed this strange tale of the fortunes endured by the survivors of the *Batavia*, a ship that hit a reef off the coast of Western Australia on its way to the east Indies, leaving the passengers stranded and, as it transpired, in the hands of a mass murderer. An eccentric text, written in prose designed to match the times of which it tells, and therefore not everyone's cup of tea, as noted in other reviews. Nonetheless, a fine achievement and a worthwhile read for anyone interested in both the story, which, although fictionalised here, is a true one, and a surprising and inventive use of the English language.

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### **Julia says**

Arabella Edge narrates the horrifying events after the shipwreck of the *Batavia*, one of the most important ships of the Dutch East Indian Company. Interestingly, the moral decay of the survivors is told by Jeronimus, sadistic pervert with a love for luxury and young boys dedicating themselves to all kinds of brutally erotic games who seizes power after the tragic accident and starts to convert the island where the crew and travellers had found a scarce refuge into his own private realm of godless frivolity and crimes. He corrupts the minds of those who've accepted his guidance way too easily the same way other dictators have done too many times in history.

The story itself is enthralling, especially as I had never heard of this historic event before, unfortunately I

didn't enjoy Edge's slightly convoluted and artificial writing style too much and - even knowing that all this had really happened - I didn't buy the psychological profile of any of the protagonists. The author has done her best to include childhood memories which are meant to explain the "evilness" of Jeronimus, but the thoughts of this characters never seemed the thoughts of a real person to me, mad or not. A fast read, quite enjoyable, but nothing special.

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### **Abby says**

This fictionalized account of the atrocities that befell the survivors of the Batavia's wreck. It is told from Jeronimus Cornelisz's (the mutineer and madman left in control of the survivors) point of view. I recommend reading a true account because no fictionalized account can be more compelling than the true story but it is creepy to read the first person POV. Thankfully the book is short because its so disgusting what he does to the survivors that I don't think I could have read much more. The author's writing is great and I thought she does an excellent job of making the reading see into this madman's mind. But its definitely not a book I need to read twice.

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### **Josh says**

I'm not quite sure what this fictional version of the wreck of the Batavia adds to the true story. I understand why the author would try to tell the story from the point of view of the villain, to try to get into his head. She succeeds somewhat, I would say, but ultimately Cornelisz is such a creepy, evil man that it's damn hard to get into his head. Still, I enjoyed the book. Where do you go to wash your brain after enjoying such horror?

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### **Lisa says**

I think I reserve one-star ratings for books I do not feel the need to finish.

I finished this one. It gets two stars expressly for that.

Weird. The story, based on true events, is pretty fascinating. The writing, particularly the voice of a sociopath and ego-maniacal murderer (which should be aMAZingly fun to write... and to read), is only eh. There was a comparison of Edge and Brett Easton Ellis written in a review on the book jacket... so I expected more out of Edge. Unfortunately, I think the comparison was made only taking the Patrick Bateman character into account and disregarding all of Ellis' talent. Even more unfortunate--for me-- I fell for it and got stuck reading through the novel in its entirety.

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### **Michelle says**

A masterly dark and disturbing tale.

Like Heath-Ledger-as-Joker disturbing.

Also disturbing: In the acknowledgements, the author thanks someone I assume is her daughter, who had to listen to the novel being read aloud every day after school. Wha? What's her bedtime story, a Clockwork Orange?

Based on true events from the 1600s, the story centers on an evil young apothecary, exiled to the colonies from Amsterdam, who is shipwrecked and spends the next 40 days marooned on desert isles playing God with his fellow castaways.

This is a truly unique read but with familiar elements. There is a strong "Lord of the Flies" element with a generous splash of S&M. The voice and style, and being forced uncomfortably into the mind of a madman, also reminds me of *Perfume: The Story of Murderer*. And the way the victims looked to the apothecary, sort of a modern pharmacist, for salvation and guidance even reminds me of TV's *Lost* and how the survivors instinctively chose Dr. Jack Shepherd as some sort of leader. But the know-how to heal is also the know-how to poison.

The known events are disturbing enough. But the author does an amazing job filling in the blanks. The chapters, dedicated to each day of the 40-day nightmare, are short and haunting. Historical fiction at its creepiest.

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### **Emily says**

nobody read this book. Historical fiction, at least in this case is something no one needs.

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### **A Reader's Heaven says**

"This is Bret Easton Ellis camped on Treasure Island with *Lord of the Flies*." - Robert Drewe

I have to say from the start that I couldn't finish this book. I can see why it is popular, I can see why those who love this book point to its historical accuracies and prose - I just couldn't read it.

I put up with the language for 150 pages and the ship had only just become shipwrecked - 150 pages of painful dialogue and descriptive prose. There is just too much to read in the world to waste more time on this.

I gave it 3 stars as, like I said, I can see why it would be popular.

Paul  
ARH

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### **Lianna says**

not a big fan of her writing style but the actual story of the shipwreck is exciting. you'd be better off reading a historical account of the whole thing.

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### **Kevin Kosar says**

Very impressive piece of work, which depicts the mind of a very bad man.

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### **Maggie Taylor says**

Worth a read. Strangely good and reminiscent of Lord of the Flies and all the more interesting as its based on a true story

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### **Dawnya says**

I just couldn't stay with the dry, lifeless narrative.

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### **Michelle (True Book Addict) Miller says**

Read in pre-blogging days, before 2009.

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### **Alex Telander says**

In Arabella Edge's The Company the reader is taken on a most unusual journey, sadly the journey ends up being a boring one. Our main character, Jeronimus Cornelisz, is a psychopath, though of course not many people know that. He is also an alchemist and an apothecary: poisons are his love. From a young age he has been obsessed with killing and controlling people through poisons and potions. Now he is throwing that all away, and with forged papers, is joining the crew on a ship of the Dutch East Indian Company, the Batavia, which is to transport goods to one of its Dutch colonies. Apart from a beautiful woman who Cornelisz is interested in, there is also a Dutch governor aboard and with him an untold amount of riches.

Soon a plan is forged between Cornelisz, the captain, and some of the crew to mutiny, get rid of all the unwanted people (but some of the women they will keep) and take the chests of gold for themselves. Except Mother Nature has a change to make in their plan: an obscured reef that the Batavia will have its hull ripped open. And those who survive will have to make do on an uninhabited island. The problem is none of them know they have a psychopath within their midst. While partially based on a true story, The Company does not really go anywhere, even though it has a remotely interesting story. But then there is the cliché of the uninhabited island along with one of the members of the crew being insane. It results in a somewhat doomed plot, but then if murderers and desert islands in the key of Treasure Island are what you like, then The Company may well be the book for you; just don't expect too much.

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