

## The Cask of Amontillado

Edgar Allan Poe

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THE thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could, but when he ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge. It must be understood that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good will. I continued as was my **wont**, to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile *NOW* was at the thought of his **immolation**.

He had a weak point -- this Fortunato -- although in other regards he was a man to be respected and even feared. He prided himself on his **connoisseurship** in wine. In this respect I did not differ from him materially; I was skillful in the Italian vintages myself, and bought largely whenever I could.

It was about dusk, one evening during the supreme madness of the carnival season, that I encountered my friend. He accosted me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much. The man wore motley. He had on a tight-fitting striped dress and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells. I was so pleased to see him that I thought I should never have done wringing his hand.

I said to him, "My dear Fortunato, you are luckily met. How remarkably well you are looking today! But I have received a **pipe** of what passes for Amontillado, and I have my doubts."

"How?" said he, "**Amontillado?** Impossible? And in the middle of the carnival?"

"I have my doubts," I replied; "and I was silly enough to pay the full Amontillado price without consulting you in the matter. You were not to be found, and I was fearful of losing a bargain."

"Amontillado!"

"As you are engaged, I am on my way to Luchesi. If any one has a critical turn, it is he. He will tell me"

"Luchesi cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry."

"And yet some fools will have it that his taste is a match for your own."

"Come let us go."

"**Whither?**"

"To your vaults."

"My friend, no; I will not impose upon your good nature. I perceive you have an engagement Luchesi" -

"I have no engagement; come."

"My friend, no. It is not the engagement, but the severe cold with which I perceive you are afflicted. The vaults are insufferably damp. They are encrusted with **nitre**."

"The cold is merely nothing. Amontillado! You have been imposed upon; and as for Luchesi, he cannot distinguish Sherry from Amontillado."

Thus speaking, Fortunato possessed himself of my arm, and putting on a mask of black silk and drawing a cloak closely about my person, I suffered him to hurry me to my **palazzo**.

There were no attendants at home; they had **absconded** to make merry in honor of the time. I took from their **sconces** two **flambeaux**, and giving one to Fortunato bowed him through several suites of rooms to the archway that led into the vaults. I passed down a long and winding staircase, requesting him to be cautious as he followed. We came at length to the foot of the descent, and stood on the damp ground of the catacombs of the Montresors.

The **gait** of my friend was unsteady, and the bells upon his cap jingled.

"The pipe," said he.

"It is farther on," said I; "but observe the white webwork which gleams from these cavern walls."

"Ugh!"

"How long have you had that cough!"

Ugh! ugh! ugh! -

My poor friend found it impossible to reply for many minutes.

"It is nothing," he said, at last.

"Come," I said, with decision, we will go back; you will be ill and I cannot be responsible. Besides, there is Luchesi" -

"Enough," he said; "the cough is a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough."

"True - true," I replied; "but you should use all proper caution. A drink of this Medoc will defend us from the damp." Here I knocked off the neck of a bottle which I drew from a long row of its fellows that lay upon the mould. "Drink," I said, presenting him the wine.

He raised it to his lips with a leer. He paused and nodded to me familiarly while his bells jingled.

"I drink," he said, "to **the buried that repose** around us."

"And I drink to your long life."

He again took my arm and we proceeded.

"These vaults are extensive," said Fortunato.

"The Montresors," I replied, "were a great numerous family."

"I ... I forget your coat of arms."

"A huge human foot of gold, in a field **azure**. The foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs are imbedded in the heel."

"And the motto?"

"Nemo me impune lacessit. (*Nobody wrongs me with **impunity***)"

"Good!" he said.

The wine sparkled in his eyes and the bells jingled. We had passed through long walls of piled skeletons, with casks and puncheons intermingling, into the inmost recesses of the catacombs.

"Let us go on. But first, another drink of the Medoc."

I broke and gave him a flagon of De Grave. He emptied it at a breath. His eyes flashed with a fierce light. He laughed and threw the bottle upwards with a **gesticulation** I did not understand.

I looked at him in surprise. He repeated the movement - a grotesque one.

"You do not comprehend?" he said.

"Not I."

"Then you are not of the brotherhood."

"How?"

"You are not of the Masons."

"Yes, yes," I said "yes! yes."

"You? Impossible! A **Mason**?"

"A mason," I replied.

"A sign," he said.

"It is this," I answered, producing from beneath the folds of my cloak a **trowel**.

"You jest," he exclaimed, recoiling a few paces. "But let us proceed to the Amontillado."

At the most remote end of the **crypt** there appeared another less spacious. Its walls had been lined with human remains piled to the vault overhead in the fashion of the great **catacombs** of Paris. Three sides of this interior crypt were still ornamented in this manner. From the fourth the bones had been thrown down, and lay promiscuously upon the earth, forming at one point a mound of some size. Within the wall thus exposed by the displacing of the bones, we perceived a recess, in depth about four feet, in width three, in height six or seven. It seemed to have been constructed for no especial use, but formed merely the interval between two of the colossal supports of the roof of the catacombs, and was backed by solid granite.

"Proceed," I said; "herein is the Amontillado."

In an instant he had reached the extremity of the niche, and finding his progress arrested by the rock, stood, stupidly bewildered. A moment more and I had **fettered** him to the granite. In its surface were two iron staples. From one of these descended a short chain. from the other a padlock. Throwing the links about his waist, it was but the work of a few seconds to secure it. He was too much astounded to resist. Withdrawing the key I stepped back from the recess.

"The Amontillado!" exclaimed my friend!"

"True," I replied; "the Amontillado."

As I said these words I busied myself among the pile of bones of which I have before spoken. Throwing them aside, I soon uncovered a quantity of building stone and **mortar**. With these materials and with the aid of my trowel, I began vigorously to wall up the entrance of the niche.

I had scarcely laid the first tier of my **masonry** when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in a great measure worn off. The earliest indication I had of this was a low moaning cry from the depth of the recess. It was NOT the cry of a drunken man. There was then a long and obstinate silence. I laid the second tier, and the third, and the fourth; and then I heard the furious vibrations of the chain. The wall was now nearly upon a level with my breast.

A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. I re-approached the wall. the **clamorer** grew still.

It was now midnight, and my task was drawing to a close. there remained but a single stone to be fitted and plastered in. I struggled with its weight; I placed it partially in its destined position. But now there came from out the niche a low laugh that erected the hairs upon my head. It was succeeded by a sad voice, which I had difficulty in recognizing as that of the noble Fortunato. The voice said, "a very good joke indeed - an excellent jest. We will have many a rich laugh about it at the palazzo -- ha! ha! ha! - over our wine - he! he! he!"

"The Amontillado!" I said.

"He! he! he! - he! he! he! - yes, the Amontillado. But is it not getting late? Will not they be awaiting us at the palazzo, the Lady Fortunato and the rest? Let us be gone."

"Yes," I said "let us be gone."

"FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, MONTRESOR!"

"Yes," I said, "for the love of God!"

But to these words I **hearkened** in vain for a reply. I grew impatient. I called aloud --

"Fortunato!"

No answer. I called again --

"Fortunato!"

No answer still. I thrust a torch through the remaining **aperture** and let it fall within. There came forth in return only a jingling of the bells. My heart grew sick -- it was the the dampness of the catacombs that made it so. I hastened to make an end of my labor. I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it up. Against the new masonry I re-erected the old **rampart** of bones. For the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them.

In Pace Requiescat!

(Rest in Peace)