The CASK of AMONTILLADO

By EDGAR ALLAN POE

There's an old saying
That "Man can stand
So much and no more,"
So it was with me:
And one day
I could stand no more.
What I did was surely
Wron[s] and sinfull,
But is there a man to say I was
Not at least partially
Justified?
Hear my story
And then judge for yourself.
I had borne a thousand injuries at the hands of Fortunato as best I could, but when he ventured insult upon insult, I vowed revenge.

You, who know so well the nature of my soul, will know I made no foolish threats.

At length, I would be avenged. This was a point definitely settled. I must not only punish, but punish with impunity.

It must be understood that neither by word nor deed did I give Fortunato cause to doubt my good will.

Ah, Fortunato, my good friend! How well you look today!

So it is you, Montessori!
HE HAD A WEAK POINT--THIS FORTUNATO--
ALTHOUGH IN OTHER REGARDS HE WAS A
MAN TO BE RESPECTED AND EVEN FEARED. HE
PRIRED HIMSELF ON HIS KNOWLEDGE OF WINES.

IN PAINTING, THOUGH, FORTUNATO WAS A QUACK.

ONLY AN EXPERT, SUCH AS MYSELF, COULD TELL
THE GENUINE FROM A FAKE!

BUT IN THE MATTER OF OLD WINES, HE WAS SINCERE.

IT IS THE FINEST VINTAGE KNOWN.

I WAS SKILLED IN THE ITALIAN VINTAGES MYSELF,
AND BOUGHT WHENEVER I COULD.

THIS CASK CONTAINS AMONTILLADO! BELIEVE IT OR NOT.

I DON'T BELIEVE IT, BUT I
WILL BUY IT ANYWAY, YOU
HAVE GIVEN ME AN IDEA.

*A VERY RARE ITALIAN WINE*
It was about dusk one evening during the supreme madness of the carnival season, that I encountered my "friend." He greeted me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much.

My dear Fortunato, we are luckily met. I have received a cask of what passes for Amontillado, and I have my doubts.

Amontillado? In the middle of the carnival? Impossible!
I have my doubts, but I was silly enough to pay the full price without consulting you in the matter.

You are a fool anyway, 'tis you who should be wearing this fool's costume.

But, Fortunato, it is Amontillado.

A bargain? Bah!

But you were not around, and I was fearful of losing a bargain.

I have my doubts.

Come along. I will satisfy myself if it is indeed Amontillado.

But Fortunato, you are too busy. I am on my way to Luchesi! If anyone knows Amontillado, it is he, and he will tell me.

Luchesi cannot tell Amontillado from sherry!
COME, LET US GO!

WHERE?

TO YOUR VAULTS, YOU OAF!

MY FRIEND, NO! I PERCEIVE YOU HAVE AN ENGAGEMENT AND I WOULD NOT INTERFERE.

I HAVE NO ENGAGEMENT, COME!

IT IS NOT AN ENGAGEMENT, MY FRIEND, BUT I SEE YOU HAVE A BAD COLD. THE VAULTS ARE COLD. THEY ARE ENCRUSTED WITH NITRE!

THE COLD IS NOTHING, YOU HAVE BEEN IMPOSED UPON. AS FOR LUCHESI, HE CANNOT TELL SHERRY FROM AMONTILLADO.
Fortunato took my arm. Putting on my mask of black silk, I allowed him to hurry me to my home...

There were no servants at home. They had all gone to make merry at the carnival. I had told them I would not return until morning.

I took from their places two torches and, giving one to Fortunato, bowed him through several suites of rooms of the archway that led to 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 together on the damp ground in the underground tombs of the Montresors.

Where is the cask? It is further on.
I pretended concern for Fortunato’s health...

Come, we’ll go back, your health is precious. You’re rich, respected, admired and beloved. You’re happy as I once was. We’ll go back, you’ll be ill, and I can decide this with Luces!

The cough... is nothing. It will not kill me.

See the white webwork which gleams from this cavern wall.

I had deceived him completely, and now I meant to make him very drunk...

Very well, then, let us drink to Defensus from the dampness.

These vaults are extensive!

Drink!

I’m drinking to the buried that repose around us!

And I drink to your life!

The mon-tressors were a great and numerous family!
The wine sparkled in his eyes, and the bells jingled on his cap. We passed through walls of piled bones, with casks and puncheons intermingling, into the inmost recesses of the catacombs...

I forget your family coat of arms.

Fortunato grew more intoxicated as we proceeded through the vaults...

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

The nitre, see! It increases. It hangs like moss upon the vaults.

Large casks with capacities of 50 to 100 gallons...

I prodded Fortunato by pretending I would have him return.

We're below the river's bed. The drops of moisture trickle among the bones. Come, we'll go back before it's too late. Your cough...

It is nothing; let us go on. But first, another drink of your medoc!

* A wine
I broke and gave him a bottle of de Grave. He emptied it at a breath. His eyes flashed then with new light.

Fortunato made a strange gesture which I did not understand. Then he laughed and threw the bottle away.

Are you of the Brotherhood?

Yes.

Then give me a sign!

Ah! You jest! Let us proceed to the Amontillado!

I produced a trowel from beneath the folds of my cloak...
We arrived at a deep crypt in which the foulness of the air caused our torches to glow rather than flame. At the remote end of the crypt, there appeared another, less spacious. Its walls had been lined with human bones, piled to the vault overhead. Three sides of this interior crypt were still ornamented in this fashion. 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 saw a still interior recess, in depth about four feet, in width three, in height six or seven. It seemed to have been constructed for no special use within itself, but formed merely the interval between two of the colossal supports of the roof of the catacombs.
PROCEED; HEREIN IS THE AMONTILLADO. AS FOR LUCHESI--- HE IS AN IGNORAMUS.

HE STEPPED FORWARD UNSTEADILY AND I FOLLOWED AT HIS HEELS...

IN AN INSTANT, HE HAD REACHED THE EXTREMITY OF THE NICHE AND FINDING HIS PROGRESS ARRESTED BY THE ROCK, STOOD STUPIDLY BEWILDERED.
He was too drunk to resist. I threw the links about his waist and it was the work of a few seconds to fasten them.

I taunted him a bit...

Once more I implore you to return. No? Then I positively must leave you.

I had scarcely laid the first tier of the masonry when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in great measure worn off...

Then, I began vigorously to wall up the entire section of the niche...

A succession of loud and shrill screams burst suddenly from the throat of the chained form.
I replied to the yells and screams. I re-echoed, I aided, I surpassed them in violence and strength. I did this and the clamor grew less.

There came out from 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.

It was now midnight and my task was brought to a close. I completed the 8th, 9th and 10th tiers and a portion of the 11th.

There, ha! A very good joke; indeed, a colossal jest. We will have many a rich laugh about it over our wine...
YOU MEAN THE AMANTILLADO?

YES, THE AMANTILLADO. IT IS GETTING LATE. WILL THEY NOT BE AWAITING US. THE LADY FORTUNATO AND THE REST? LET US BE GONE.

YES, LET US BE GONE.

FOR THE LOVE OF HEAVEN, MONTESSORI!

IN PACE RENQUIESCAT.*

*REST IN PEACE.

I PLASTERED THE LAST STONE INTO PLACE. AGAINST THE NEW MASONRY, I REERECTED THE OLD RAMPS OF BONES. FOR HALF A CENTURY NOW, NO ONE HAS DISTURBED THEM.

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