

Edgar Allan Poe

The Cask of Amontillado

The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could, but when he ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge. You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that I gave utterance to a threat. At length I would be avenged; this was a point definitely settled-but the very definitiveness with which it was resolved, precluded the idea of risk. I must not only punish, but punish with impunity. A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong..

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. Few Italians have the true virtuoso spirit. For the most part their enthusiasm is adopted to suit the time and opportunity- to practise imposture upon the British and Austrian millionaires. In painting and gemmery, Fortunato, like his countrymen, was a quack- but in the matter of old wines he was sincere. 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 parti-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 to-day! But I have received a pipe of what passes for Amontillado, and I have my doubts.»

«How?» said he. «Amontillado? A pipe? 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!»

«I have my doubts.»

«Amontillado!»

«And I must satisfy them.»»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.»

«Let us go, nevertheless. 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.

Putting on a mask of black silk, and drawing a roquelaire 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 honour of the time. I had told them that I should not return until the morning, and had given them explicit orders not to stir from the house. These orders were sufficient, I well knew, to insure their immediate disappearance, one and all, as soon as my back was turned.

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 together on the damp ground of the catacombs of the Montresors.

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

«The pipe,» said he.

«It is farther on,» said I; «but observe the white web-work which gleams from these cavern walls.»

He turned towards me, and looked into my eyes with two filmy orbs that distilled the rheum of intoxication.

«Nitre?» he asked, at length.

«Nitre,» I replied. «How long have you had that cough?»

«Ugh! ugh! ugh!-ugh! ugh! ugh!-ugh! ugh! ugh!-ugh! ugh! ugh!-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; your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was. You are a man to

be missed. For me it is no matter. 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; «and, indeed, I had no intention of alarming you unnecessarily-but you should use all proper caution. A draught 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 to your long life.»

He again took my arm, and we proceeded.

«These vaults,» he said, «are extensive.»

«The Montresors,» I replied, «were a great and numerous family.»

«I forget your arms.»

«A huge human foot d'or, in a field azure; the foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs are imbedded in the heel.»

«And the motto?»

«Nemo me impune lacessit.» «Good!» he said.

The wine sparkled in his eyes and the bells jingled. My own fancy grew warm with the Medoc. We had passed through walls of piled bones, with casks and puncheons intermingling, into the inmost recesses of catacombs. I paused again, and this time I made bold to seize Fortunato by an arm above the elbow.

«The nitre!» I said; «see, it increases. It hangs like moss upon the vaults. We are below the river's bed. The drops of moisture trickle among the bones. Come, we will go back ere it is too late. Your cough»

«It is nothing,» he said; «let us go on. But first, another draught of the Medoc.»

I broke and reached 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,» I replied.

«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, «a sign.»

«It is this,» I answered, producing a trowel from beneath the folds of my roquelaire.

«You jest,» he exclaimed, recoiling a few paces. «But let us proceed to the Amontillado.» «Be it so,»

I said, replacing the tool beneath the cloak and again offering him my arm. He leaned upon it heavily. We continued our route in search of the Amontillado. We passed through a range of low arches, descended, passed on, and descending again, arrived at a deep crypt, in which the foulness of the air caused our flambeaux rather to glow than flame.

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 side 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 still interior recess, in depth about four feet in width three, in height six or seven. It seemed to have been constructed for no especial use within itself, but formed merely the interval between two of the colossal supports of the roof of the catacombs, and was backed by one of their circumscribing walls of solid granite.

It was in vain that Fortunato, uplifting his dull torch, endeavoured to pry into the depth of the recess. Its termination the feeble light did not enable us to see. «Proceed,» I said; «herein is the Amontillado. As for Luchesi»

«He is an ignoramus,» interrupted my friend, as he stepped unsteadily forward, while I followed immediately 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. A moment more and I had fettered him to the granite. In its surface were two iron staples, distant from each other about two feet, horizontally. From one of these depended 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.

«Pass your hand,» I said, «over the wall; you cannot help feeling the nitre. Indeed, it is very damp. Once more let me implore you to return. No? Then I must positively leave you. But I must first render you all the little attentions in my power.»

«The Amontillado!» ejaculated my friend, not yet recovered from his astonishment.

«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 the 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 noise lasted for several minutes, during which, that I might hearken to it with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labours and sat down upon the bones. When at last the clanking subsided, I resumed the trowel, and finished without interruption the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh tier. The wall was now nearly upon a level with my breast. I again paused, and holding the flambeaux over the mason-work, threw a few feeble rays upon the figure within.

A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. For a brief moment I hesitated- I trembled. Unsheathing my rapier, I began to grope with it about the recess; but the thought of an instant reassured me. I placed my hand upon the solid fabric of the catacombs, and felt satisfied. I reapproached the wall; I replied to the yells of him who clamoured. I re-echoed- I aided- I surpassed them in volume and in strength. I did this, and the clamourer grew still.

It was now midnight, and my task was drawing to a close. I had completed the eighth, the ninth, and the tenth tier. I had finished a portion of the last and the eleventh; 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-

«Ha! ha! ha!-he! he! he!-a very good joke indeed-an excellent jest. We shall have many a rich laugh about it at the palazzo-he! he! he!-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 reply only a jingling of the bells. My heart grew sick on account of the dampness of the catacombs. I hastened to make an end of my labour. 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!.The Raven.by Edgar Allan Poe
Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and
weary, Over many a quaint and curious volume of
forgotten lore- While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly
there came a tapping, As of some one gently rapping,
rapping at my chamber door. «'Tis some visiter,» I
muttered, «tapping at my chamber door-
Only this and nothing more.»

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December,
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon
the floor. Eagerly I wished the morrow;-vainly I had
sought to borrow From my books surcease of sorrow-
sorrow for the lost Lenore- For the rare and radiant
maiden whom the angels name Lenore-Nameless
here for evermore.

And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple
curtain Thrilled me-filled me with fantastic terrors never
felt before; So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I
stood repeating «'Tis some visiter entreating entrance at
my chamber door- Some late visiter entreating entrance
at my chamber door;

This it is and nothing more.»

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no
longer, «Sir,» said I, «or Madam, truly your forgiveness I
implore; But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you
came rapping, And so faintly you came tapping, tapping
at my chamber door, That I scarce was sure I heard you»-
here I opened wide the door-

Darkness there and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there
wondering, fearing, Doubting, dreaming dreams no
mortals ever dared to dream before; But the silence was
unbroken, and the stillness gave no token, And the only
word there spoken was the whispered word, «Lenore?»
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word,
«Lenore!»-Merely
this and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me
burning, Soon again I heard a tapping something louder
than before. «Surely,» said I, «surely that is something at
my window lattice; Let me see, then, what thereat is and
this mystery explore- Let my heart be still a moment and
this mystery explore;-

'Tis the wind and nothing more.

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and
flutter, In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days
of yore. Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute
stopped or stayed he, But, with mien of lord or lady,
perched above my chamber door- Perched upon a bust of
Pallas just above my chamber door-Perched,
and sat, and nothing more.

Then the ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it
wore, «Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou,» I

said, «art sure no craven, Ghastly grim and ancient Raven
wandering from the Nightly shore- Tell me what thy
lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!»

Quoth the Raven, «Nevermore.»

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so
plainly, Though its answer little meaning-little relevancy
bore; For we cannot help agreeing that no living human
being Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his
chamber door- Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust
above his chamber door,

With such name as «Nevermore.»

But the Raven, sitting lonely on that placid bust, spoke
only That one word, as if its soul in that one word he did
outpour Nothing farther then he uttered; not a feather then
he fluttered- Till I scarcely more than muttered: «Other
friends have flown before- On the morrow he will leave
me, as my Hopes have flown before.»

Then the bird said «Nevermore.»

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,
«Doubtless,» said I, «what it utters is its only stock and
store, Caught from some unhappy master whom
unmerciful Disaster Followed fast and followed faster till
his songs one burden bore- Till the dirges of his Hope
that melancholy burden bore. Of 'Never-nevermore.'«

But the Raven still beguiling all my sad soul into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird and
bust and door; Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook
myself to linking Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this
ominous bird of yore- What this grim, ungainly, ghastly,
gaunt, and ominous bird of yore

Meant in croaking «Nevermore.»

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's
core; This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease
reclining On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamp-light
gloated o'er, But whose velvet violet lining with the lamp-light
gloating o'er

She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an
unseen censer Swung by Seraphim whose foot-falls
tinkled on the tufted floor. «Wretch,» I cried, «thy God
hath lent thee-by these angels he hath sent thee Respite-

respice and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore!
Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost
Lenore!»

Quoth the Raven, «Nevermore.»

«Prophet!» said I, «thing of evil!-prophet still, if bird or
devil!- Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed
thee here ashore, Desolate, yet all undaunted, on this
desert land enchanted- On this home by Horror haunted-
tell me truly, I implore- Is there-is there balm in
Gilead?-tell me-tell me, I implore!»

Quoth the Raven, «Nevermore.»

«Prophet!» said I, «thing of evil!-prophet still, if bird or
devil! By that Heaven that bends above us-by that God

we both adore- Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within
the distant Aidenn, It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom
the angels name Lenore- Clasp a rare and radiant maiden
whom the angels name Lenore.»

Quoth the Raven, «Nevermore.»

«Be that our sign of parting, bird or fiend!» I shrieked,
upstarting- «Get thee back into the tempest and the
Night's Plutonian shore! Leave no black plume as a token
of that lie thy soul has spoken! Leave my loneliness
unbroken!-quit the bust above my door! Take thy beak
from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!»

Quoth the Raven, «Nevermore.»

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is
dreaming And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws
his shadows on the floor; And my soul from out that
shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted-nevermore!