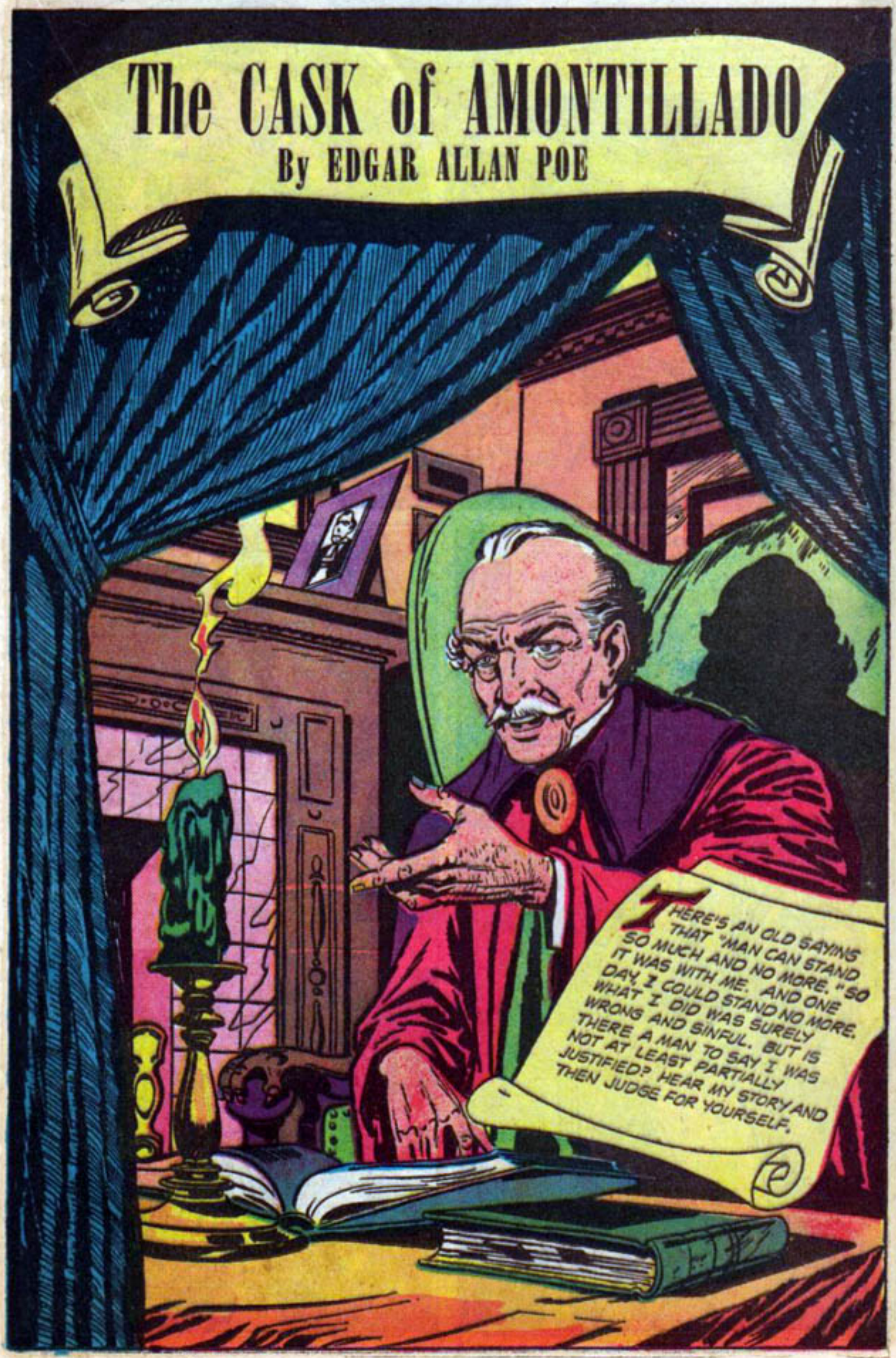


# The CASK of AMONTILLADO

By EDGAR ALLAN POE



**T**HERE'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  
WRONG AND SINFUL. 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.



SO IT IS YOU, MONTRESSOR!

AH, FORTUNATO, MY GOOD FRIEND! HOW WELL YOU LOOK TODAY!

THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO

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 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 VIN-  
TAGE KNOWN.



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

THIS CASK CON-  
TAINS 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



THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO



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 YOU WERE NOT AROUND, AND I WAS FEARFUL OF LOSING A BARGAIN.

A BARGAIN? BAH!



BUT, FORTUNATO, IT IS AMONTILLADO!

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.

\*A MINERAL.

THE CASK OF 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 TO 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 MONTRESSORS.



WHERE IS THE CASK?

IT IS FURTHER ON.



SEE THE WHITE WEBWORK WHICH GLEAMS FROM THIS CAVERN WALL.

{COUGH}  
{COUGH}



I PRETENDED CONCERN FOR FORTUNATO'S HEALTH...

COME, WE'LL GO BACK, YOUR HEALTH IS PRECIOUS. YOU'RE RICH, RESPECTED, ADMIRERD AND BELOVED. YOU'RE HAPPY AS I ONCE WAS. WE'LL GO BACK, YOU'LL BE ILL, AND I CAN DECIDE THIS WITH LUCESI!

THE COUGH... IS NOTHING. IT WILL NOT KILL ME.



I HAD DECEIVED HIM COMPLETELY, AND NOW I MEANT TO MAKE HIM VERY DRUNK.



VERY WELL, THEN. LET US DRINK TO DEFENDUS FROM THE DAMPNES.



DRINK!

I'M DRINKING TO THE BURIED THAT REPOSE AROUND US!



AND I DRINK TO YOUR LIFE!



THESE VAULTS ARE EXTENSIVE!

THE MON-TRESSORS WERE A GREAT AND NUMEROUS FAMILY!!



FORTUNATO GREW MORE INTOXICATED AS WE PROCEEDED THROUGH THE VAULTS...

I FORGET YOUR FAMILY COAT OF ARMS.

A HUGE HUMAN FOOT OF GOLD IN A FIELD OF AZURE. THE FOOT CRUSHES A SERPENT WHOSE FANGS ARE IMBEDDED IN THE HEEL!

THE WINE SPARKLED IN HIS EYES, AND THE BELLS JINGLED ON HIS CAP. WE PASSED THROUGH WALLS OF PILED BONES, WITH CASKS AND PUNCHONS\* INTERMINGLING, INTO THE INMOST RECESSES OF THE CATACOMBS...

\*LARGE CASKS WITH CAPACITIES OF 70 TO 100 GALLONS...

THE NITRE, SEE! IT INCREASES. IT HANGS LIKE MOSS UPON THE VAULTS.

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.



THEN GIVE ME A SIGN!



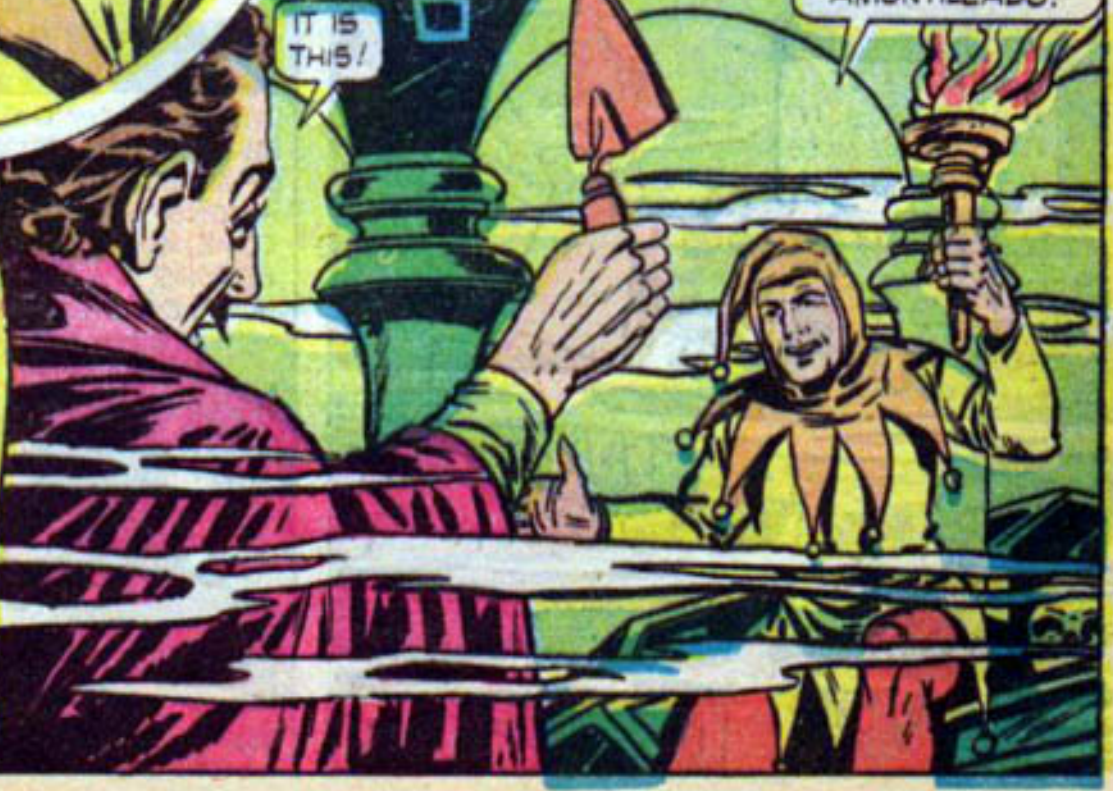
FORTUNATO MADE A STRANGE GESTURE WHICH I DID NOT UNDERSTAND, THEN HE LAUGHED AND THREW THE BOTTLE AWAY.

ARE YOU OF THE BROTHERHOOD?

YES, YES!



I PRODUCED A TROWEL FROM BENEATH THE FOLDS OF MY CLOAK...



IT IS THIS!

AH! YOU JEST! LET US PROCEED TO THE AMONTILLADO!

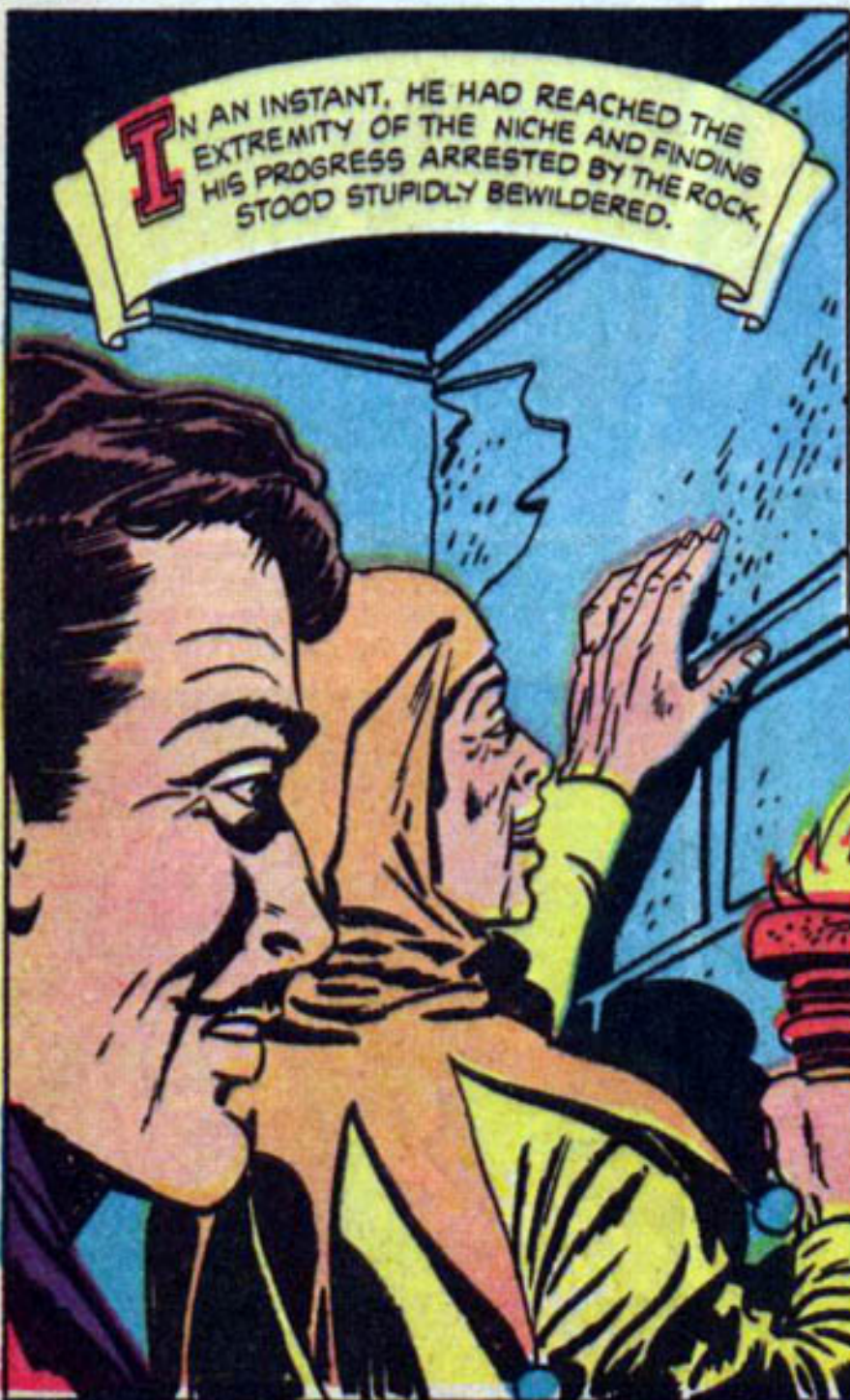
**W**E ARRIVED AT A DEEP CRYPT IN WHICH THE FOULNESS OF THE AIR CAUSED OUR TORCHES TO GLOW RATHER THAN FLAME. AT THE REMOTE END OF THE CRYPT, THERE APPEARED ANOTHER, LESS SPACIOUS. ITS WALLS HAD BEEN LINED WITH HUMAN BONES, PILED TO THE VAULT OVERHEAD. THREE SIDES OF THIS INTERIOR CRYPT WERE STILL ORNAMENTED 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.



**W**ITHIN 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.



THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO



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.



PASS YOUR HAND OVER THE WALL; YOU CAN NOT HELP FEELING THE NITRE. IT IS VERY DAMP.



I TAUNTED HIM A BIT...

ONCE MORE I IMPLORE YOU TO RETURN. NO? THEN I POSITIVELY MUST LEAVE YOU.



THEN, I BEGAN VIGOROUSLY TO WALL UP THE ENTIRE SECTION OF THE NICHE...



I HAD SCARCELY LAID THE FIRST TIER OF THE MASONRY WHEN I DISCOVERED THAT THE INTOXICATION OF FORTUNATO HAD IN GREAT MEASURE WORN OFF...



A SUCCESSION OF LOUD AND SHRILL SCREAMS BURST SUDDENLY FROM THE THROAT OF THE CHAINED FORM.



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.



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 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.

HA, HA! A VERY GOOD JOKE; INDEED, A COLOSSAL JEST. WE WILL HAVE MANY A RICH LAUGH ABOUT IT OVER OUR WINE...





YOU MEAN THE AMONTILLADO?



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, MONTRESSOR!

IN PACE REQUIESCAT.\*

\*REST IN PEACE



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

THE END

NOW THAT YOU HAVE READ THE CLASSICS Illustrated EDITION, DON'T MISS THE ADDED ENJOYMENT OF READING THE ORIGINAL, OBTAINABLE AT YOUR SCHOOL OR PUBLIC LIBRARY.