

EDGAR ALLAN POE'S

TALES OF TERROR



Valdemar was a charming, well-educated old man who knew he had but a short time to live. He accepted the services of a mesmerist* to relieve his extreme pain.

* hypnotist

THERE IS NO PAIN, YOU ARE AT PEACE, YOUR BODY AND YOUR MIND AT PEACE ENTIRELY.

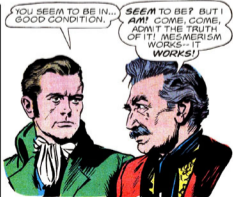
YES.

THEN LISTEN TO MY VOICE, THAT WHICH IS TRUE AS OF THIS MOMENT WILL BE TRUE AS WELL WHEN COGNIZANCE RETURNS-- PAIN VANISHED, MIND AND BODY IN A STATE OF PEACE, YOU UNDERSTAND?

I UNDERSTAND.

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I HAVE NEVER DOUBTED THAT IT WORKS, SIR. ONLY ITS ADVISABILITY... IN CERTAIN CASES.

WELL, I WOULD SAY IT WAS ADVISABLE IN MY CASE. OR SHOULD I SUFFER UNTOLD AGONIES OF PAIN-- IN ORDER TO OBSERVE STRICT MEDICAL PROTOCOL?



FORGIVE ME. I TEASE YOU MERCILESSLY, I FEAR. IT IS ONLY THAT I REJOICE AT THE DISAPPEARANCE, EVEN THOUGH IT MAY BE TEMPORARY, OF THAT GHASTLY PAIN WHICH-- IN THE END-- WILL TAKE MY LIFE.

ERNEST...



MY SWEET HELENE. PLEASE FORGIVE MY MOST UNTIMELY SENSE OF HUMOR... BUT THIS IS A JOYOUS MOMENT! SMILE! I DRINK TO MESMERISM... MINISTRATION OF THE GODS!

I'M SORRY. I-- CANNOT DRINK TO THAT.



THEN DRINK TO THE HEALTH OF MY WIFE.

TO THE VERY GOOD HEALTH OF YOU BOTH.



AH! HOW BLESSED TO BE FREE OF PAIN.

FOR THAT PART, SIR, I AM TRULY HAPPY, PLEASE BELIEVE ME. IT IS FOR THE OTHER ASPECT OF MERMERIC INFLUENCE I FEEL CONCERN.

WHICH IS... SIR?



WHICH IS PERILOUS TOYING WITH THE HUMAN MIND.

I, LITERALLY, OWE MY LIFE TO MR. CAR-MICHAEL. YET HE WILL ACCEPT NOTHING FOR HIS HELP-- SAVE SOME TRIFLING FAVOR ON MY DEATH BED.

FAVOR, ERNEST?



I SHOULD NOT HAVE EVEN MENTIONED IT, IT IS SO SLIGHT.

NO, PLEASE... I WANT TO KNOW.

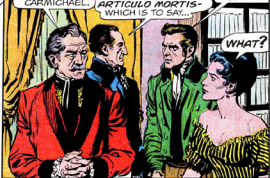


WELL, IT'S SIMPLY THAT... YOU TELL THEM, MR. CARMICHAEL.

MR. VALDEMAR HAS CONSENTED TO BE MESMERIZED - IN ARTICULO MORTIS - WHICH IS TO SAY...

AT THE POINT OF DEATH!

WHAT?



I FEAR IT SOUNDS SO MUCH MORE DREADFUL THAN IT REALLY IS. IS THAT NOT SO, MR. CARMICHAEL?

QUITE SO, MR. VALDEMAR.

BUT WHAT DOES IT MEAN? WHY?



TO ASCERTAIN JUST HOW LONG THE ACTUAL MOMENT OF DEATH CAN BE FORSTALLED. A MOMENTOUS EXPERIMENT FOR...

MOMENTOUS? MONSTROUS WOULD BE MORE THE WORD! MR. VALDEMAR, I APPEAL TO YOU TO WITHDRAW THIS OFFER. THE DEATH-BED IS NO PLACE FOR LUNATIC EXPERIMENTS!



MY DEAR FRIEND, WHAT DOES IT MATTER IF I DIE TEN OR TWENTY MINUTES BEYOND THAT POINT WHEN I SHALL DIE AT ANY RATE? I OWE THIS GENTLEMAN A GREAT DEAL. I COULD NOT DREAM OF REFUSING HIM SUCH AN INSIGNIFICANT REQUEST.

AS YOU SAY, SIR... I MUST LEAVE NOW.

SO SOON? WELL, GOOD NIGHT, SIR, THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING ME. HELENE, MY DEAR, SHOW OUR GOOD FRIEND TO THE DOOR, PLEASE.



Sometime later, when Valdemar and Helene were alone...

WILL YOU NOT-- RECONSIDER?

REGARDING THE EXPERIMENT?



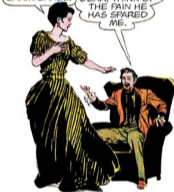
YES.

I WISH YOU COULD SEE IT ALL AS I DO. I AM NOT AFRAID OF DEATH ITSELF. HOW THEN CAN I FEAR SOME BRIEF, HARMLESS EXPERIMENTING AT THE POINT OF IT?



THEN... FEAR CARMICHAEL.

FEAR HIM? MY DEAR, THINK OF THE PAIN HE HAS SPARED ME.



I KNOW... AND I WOULD NOT, TO SAVE MY LIFE, HAVE EVER WISHED FOR YOU TO SUFFER A MOMENT OF PAIN. AND YET, I FEAR HIM. IF YOU COULD ONLY SEE THE CHANGE IN HIM WHEN YOU ARE UNDER HIS CONTROL. NO LONGER IS IT MISTER VALDEMAR AND ALL THE FAWNING CEASES. HE CALLS YOU VALDEMAR; HE TELLS YOU WHAT TO DO, WHAT TO...

NO MORE! LET US FORGET IT. IT IS ESTABLISHED AND OF NO IMPORTANCE TO ME. WHAT IS IMPORTANT-- IS YOU!



I WISH-- WITH ALL MY HEART--THAT, FOLLOWING MY DEATH, YOU MARRY OUR GOOD DR. JAMES. IT WOULD MAKE ME VERY HAPPY TO KNOW THAT YOU WOULD NOT BE LEFT ALONE. THAT YOU WOULD MARRY

AGAIN-- TO A MAN FOR WHOM I HAVE ALL THE RESPECT IN THE WORLD.



HOW VERY MUCH I LOVE YOU. YOUR HAPPINESS MEANS MORE TO ME THAN ANYTHING. INDEED, I SHALL NOT DIE UNTIL THAT HAPPINESS HAS BEEN ASSURED.



Several weeks later...

IT APPROACHES... DOES IT NOT?... PLEASE... NO PRETENSE.

IT APPROACHES.



NO SORROW, MY DEAR. I AM CONTENT, BELIEVE ME... YOU HAVE-- INFORMED MR. CARMICHAEL, AS I REQUESTED?

ERNEST, PLEASE...



I HAVE PROMISED HIM, MY DEAR. AND... I HAVE ALWAYS... KEPT MY... PROMISES. LET ME NOT... FAIL IN THIS... LAST ONE.

HE IS BELOW, SIR. I WILL FETCH HIM.



IT WILL BE TO YOU NO MORE THAN A SINKING INTO DREAMLESS SLEEP.

BEST... HURRY... MISTER... CARMICHAEL.



As Carmichael sets up his equipment...

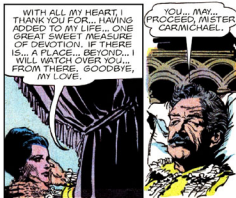
I CHARGE YOU THIS-- UPON YOUR SOUL. WATCH OVER MY HELENE. SWEAR TO THIS!

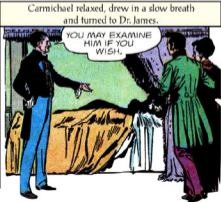
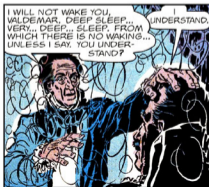
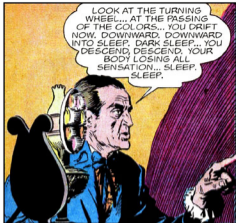
I SWEAR TO THIS. REST EASILY, SIR.



WITH ALL MY HEART, I THANK YOU FOR... HAVING ADDED TO MY LIFE... ONE GREAT SWEET MEASURE OF DEVOTION. IF THERE IS... A PLACE... BEYOND... I WILL WATCH OVER YOU... FROM THERE. GOODBYE, MY LOVE.

YOU... MAY... PROCEED, MISTER CARMICHAEL.





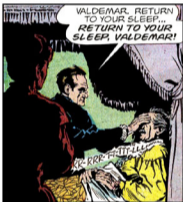
As Dr. James bent over Valdemar he stiffened in shock as a hideous death rattle started in Valdemar's throat.



WHAT IS HAPPENING?
WHAT IS HAPPENING?



VALDEMAR, RETURN
TO YOUR SLEEP...
RETURN TO YOUR
SLEEP, VALDEMAR!



SLEEP! I COMMAND
YOU TO RETURN TO
YOUR SLEEP!
SLEEP!

STOP IT!



Suddenly, the rattle stopped and there was
utter silence.

VALDEMAR... CAN
YOU HEAR ME?

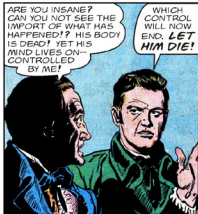


There was a strange sound in Valdemar's throat,
like the cry of a demented prisoner in some
dungeon. Then a voice spoke-- a voice harsh,
broken, hollow. AND VALDEMAR'S LIPS did
not move.

I HEAR.





A two-panel comic strip. The top-left panel shows two men in conversation. The man on the left is older, with a mustache, wearing a blue suit and a patterned tie. The man on the right is younger, wearing a green jacket. The man in the green jacket is gesturing with his hand. The top-right panel shows the same two men. The man in the blue suit is speaking, and the man in the green jacket is looking at him. The background is a simple blue and white.

ARE YOU INSANE?
CAN YOU NOT SEE THE
IMPORT OF WHAT HAS
HAPPENED!? HIS BODY
IS DEAD! YET HIS
MIND LIVES ON--
CONTROLLED
BY ME!

WHICH
CONTROL
WILL NOW
END. **LET
HIM DIE!**

NO! ...
WALDEMAR,
WHAT DO
YOU SEE?

I SEE... ONLY DARKNESS.
ROCKING- BACK AND
FORTH- IN- COLD- UTTER-
DARKNESS. YET- ALSO
MOVING FORWARD.
WHERE? WHAT IS
THAT AHEAD? WHERE
AM I?--
**WHAT PLACE IS
THIS?**

A large, detailed panel showing a man with a mustache and blue eyes, wearing a yellow jacket with a white ruffled collar. He is surrounded by a chaotic, swirling mass of yellow and orange lines, suggesting a storm or a mental state. A speech bubble above him contains the text "NO! NO-O-O!".

NO!
NO-O-O!

As Valdemar's word extended itself into a ghastly wail of dread and horror, Helene's horror mounted until her eyes rolled back and she started to crumple. Dr. James caught her and carried her from the room. Carmichael immediately closed and locked the door.

Valdemar's wailing lost volume and descended to a faint despairing whimper.

BE SILENT, VALDEMAR!

HELP ME... LET ME GO...



BE SILENT!... I WILL LET YOU GO WHEN I AM READY!

One day seven months later...

I ORDER YOU TO END THE MESMERIC CONTROL IMMEDIATELY!

AND HOW DO YOU PROPOSE TO ENFORCE THAT ORDER, DOCTOR JAMES?



Dr. James reached into his bag and...

WITH THIS, MISTER CARMICHAEL.

IF YOU KILL ME-- VALDEMAR WILL REMAIN IN THIS STATE INDEFINITELY-- PERHAPS FOREVER.

NO...



I SHALL COUNT TO THREE. THEN I SHALL KILL YOU! -- ONE... TWO...

WAIT! I WANT YOU TO HEAR SOMETHING FIRST.



NOTHING FROM YOU, SIR!

DID I SAY IT WAS FROM ME?





TEL THEM, VALDEMAR. TELL THEM WHAT YOU TOLD *ME* JUST BEFORE... ABOUT HELENE.

I... DO NOT WISH--FOR HER--TO MARRY-- DOCTOR JAMES. I WISH--INSTEAD-- FOR HER--TO MARRY--MISTER CARMICHAEL.

NO!



YOU HEARD HIM SPEAK, MADAME!

HE IS UNDER YOUR CONTROL. THE WORDS WERE GIVEN HIM BY YOU.

YOU MUST LEAVE NOW, ELLIOT.



DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND, HELENE? IT WAS NOT YOUR HUSBAND SPEAKING. IT WAS HIS VOICE BUT NOT HIS WILL.

THERE IS NOTHING MORE TO BE SAID-- OR DONE. I WISH FOR YOU TO GO NOW.



Dr. James sorrowfully left the room. Carmichael quickly locked the door and...

WELL, MADAME...

I BELIEVE THAT DOCTOR JAMES IS QUITE CORRECT. IT WAS NOT MY HUSBAND WHO BADE ME TO MARRY YOU.



HOWEVER, I WILL MAKE A BARGAIN WITH YOU. I WILL MARRY YOU-- UPON THE STIPULATION THAT YOU SET MY HUSBAND FREE.

I NEED MAKE NO BARGAINS WITH YOU, MADAME. I AM IN COMMAND HERE! YOU WILL DO AS I SAY! OR I SHALL LEAVE MISTER VALDEMAR EXACTLY AS HE IS AND NEVER LET HIM GO!



YOU WILL BE MY WIFE-- AND ALL THAT IS YOUR SHALL BE MINE-- AS I COMMAND!

NO. NO. YOU'RE HURTING ME. PLEASE...





Dr. James was just going out the door when he heard Carmichael's howl of terror ring out.



As the Doctor reached the locked bedroom door, the scream ceased and there was a hideous bubbling noise inside the room. He threw his weight against the door.



Across Carmichael's body, there was an oozing liquid putrescence... all that remained of Mr. Valdemar.

