

THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO



THE THOUSAND INJURIES OF FORTUNATO I HAD BORN 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 LITTERANCE TO A THREAT.

AT LENGTH I WOULD BE AVENGED--

--THIS WAS A POINT DEFINITELY SETTLED ...BUT THE VERY DEFINITENESS WITH WHICH IT WAS RESOLVED PRECLUDED THE IDEA OF RISK.

I MUST NOT ONLY PUNISH... BUT PUNISH WITH IMPUNITY.

A WRONG IS UNRE-DRESSED WHEN RETRIBUTION OVERTAKES ITS RE-DRESSER. IT IS EQUALLY UNRE-DRESSED WHEN THE AVENGER FAILS TO MAKE HIMSELF FELT AS SUCH TO HIM WHO HAS DONE THE WRONG.

IT WAS ABOUT DUSK, ONE EVENING DURING THE SUPREME MADNESS OF THE CARNIVAL SEASON, THAT I ENCOUNTERED MY FRIEND.

HOW REMARKABLY WELL YOU ARE LOOKING TODAY!

BUT I HAVE RECEIVED A PIPE OF WHAT PASSES FOR AMONTILLADO, AND I HAVE MY DOUBTS.

AMONTILLADO?

IT MUST BE UNDERSTOOD, THAT NEITHER BY WORD NOR DEED HAD I GIVEN FORTUNATO CAUSE TO DOUBT MY GOOD WILL.

A PIPE?

IMPOSSIBLE!

AND IN THE MIDDLE OF A CARNIVAL!

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.

I HAVE MY DOUBTS--

--AND I WAS SILLY ENOUGH TO PAY THE FULL AMONTILLADO PRICE WITHOUT CONSULTING YOU.

BUT I WAS FEARFUL OF LOSING A BARGAIN.

AMONTILLADO!

I HAVE MY DOUBTS.

AMONTILLADO!

AND I MUST SATISFY THEM.

AMONTILLADO!

IN PAINTING AND GEMMERY FORTUNATO, LIKE HIS ITALIAN COUNTRYMEN, WAS A QUACK... BUT IN THE MATTER OF OLD WINES HE WAS SINCERE.



AS YOU ARE ENGAGED, I AM ON MY WAY TO LUCHESI. IF ANYONE 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.

THERE WERE NO ATTENDANTS AT HOME; THEY HAD ABDONDED TO MAKE MERRY IN HONOR 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 SCORIES TWO FLAMBEALIX, AND ESCORTED FORTUNATO TO THE ARCHWAY THAT LED TO--

--THE VAULTS.

I PASSED DOWN A LONG AND WINDING STAIRCASE, REQUESTING HIM TO BE CAUTIOUS AS HE FOLLOWED.



♪UGH! ♪UGH! ♪UGH!

THE PIPE?

WE CAME AT LENGTH TO THE FOOT OF THE DESCENT AND STOOD TOGETHER ON THE DAMP GROUND OF THE CATACOMBS OF THE MONTRESORS.

AH, BUT, FORTUNATO, YOU SHOULD NOT ACCOMPANY ME, NO, YOU HAVE A NASTY COLD, AND THE VAULTS ARE INSUFFERABLY DAMP.

LET US GO, NEVER-THELESS, THE COLD IS MERELY NOTHING.

AMONTIL-LADO.

IT IS FARTHER ON, BUT OBSERVE THE WHITE WEBWORK WHICH GLEAMS FROM THESE CAVERN WALLS.

NITER? ♪UGH! ♪UGH!

NITER.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU HAD THAT COUGH?

IT IS-- ♪UGH! ♪UGH! --NOTHING.

COME, WE WILL GO BACK...YOUR HEALTH IS PRECIOUS, YOU ARE RICH, RESPECTED, ADMIRED, BE-LOVED--

--YOU ARE HAPPY--

--AS I--

--ONCE--



--WAS.



ENOUGH.
UGH-UGH!

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

I SHALL NOT DIE OF A COLIGH.



TRUE --
--TRUE.



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 DAMPS.



CHINK-A-CHINK-A-LING

I DRINK TO THE BURIED THAT REPOSE AROUND US.



AND I TO YOUR --
--LONG LIFE.



THESE VAULTS ARE EXTENSIVE.

CLING CLING

THE MONTRESORS--

--WERE A GREAT AND NUMEROUS FAMILY.

GINK-KINK



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?

LING-PING

NEMO ME IMPUNE LACESSIT.*

GOOD!

*"NO ONE OFFENDS ME WITH IMPUNITY."



THE WINE SPARKLED IN HIS EYES AND THE BELLS JINGLED.

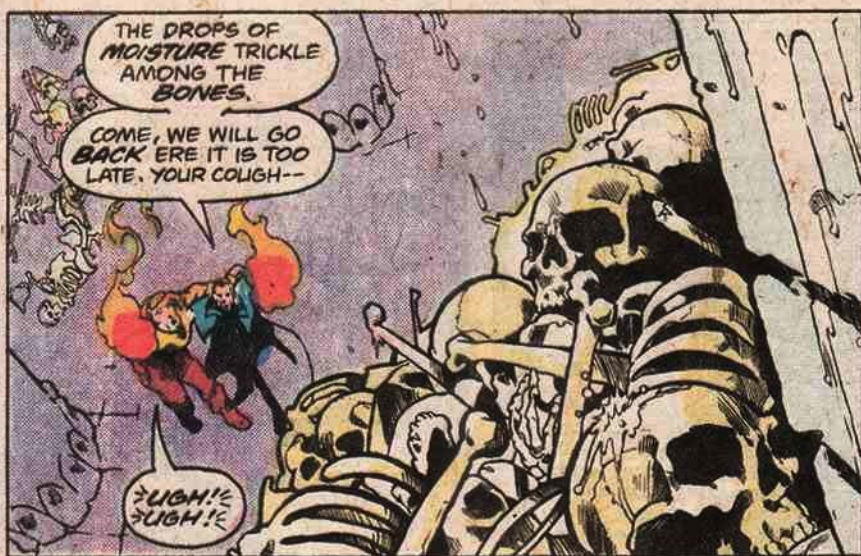
CLING CLING

WE HAD PASSED THROUGH WALLS OF PILED BONES, WITH CASKS AND PUNCHEDONS INTER-MINGLING...

...INTO THE INMOST RECESSES OF THE CATACOMBS.



THE NITER! 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--

UGH! UGH!



IT IS NOTHING. LET US GO ON, BUT FIRST, ANOTHER DRAUGHT OF THE MEDOC.



KACHING KACHING

CRASSHI!

HE LAUGHED AND THREW THE BOTTLE UPWARD WITH A GESTICULATION I DID NOT UNDERSTAND.



YOU ARE NOT OF THE BROTHERHOOD...OF THE MASONS.

YES, YES.

YOU? IMPOSSIBLE! A MASON?

A MASON.

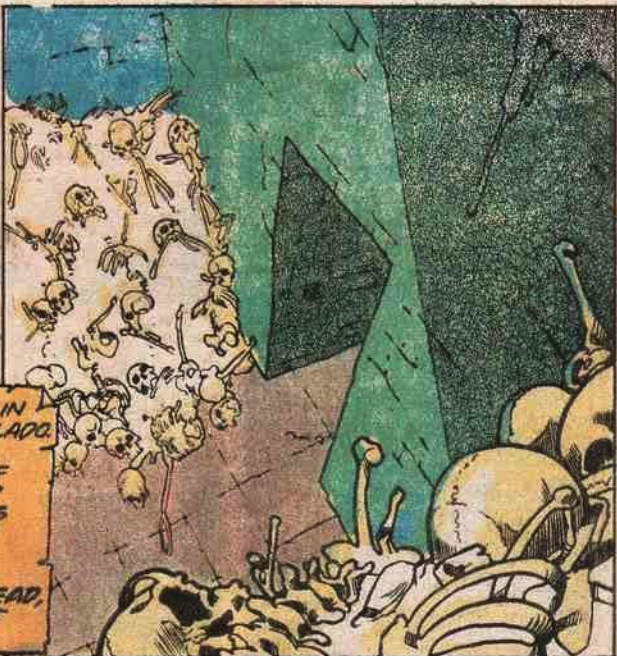
A SIGN.



IT IS THIS.

YOU JEST.

BUT LET US PROCEED TO THE AMONTILLADO.



WE CONTINUED OUR ROUTE IN SEARCH OF 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 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.



PROCEED! HEREIN IS THE AMONTILLADO! AS FOR LUCHESI!--

CHING-A-LING

--HE IS AN IGNORAMUS.



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 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.



PASS YOUR HAND OVER THE WALL ... YOU CANNOT HELP BUT FEEL THE NITER.


INDEED IT IS VERY DAMP. ONCE MORE LET ME IMPLORE YOU TO RETURN.



NO?

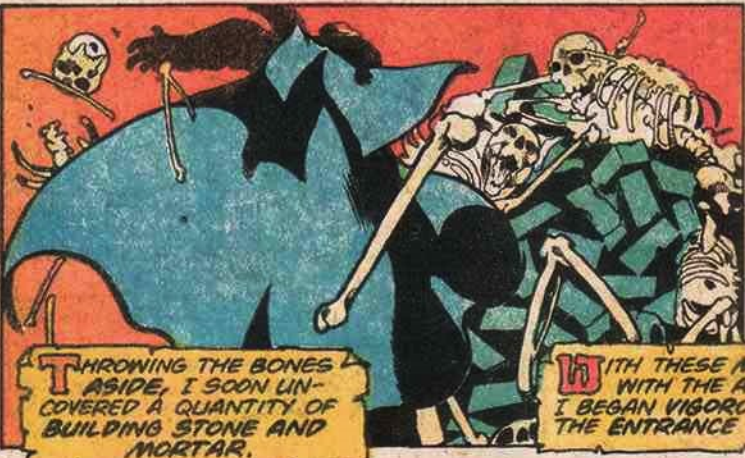
THEN I MUST, POSITIVELY MUST LEAVE YOU,

BUT I MUST FIRST RENDER YOU ALL THE LITTLE ATTENTIONS IN MY POWER.




THE AMON-TILLADO.

TRUE... THE AMONTILLADO.



THROWING THE BONES 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 TO 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... 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 REPLIED TO THE YELLS OF HIM WHO CLAMORED. I RECHOED... I AIDED...

... I SURPASSED THEM IN VOLUME AND IN STRENGTH. I DID THIS...

...AND THE CLAMORER 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.

BUT NOW THERE CAME FROM OUT OF THE NICHE A LOW LAUGH THAT ERECTED THE HAIRS ON MY HEAD.



I WAS SUC-
CEDED BY A
SAD VOICE, WHICH
I HAD DIFFICULTY
IN RECOGNIZING
AS THAT OF THE
NOVEL FORTUNATO.

THE
AMONTILLADO!

A VERY GOOD
JOKE INDEED...AN
EXCELLENT JEST.
WE WILL HAVE MANY
A RICH LAUGH
ABOUT IT AT THE
PALAZZO...HE! HE!
...OVER OUR WINE
...HE! HE! HE!

YES, THE AMON-
TILLADO, BUT IS IT
NOT GETTING LATE?
WILL THEY NOT BE
AWAITING US AT
THE PALAZZO...
LADY FORTUNATO
AND THE REST?

LET
US BE
GONE.

YES--
--LET
US BE--
--GONE.

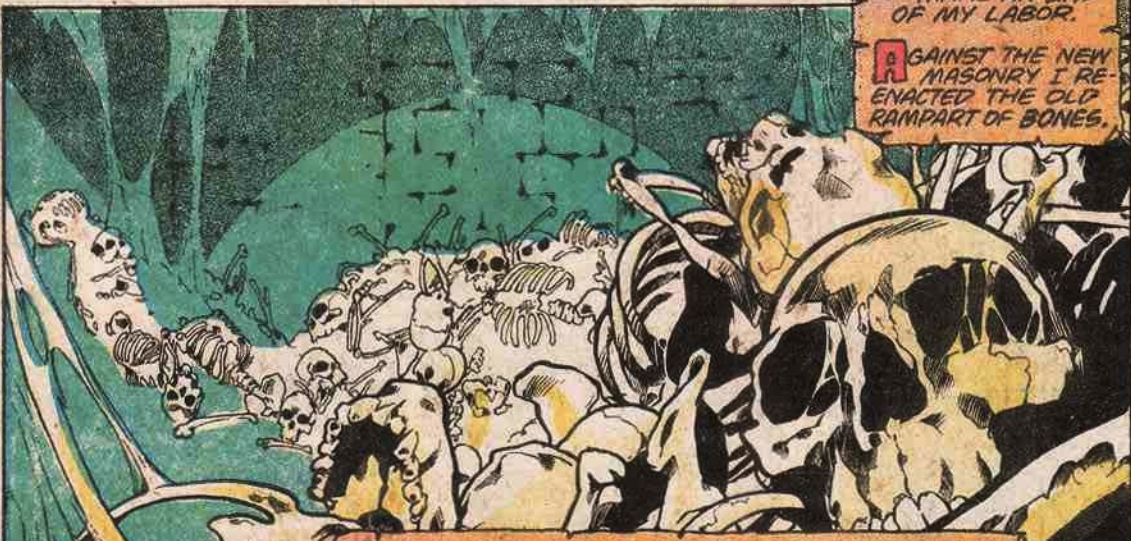
FOR THE
LOVE OF GOD,
MONTRESOR!
TING-LING

YES--
--FOR THE
LOVE OF
GOD!

THERE CAME IN
REPLY ONLY A
JINGLING OF THE
BELLS.

I HASTENED TO
MAKE AN END
OF MY LABOR.

AGainst the new
masonry I re-
enacted the old
rampart of bones.



FOR THE HALF OF A CENTURY NO MORTAL HAS
DISTURBED THEM.
IN PACE REQUIESCAT!

FIN.