

THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO

A Dramatic Reading

by
Edgar Allan Poe



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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. 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--he prided himself on his connoisseurship in wine. In this respect I did not differ from him materially: I was skillful in Italian vintages myself, and bought largely whenever I could.

It was about dusk, one evening during the carnival season, that I encountered my friend. He accosted me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much. He had on a parti-striped dress, and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells. I thought I should never have done wringing his hand.

“My dear Fortunato, I have received a cask of what passes for Amontillado, and I have my doubts.”

“Amontillado? Impossible!”

“I have my doubts, and I was silly enough to pay the full Amontillado price without consulting you in the matter.”

“Amontillado!”

“I have my doubts, and I must satisfy them.”

“Amontillado!”

“As you are engaged, I am on my way to Luchesi. He will tell me--”

“Luchesi cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry.--Come, let us go.”

“My friend, no; I perceive you have a severe cold and the vaults are insufferably damp. They are encrusted with nitre.”

“The cold is merely nothing. Amontillado! You have been imposed upon. And as for Luchesi, he cannot distinguish Sherry from Amontillado.”

Fortunato possessed himself of my arm and hurried me to my palazzo.

I took from their sconces two flambeaux, and giving one to Fortunato, we passed down a winding staircase. At the foot of the descent, we 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 cask,” said he.

“It is farther on; but observe the white web-work which gleams from these cavern walls.”

“Nitre?”

“Nitre,” I replied. “How long have you had that cough?”

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