

# The Cask of Amontillado

*Adapted from the story by Edgar Allan Poe*

## About the Author

Edgar Allan Poe was born in 1809 in Boston, Massachusetts. His parents died when he was a child. Poe was raised by John and Frances Allan, in Richmond, Virginia. He quarreled with the Allans when he was a young man and left home. Poe worked as an editor for several literary magazines but lost his job frequently. His own writing—poetry and short stories—became popular, but he remained poor in spite of his literary success. He died in 1849. Poe is generally considered the first writer of mystery or detective stories. "The Murders of the Rue Morgue" and "The Gold Bug" are among these. He is equally famous for the horror stories—such as "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Cask of Amontillado"—in which he explores the dark side of the human mind and heart.



# Before You Read

## 3

### 1 About "The Cask of Amontillado"

#### *Characters*

Montressor, the narrator; Fortunato

#### *Plot*

Montressor is angry because Fortunato has insulted him. One evening during Carnival, Montressor decides to get his revenge. Curiously, the reader never learns what Fortunato had done to insult Montressor. Poe leaves that part of the plot for the reader to think about.

#### *Setting*

*Time:* early 1800s, during Carnival season

*Place:* city streets, underground vaults in Montressor's house

#### *Theme*

The desire for revenge is a powerful human feeling.

### 2 Build Background

#### **Amontillado and Carnival**

Amontillado (ah-mon-tee-YAH-doe) is a type of wine. A cask is a large barrel that, usually, contains wine. The most famous Amontillado comes from Spain. Yet we cannot be sure that this story is set in Spain. Certainly it is set in a country that, like Spain or Italy, has a Carnival season. At Carnival time, there is feasting and merrymaking. Carnival comes right before Lent, a period of strict religious observance. Many cultures have a period of feasting and merrymaking. What kinds of similar celebrations do you know of in a country outside the United States?

### 3 Key Words

*Read these sentences. Try to understand each word in dark type by looking at the other words in the sentence. Use a dictionary to check your ideas. Write each word and its meaning in your notebook.*

damp  
mold  
noble  
palazzo  
torch

1. Montressor's vaults are **damp**—the walls and the ground are slightly wet.
2. The walls of Montressor's vaults are covered with **mold**, a fungus that grows on damp surfaces.
3. A person who is **noble** has a high moral character or a high social standing.
4. Montressor lives in a **palazzo**. He has many servants who take care of his large house.
5. Montressor lights a **torch**. Its fire helps him see in the dark.

### 4 Reading Strategy

#### Make Inferences

*When you make inferences, or infer, you make reasonable guesses based on information in the story and your own knowledge. For example, read this passage from the story:*

Putting on a mask of black silk in order to mix with the Carnival crowd, I allow him to hurry me to my palazzo.

From the information in this sentence, you can infer that people wear masks during Carnival. You can also infer that the streets are crowded with people.

Poe does not explain everything in "The Cask of Amontillado." Some parts of the story will be hard to understand unless you make inferences as you read.

# 3 The Cask of Amontillado

*Adapted from the story by Edgar Allan Poe*

## I

I had born the thousand injuries of Fortunato as well as I could, but when he dared to insult me, I knew I must have revenge.

However, you, my friend, will understand that I never spoke a threat. I, Montressor, would have revenge eventually; there was no doubt about that. But I wanted no risk. I wanted to punish, but to punish in safety, and with confidence. The insult would be paid back, yes. But also the insulter must know the punisher. And Montressor, the punisher, must go free.

I continued, therefore, to smile in Fortunato's face, as always. He could not know that my smile *now* was at the thought of his destruction.

He had a weakness, this Fortunato. He was proud of his knowledge of wines. In fact, he did know the old Italian wines very well—as I did. And this was excellent for my purposes.

It was about dusk, one evening during Carnival, when I found him walking along the crowded street. He greeted me with unusual warmth, for he had been drinking much. The man wore Carnival clothes: a brightly colored shirt, tight pants, and a hat with little bells on it. I was so pleased to see him that I almost forgot to let go of his hand.

"My dear Fortunato," I said, "how well you look! But what do you think? I have received a cask of the real Amontillado wine. At least they *say* it's the real thing. But I have my doubts."

"What, Montressor?" said he. "Amontillado? A whole cask? Impossible! And in the middle of Carnival!"





"I have my doubts," I repeated. "And do you know, I was foolish enough to pay the full Amontillado price. I had to do it without asking you. I couldn't find you, and I didn't want to lose a bargain."

"Amontillado!"

"I have my doubts."

"Amontillado!"

"And I must bury them."

"Amontillado!"

"Since you are busy, I am going to find Luchresi. If anyone has the ability to judge, it is he. He will tell me—"

"Luchresi cannot tell the difference between Amontillado and ordinary wine."

"And yet some fools say that his taste is equal to yours."

"Come, let us go."

"Where?"

"To your vaults."

"My friend, no. I refuse to give you trouble in this way. I see that you are on your way to a party. Luchresi—"

"I am going nowhere. Come."

"My friend, no. It is not only the party. I see you have a bad cold. My vaults are terribly damp. You will suffer."


"Let us go anyway. My cold is nothing. And Luchresi? I tell you, the man cannot tell Amontillado from milk!"

Speaking in this way, Fortunato took my arm. Putting on a mask of black silk in order to mix with the Carnival crowd, I allowed him to hurry me to my palazzo.

There were no servants at home; they were all enjoying the Carnival. I had told them that I would not return to the palazzo until the morning. To them, this announcement was like an invitation to go on vacation.

I took two torches from their holders. Giving one to Fortunato, I led him





through many rooms. We came to the door that led into the vaults. We walked through it and down a long and winding staircase. I requested him continuously to be careful. At last we came to the bottom and stood on the damp ground of the burial vaults of my family, the Montressors.

## II

The footsteps of my friend were unsteady, and the bells on his hat lightly rang as he walked.

"The cask?" said he.

"It is a little further," I said. "But look at the white mold on the walls down here."

He turned toward me unsteadily. I saw in his eyes how much he had been drinking.

"What did you say?" he asked.

"Mold," I repeated, "the mold on the walls. How long have you had that bad cough?"

"Ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!"


My poor friend could not 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, admired, loved. You are happy, as I once was. You are a man who will be missed. For me, it is no matter. We will go back; you will be ill, and I cannot be responsible. Besides, there is Luchresi—"

"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 did not mean to frighten you. But you must use proper caution. A drink of this fine Medoc wine will protect us from the dampness."



Here, I broke off the neck of a bottle which I took from a long row that lay on the mold.

"Drink," I said, giving him the wine.

He raised it to his lips with a smile that I did not like.

He said, "I drink to the members of your fine family who are buried in these vaults."

"And I drink to your long life," I quietly replied. Again he took my arm and we continued. The wine shone in his eyes. My own face was warm with the Medoc. We were deeper into the vaults now, and began to pass piles of human bones. I took Fortunato by an arm above the elbow.

"Look! The mold," I said. "See, it increases. It hangs from the roof of the vault. We must be below the river. That is why the dampness is so bad. Come, we will go back before it is too late. Your cough—"

"It is nothing," he said; "let us continue. But first another drink of the





Medoc." He finished the wine in one swallow. Then he threw the bottle into the air with a strange motion that I did not understand. He repeated the motion again. His eyes questioned me, but I could only look at him in surprise.

"You do not understand the sign?" he said.

"No," I replied.

"Then you are not a Mason."

"A mason?" I said. "Isn't a mason someone who builds walls?"

"Ha! I mean a member of our secret society. We are called Masons. Have you never heard of us and our secret meetings?"

"Ah, yes, a mason," I said. "I am indeed a mason."

"You? Impossible! A Mason?"

"A real mason," I replied.

"Prove it," said he. "Give me the secret sign!"

"It is this," I answered. From a large pocket inside my coat I took a small tool. It was a trowel, used by masons to put plaster between the bricks in a wall.

"Ha! ha! You joke," he said. "Excellent! Now come. Let us continue to the Amontillado."

"Indeed," I said, and offered him my arm again. He leaned on it heavily. We passed through more rooms of bottles, casks, and bones. We went down one more staircase and arrived at last in the deepest room of the vaults. Here the human bones were piled as high as the ceiling. It was very dark, and our torches glowed rather weakly. At the far end of the large room there was still another, smaller room. It lay beyond an opening of one meter in width.

"Continue," I said. "The Amontillado is in there. I wonder whether Luchresi—"

"He is a fool," my friend said as he stepped unsteadily forward into the last small room. I followed quickly after him. His progress was stopped by the bare wall ahead of him, which he looked at stupidly in confusion. In a moment I had chained him to the rock. On its surface were two iron rings, about two









feet apart. A short chain hung from one of these rings, and a lock from the other. Throwing the chain quickly twice around his waist, I took only a few seconds to attach it to the lock. He was too astonished to struggle against me. Taking the key of the lock with me, I stepped back from the small room.

"If you place your hand on the wall," I said, "you will feel the mold. Indeed it is *very* damp. Once more I *beg* you to return with me. No? Then I must leave you. But first I should try to make you as comfortable as possible."

"The Amontillado!" cried my friend. He was not yet recovered from his astonishment.

"True," I replied; "the Amontillado."

As I said these words, I walked to the nearest small pile of bones. I began moving aside those on the top. Soon I uncovered some plaster and building stone. With these materials and with the help of my trowel, I began energetically to wall up the entrance to the small room.

I had laid only the first row of stones when I discovered that the effects of Fortunato's drinking had disappeared. The first sign of this was a low continual groan from the small room. It was not simply the groan of a man who has been drinking too much. Then there was a long and insistent silence. I laid the second row, and the third, and the fourth. And then I heard a furious shaking of the chains. I sat down and listened to it with satisfaction until it stopped. Then I finished the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh row. The wall was now at the height of my chest. I again paused, and holding my torch above the wall, I threw the light on the figure inside.

Loud, terrible screams burst from the throat of that chained form. They seemed to push me violently backward. For a brief moment I hesitated. But when I placed my hand on the strong walls of the vault, I again felt satisfied. I approached the wall a second time. I replied to the screams with screams of my own. I echoed and reechoed the man, passing him in loudness and strength. I did this, and the screaming stopped.

My work was almost finished. I had completed the eighth, the ninth, and



the tenth row. I had finished the eleventh, except for the final stone. I struggled with its weight; I had it almost into position. But now a low laugh came from the small room—a laugh that horrified me. It was followed by a sad voice, which I had difficulty recognizing as the voice of the noble Fortunato. The voice said—

"Ha! ha! ha!-he! he! he!—a very good joke indeed—an excellent joke! We will have much laughter 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 it is getting late. Won't they be waiting for us at the palazzo, the Lady Fortunato and the rest? Let us be gone."

"Yes," I said, "let us be gone."

"Why? Why? For the love of God, Montressor! You're mad!"

"Yes," I said, "for the love of God!"

But there was no reply to these words. I waited. I called—

"Fortunato!"

No answer. I called again—

"Fortunato!"

No answer still. I placed a torch through the last hole and let it fall inside. Only a small ringing of bells came in return. My heart grew sick; it was the dampness of the vault. I hurried now in finishing. I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it. I put the pile of old bones in front of the new wall. And for half a century, no man has disturbed them.

*In pace requiescat!*

# After You Read

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## 1 Understand the Story

*Answer these questions in your notebook. Write complete sentences.*

1. Who is the narrator of this story?
2. What holiday was it when Montessor and Fortunato met on the street?
3. What did Montessor tell Fortunato he had received?
4. Where did the two men go, and why?
5. What "sign" did Fortunato give Montessor?
6. What did Montessor do to Fortunato when the two men reached the last room underground? Why did he do it?

## 2 Elements of Literature

### Characterization

*Read this quote from Fortunato. Then answer the questions.*

"Luchresi cannot tell the difference between Amontillado and ordinary wine. ... I tell you, the man cannot tell Amontillado from milk!"

How do Fortunato's words show his pride? In what way does Fortunato's pride contribute to his death?

### 3 Discussion

*Discuss in pairs or small groups.*

1. What was your reaction to "The Cask of Amontillado"? Were you satisfied—or horrified—that Montressor got his revenge on Fortunato? Did the story amuse you? Scare you? Entertain you?
2. In the end, what do you think Montressor feels about the revenge he takes on Fortunato? Explain your answer.

### 4 Vocabulary

*Choose the correct word. Write the completed sentences in your notebook.*

1. I had told the servants that I would not return to my \_\_\_\_\_ until the morning.  
a. torch                      b. palazzo                      c. Carnival
2. "I see you have a bad cold. My vaults are terribly \_\_\_\_\_. You will suffer."  
a. damp                      b. noble                      c. mold
3. "Look at the white \_\_\_\_\_ on the walls down here ... it hangs from the roof of the vault."  
a. noble                      b. mold                      c. damp
4. It was very dark, and our \_\_\_\_\_ glowed rather weakly.  
a. casks                      b. palazzos                      c. torches
5. I had difficulty recognizing the voice of the \_\_\_\_\_ Fortunato.  
a. noble                      b. torch                      c. mold

## 5 Extension Activity

### Carnival Hats and Masks

In "The Cask of Amontillado", Fortunato is wearing a hat with little bells on it. Montressor wears a black silk mask.

#### A. *Read about Carnival hats and masks.*

During Carnival, people wear costumes that include beautiful masks and wild hats. These masks and hats are made out of many different materials, including felt, velvet, feathers, sequins, and bells.

#### B. *Design a carnival hat or mask.*

- Find pictures of Carnival costumes in an encyclopedia or on the Internet.
- Make photocopies, printouts, or drawings of hats or masks that you like. These will give you ideas for the hat or mask you will make.
- Make your own hat or mask. Use materials such as felt, feathers, construction paper, markers, tape, glue, glitter, and string.
- Wear the hat or mask to a Carnival celebration in your classroom.

## 6 Writing Practice

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The Cask of Amontillado

Edgar Allan Poe

### Write an Opinion

When you write your opinion, you tell your thoughts or feelings about a subject. Here is some information about opinions:

An opinion is not a fact.

An opinion cannot be proved.

An opinion can be supported by facts or details.

Read the question below. Then read one student's response to it.

**Question:** What might Fortunato have done to make Montressor want revenge? Give reasons to support your opinion.

**Opinion:** *I think Fortunato did many things to make Montressor and his whole family look bad. In the first sentence, Montressor talks about the "thousand injuries of Fortunato" and that Fortunato has "dared to insult" him. Then, in the vaults, Fortunato drinks wine with a nasty smile and says, "I drink to the members of your fine family who are buried in these vaults." He obviously means the opposite. He has no respect for Montressor and his family, and this must be a deep insult for Montressor.*

Write your own opinion in response to one of the questions below. Give at least two reasons to support your opinion.

1. Do you think Montressor is mad (insane)? Why or why not?
2. Do you think "The Cask of Amontillado" is a good story? Why or why not?
3. Do you think this story is realistic? Why or why not?

# Chinese Version

## 1 一桶白葡萄酒

根据埃德加·爱伦·坡的同名故事改写

### 作者简介

埃德加·爱伦·坡 1809 年生于马萨诸塞州的波士顿。他幼年丧父，由弗吉尼亚州里士满市的约翰和弗朗西斯·阿兰收养。长大后，与阿兰夫妇关系不和，在一次吵翻后离家出走。他曾先后为几家文学杂志做过编辑，但都没有干长。后来，他自己的创作——诗歌和短篇故事——开始流行。在文学上获得的成功并没有使他改善生活的贫困状态。他逝世于 1849 年。爱伦·坡被普遍认为是神秘小说或侦探小说的鼻祖。《莫尔街凶杀案》和《金甲虫》就是这类小说中的两部。另外他的恐怖小说也同样著名，如《泄密的心》和《一桶白葡萄酒》，在这类作品中揭露了人的心灵中的阴暗面。

### 一桶白葡萄酒

#### I

我遭受福特内托的伤害足有上千次了，这些都可以忍受，但这次他竟敢侮辱我，我知道必须报仇雪恨了。

然而，你，我的朋友，要明白，我从不搞什么威胁恐吓。我，蒙特莱瑟尔，终究是要报复的，这一点是肯定无疑的，但绝不想冒任何风险。我要惩罚，但必须做得不露破绽，还要有充分的把握。他绝不能白白地侮辱我。没错，我必须报复。但侮辱者也必须知道惩罚者是谁。而且，惩罚者蒙特莱瑟尔还必须平安无事，逍遥法外。

因此，当面我还是一如既往地对福特内托微笑。可他并不知道我的笑现在却是别有用心，我是在笑他的死期已近。

这家伙有个弱点。他总是自以为精通酒道。事实上，他也很的确非常精通古意大利酒，这一点跟我一样。这也正是我要利用的，可谓正中下怀。

狂欢节的一天晚上，将近黄昏时分，我发现他正在大街上着人流走着。见了我，他显得超乎寻常地热情，因为他刚刚喝过很多酒。他穿着狂欢节的服装：浅色衬衫，紧身裤，帽子上系着一些小铃铛。见到他我实在是太高兴了，紧紧握着他的手，差一点忘了松开。

“亲爱的福特内托，”我说，“你看上去很健康！可你猜怎么着？我弄到了一桶真正的白葡萄酒。起码人家都说那是真家伙，但我还有怀疑。”

“你说什么，蒙特莱瑟尔？”他说。“白葡萄酒？满满一桶？不可能！而且是在狂





欢节期间！”

“我也有怀疑，”我重复说。“你知道吗，我居然愚蠢地付了全价买那桶酒。我当时没法向你请教就买下来了。因为找不到你，而又不想失去这个便宜买卖。”

“白葡萄酒！”

“我有怀疑。”

“白葡萄酒！”

“我真该把那些人都活埋了。”

“白葡萄酒！”

“既然你忙，我去找鲁克利希好了。要说有判断力嘛，那还得是他。他会告诉我——”

“鲁克利希看不出白葡萄酒和普通葡萄酒有什么区别。”

“但是有些蠢人居然说他对酒的鉴赏力跟你一样。”

“得，咱们走。”

“去哪儿？”

“去你家的墓穴。”

“不，朋友。我绝不能给你找这麻烦。我看得出你正要去参加一个晚会。鲁克利希——”

“我哪儿也不去了。咱们走。”

“不，朋友。不光是耽误了你的晚会，我还看出你得了重感冒。我家墓穴太潮湿了，你去了会受罪的。”

“不管怎么说，赶紧走吧。我的感冒无所谓。至于鲁克利希嘛，我告诉你吧，那是个连白葡萄酒和牛奶都区别不开的人！”

福特内托一边说着，一边挽起我的胳膊。我戴上一块黑丝面罩以便混入狂欢节的人流之中，然后，就让他催着去了我的宅邸。

家里一个仆人也沒有，都出去享受狂欢节了。我告诉过他们我得明天早晨才能回来。对他们来说，这个宣布无疑于邀请他们去过节。

我从两个持火炬的人手中接过两个火炬，一个给了福特内托。我带领他穿过许多房间，来到那个通向墓穴的门口。进了门，又走下很长一段旋梯，不断地叮嘱他小心走好。最后，我们来到底层，站在我们蒙特莱瑟尔家族墓穴潮湿的地上！

## II

我这位朋友步履蹒跚，一走路，帽子上的铃铛就发出轻轻的叮当声。