



Read Rhyme Repeat

The Cask of Amontillado

Theater Adaptation
by Jill Craddock

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Rhyming Reader's Theater Adaptation by Jill Craddock

Characters

NARRATOR
MONTRESOR
FORTUNATO

NARRATOR

Do we really have to read this?
First of all, how are we supposed to know what Poe means by "cask"?
And, come on! "A-mon-something-something-doh?"
Is this something we really need to know?

FORTUNATO

Yes, we are reading it. Don't whine.
I've been practicing for the big time.

(Pronounces slowly and properly)

"Ah-mon-til-LAHD-doe" is a Spanish wine.

MONTRESOR

So what's a cask?

FORTUNATO

It's a barrel. Glad you asked.

NARRATOR

So why not call it "The Barrel of Wine"?

FORTUNATO

How should I know?
It's Poe.
Now, can we get on with the show?

NARRATOR

Fine.
So. The time was Carnival—
Wait. How can the time be a carnival?
Don't they mean the place was a carnival?

MONTRESOR

Not "carnival," but Car-Nee-VAAL: a celebration held in February or March,
In which, people in masks and costumes prepare for the coming of Lent,
A time when Catholics abstain from meat and remain penitent.

FORTUNATO

All right, then? Can we start?
The Cask of Amontillado:
It's a tale of revenge between Montresor and Fortunato.

MONTRESOR

I've borne quite enough of Fortunato's injuries.
He's now added insult, so I name myself both judge and jury.
I'll keep him close like a friend,
To make him easy to apprehend

I have smiled at his wretched face.
With only thoughts of his downfall and disgrace.
I've ruminated on revenge for what he's done.
But if I get caught, then what have I won?
My only goal is crafting his misery.
The key in so doing is not to implicate me.

NARRATOR

What these two so-called gentleman share is a love of fine wine.
They believe their taste and palates are almost divine.
As for clothing and art—these Italians don't know jack.
But I'll concede when it comes to wine.
I guess I'll give 'em that.

MONTRESOR

For Carnival each year, Fortunato wears bells and striped tights.
Here he is, now!
Well, aren't you a sight!
In fact, you're just the man I was hoping to see.
I got my hands on a cask of Amontillado,
I thought you'd like to join me on a tasting spree.

FORTUNATO

Amontillado?

MONTRESOR

Indeed.

FORTUNATO

Amontillado?

MONTRESOR

I believe.

FORTUNATO

Amontillado?

MONTRESOR

That's what the seller said when I asked.

FORTUNATO

A whole cask?

MONTRESOR

Enough to fill ten-thousand flasks.

NARRATOR

Settle down, gentlemen; it's just a barrel of wine.

FORTUNATO

Amontillado, good man! This is quite a find!

MONTRESOR

I know, but it may not be the real deal.

FORTUNATO

Too, true. With your palate, it could be grape juice and still appeal.

MONTRESOR

Don't make jokes. This isn't funny.

FORTUNATO

Oh. Did you pay a pretty penny?

MONTRESOR

Yes, far too much money.

FORTUNATO

It's the spirit of Carnival; you were swept away.

MONTRESOR

I'm going to find Luchesi. He'll tell me if I overpaid.

NARRATOR

Listen carefully. This was all part of Montresor's plan.

FORTUNATO

Luchesi! He can't tell good wine from swill in an old beer can!

MONTRESOR

I can't ask you. Although you are, about wine, quite a wise man.

FORTUNATO

I want to go.

MONTRESOR

It's not a good idea. You seem peaked. You've had a cold for how long?

FORTUNATO

Nonsense. A small cough. My constitution is strong.

MONTRESOR

The wine is in storage, deep underground.

FORTUNATO

That's the best place for it. Why are we standing around?

MONTRESOR

It's awfully damp. It's in a vault.

FORTUNATO

No more folly. You're wasting time, now.

MONTRESOR

If you get sicker, it won't be my fault.
Really, for your health's sake,
I should call on Luchesi to see if the price was right.

FORTUNATO

Luchesi! I say again, that fool cannot tell red wine from white.

NARRATOR

Montresor was no fool, here. He knew Fortunato's exact point of pride.
He exploited this knowledge and led his enemy down the path, pie-eyed.
Arriving at Montresor's palatial home, servants gone, the two were all alone.
They descended a winding staircase with candlesticks aglow.
Stepping carefully, Montresor the leader, they had a long way to go.

FORTUNATO

What's this white clutter on the walls of your catacomb trough?

MONTRESOR

It's salt residue.

(FORTUNATO coughs uncontrollably)

Let's go back. It bothers your cough.
Your health is of utmost importance to me.
Besides, Luchesi—

FORTUNATO

Enough! I'll be fine. Just give me a sip from some of your wine.
Cheers to the dead that surround us. May they endure a peaceful afterlife.

MONTRESOR

And cheers to you, my friend. May you enjoy a long and prosperous life.

NARRATOR

Oh, yes. About the vault where the rich kept their wine.
Their cellars are also tombs—and sometimes a shrine.
On one side wine barrels and bottles, on the other side bones.
Don't ask me to explain. I don't pretend to know.
Only that the two of them kept moving past the dead on tiptoe.

FORTUNATO

This journey is taking awfully long.

MONTRESOR

Yes, the family tree has roots both deep and strong.

FORTUNATO

How could I forget your impressive coat of arms and history?

MONTRESOR

It's hard to forget, now that
We're walking among the buried.
But the salt content is getting thicker.
I'm worried you may get sicker.

FORTUNATO

It's nothing. Let's go. First, another drink.

(Makes a secret gesture).

MONTRESOR

What's that you're doing, my friend?

FORTUNATO

You don't comprehend?
It's from the Mason Society.
Never mind. For a moment I thought you might be—

MONTRESOR

Oh yes. The Masons. Of course. I have their special seal.
(Draws a trowel from an inner pocket of his coat)

NARRATOR

Secret societies back then were a huge trend.
In truth, neither one of these men were ever invited to attend.
They proceeded deeper through arches into a crypt of human remains.
One more recess awaited, and it was equipped with chains.

MONTRESOR

In here you'll find the cask of Amontillado.

FORTUNATO

Are you certain it's here? How can you see?

MONTRESOR

I placed it there by myself. Just two more steps. Trust me.
*(FORTUNATO hits a wall and turns around, bewildered.
MONTRESOR locks chains around FORTUNATO'S wrists and waist.)*

FORTUNATO

The Amontillado?

MONTRESOR

Now, you're chained, I must brick you up behind eleven rows of stones and bones.

FORTUNATO

Is this—? Are you—? Oh, this must be a joke.
We'll live to laugh at this over many glasses of wine.

MONTRESOR

That we will not. Only one brick to go, and that's the end of your line.

FORTUNATO

Surely you jest.
Isn't this rather abrupt?
Can a man be so completely corrupt?
I can't possibly have caused you such a stir.

MONTRESOR

May you rest in peace, good sir.

NARRATOR

The story ends here, and now you know
The wicked revenge endured by Fortunato.
No surprise Poe finished the tale so very grim.
But my question is: what did Fortunato ever do to him?