



The Cask of Amontillado

Edgar Allan Poe

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. *At length* I would be avenged; this was a point definitely settled—but the very definitiveness with which it was resolved, **precluded** the idea of risk. I must not only punish, but punish with **impunity**. A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong. **A**

It must be understood, that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good-will. 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—although in other regards he was a man to be respected and even feared. He prided himself on his connoisseurship¹ in wine. Few Italians have the true virtuoso spirit. For the most part their enthusiasm is adopted to suit the time and opportunity—to practice imposture upon the British and Austrian *millionaires*. In painting and gemmary² Fortunato, like his countrymen, was a quack—but in the matter of old wines he was sincere. In this respect I did not differ from him materially; I was skillful in the Italian vintages myself, and bought largely whenever I could.

It was about dusk, one evening during the supreme madness of the carnival³ season, that I encountered my friend. He accosted me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much. The man wore motley.⁴ He had on a tight-fitting parti-striped dress, and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells. I was so pleased to see him, that I thought I should never have done wringing his hand.

1. **connoisseurship** (kɒn'ə-sū'shɪp): expertise or authority, especially in the fine arts or in matters of taste.
2. **gemmary** (jəm'ə-rē): knowledge of precious gems.
3. **carnival**: a festival before the fasting period of Lent, characterized by fanciful costumes, masquerades, and feasts.
4. **motley**: the costume of a court jester.

Analyze Visuals ▶

Would you describe the mood of this photograph as festive or sinister? Explain.

preclude (prī-klōōd')
v. to make impossible, especially by taking action in advance

impunity
(im-pyōō'nī-tē) n.
freedom from penalty or harm

A PARAPHRASE

Paraphrase the opening paragraph. Why does the narrator vow revenge? What does he consider a successful revenge?

immolation
(im'ə-lā'shən) n. death or destruction