

NOW, RABID READERS, WE DIP INTO THE PULSATING PAGES OF MACABRE MASTER EDGAR ALLAN POE TO DRAW FORTH HIS CREEPY CLASSIC...



The MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH



THE RED DEATH HAD LONG DEVASTATED THE COUNTRY. NO PESTILENCE HAD EVER BEEN SO FATAL, OR SO HIDEOUS. BLOOD WAS ITS AVATAR AND ITS SEAL... THE SCARLET STAINS UPON FACE AND BODY OF THE VICTIM WERE THE PEST BAN WHICH SHUT HIM OUT FROM THE AID AND SYMPATHY OF HIS FELLOW MEN...



PRINCE PROSPERO WAS HAPPY AND DAUNTLESS; THE EXTERNAL WORLD COULD TAKE CARE OF ITSELF. IT WAS FOLLY TO GRIEVE OR THINK, AND AGAINST THIS PROSPERO HAD PROVIDED ALL THE APPLIANCES OF PLEASURE. ALL THESE AND SECURITY WAS WITHIN. WITHOUT WAS THE RED DEATH...



IT WAS TOWARD THE CLOSE OF THE SIXTH MONTH OF THIS SECLUSION, WHILE THE PESTILENCE RAGED MOST FURIOUSLY ABROAD, THAT PRINCE PROSPERO ARRANGED AN UNUSUAL ENTERTAINMENT...



THE OTHER ROOMS WERE DENSELY CROWDED, BUT TO THE BLACK ROOM, NONE OF THE REVELERS WOULD VENTURE. WITHIN ITS SHROUDED WALLS THERE STOOD A GIGANTIC CLOCK OF EBONY. AS EACH HOUR WAS STRUCK, FROM THE BRAZEN LUNGS OF THE CLOCK CAME A SOUND OF SO PECULIAR A NOTE THAT THE MUSICIANS WERE CONSTRAINED TO PAUSE...

...AND EVEN THE GIDDIEST OF THE DANCERS CEASED AND GREW PALE!



BUT WHEN THE ECHOS HAD FULLY CEASED, ALL SMILED AT THEIR OWN NERVOUSNESS AND MADE WHISPERING VOWS, EACH TO THE OTHER, THAT THE NEXT CHIMING OF THE CLOCK WOULD NOT FIND THEM AGAIN AFRAID...



THEN, AGAIN, AFTER THE LAPSE OF SIXTY MINUTES WOULD COME THE NEXT OMINOUS CHIMING, AND WITH IT, THE SAME FEAR AND TREPIDATION!

BONG! BONG! BONG! BONG! BONG!
BONG! BONG!

WHAT WHIMSEY OF PRINCE PROSPERO PROVIDED SUCH A TIMEPIECE TO TOLL THE HOUR? IT'S A MOST DEPRESSING SOUND.

THE WHIMSEY OF A MAD-MAN SOME MIGHT SAY, M'LADY... THOUGH CERTAINLY I WOULD NOT! COME, FORGET... DANCE!





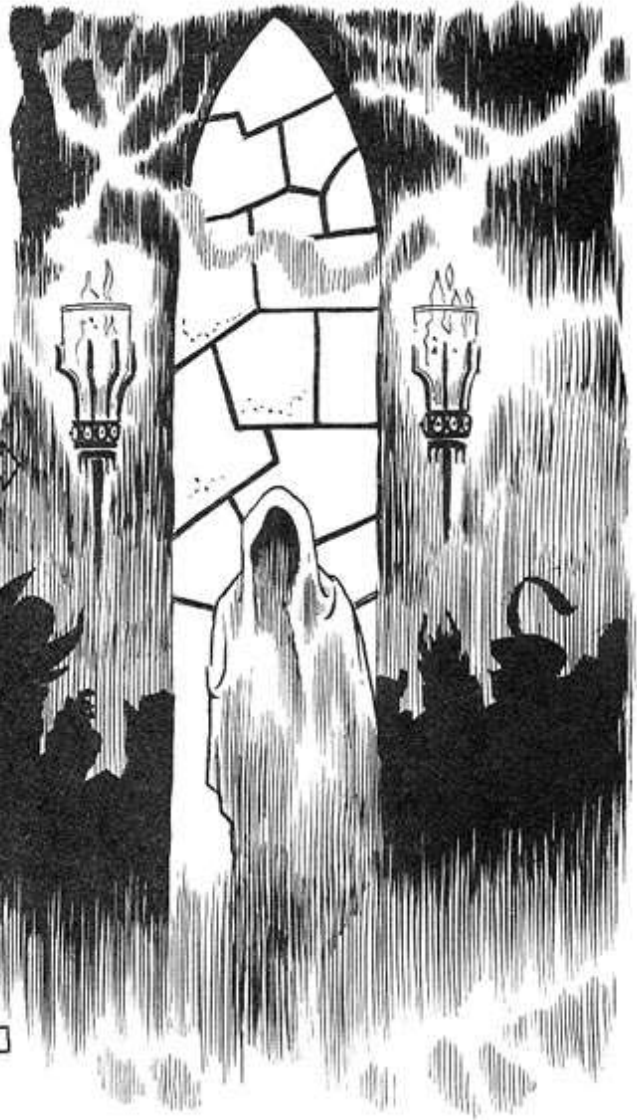
THE REVEL WENT WHIRLINGLY ON, UNTIL AT LENGTH THERE COMMENCED THE SOUNDING OF MID-NIGHT UPON THE CLOCK; AND THERE WAS AN UNEASY CESSATION OF ALL THINGS AS BEFORE. BUT NOW THERE WERE TWELVE STROKES TO BE SOUNDED, AND A MUCH LONGER TIME TO PAUSE AND THINK...

BEFORE THE LAST ECHOES OF THE LAST CHIME HAD UTTERLY SUNK INTO SILENCE, THE MOTIONLESS DANCERS BECAME AWARE OF THE PRESENCE OF A MASKED FIGURE WHICH HAD ARRESTED THE ATTENTION OF NO SINGLE INDIVIDUAL BEFORE...



THERE AROSE AT LENGTH FROM THE WHOLE COMPANY A MURMUR OF FIRST SURPRISE, THEN TERROR, HORROR, AND FINALLY, DISGUST...

SIRE, THE FELLOW GOES TOO FAR! EVEN AMONG THE UTTERLY LOST TO WHOM LIFE AND DEATH ARE BOTH JOKES, THERE ARE MATTERS OF WHICH NO JEST CAN BE MADE!



ALL MIGHT HAVE BEEN ENDURED, IF NOT APPROVED BY THE MAD REVELLERS, BUT THE NEWCOMER HAD GONE SO FAR AS TO ASSUME THE COUNTENANCE OF THE RED DEATH... HIS VESTURE WAS DABBLED IN BLOOD AND HIS BROAD BROW, WITH ALL THE FEATURES OF THE FACE, WAS SPRINKLED WITH THE SCARLET HORROR!



WHO DARES INSULT US WITH THIS BLASPHEMOUS MOCKERY? SEIZE HIM AND UNMASK HIM!

BUT FROM A CERTAIN NAMELESS AWE WITH WHICH THE MADE ASSUMPTIONS OF THE FIGURE HAD INSPIRED THE WHOLE PARTY, THERE WERE NONE WHO PUT FORTH HAND TO SEIZE HIM...



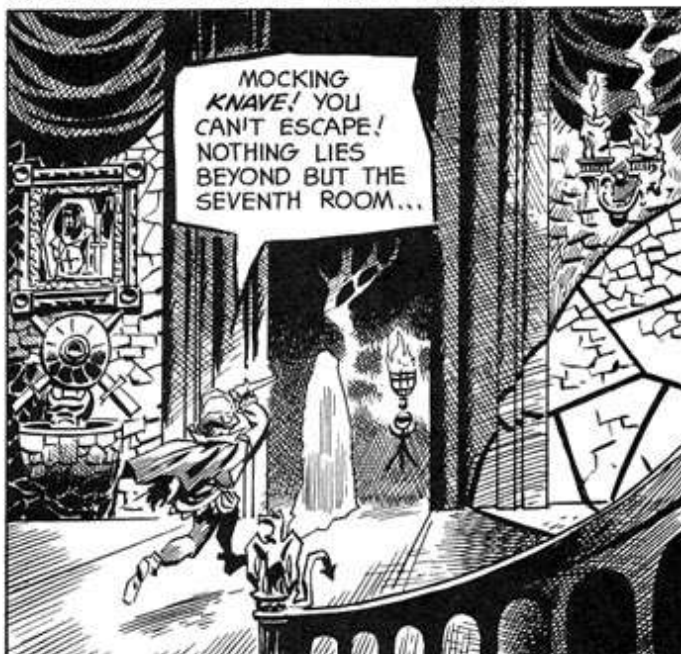
THEN, PRINCE PROSPERO, MADDENED WITH RAGE AND THE SHAME OF HIS OWN MOMENTARILY COWARDICE, RUSHED FORWARD...



WITH A SOLEMN AND MEASURED STEP, THE SILENT FIGURE MOVED FROM THE BLUE CHAMBER INTO THE PURPLE, THROUGH THE PURPLE TO THE GREEN, AND ON TO THE ORANGE, THEN THE WHITE...



... EVEN THENCE TO THE VIOLET ROOM...



HAVING ATTAINED THE EXTREMITY OF THE BLACK CHAMBER, THE GRIM INTRUDER TURNED SUDDENLY A CONFRONTED HIS PURSUER!



SUMMONING THE WILD COURAGE OF DESPAIR, A THRONG OF REVELLERS HURLED THEMSELVES INTO THE BLACK COMPARTMENT WHERE THE GAUNT FIGURE STOOD ERECT AND MOTIONLESS WITHIN THE SHADOW OF THE EBONY CLOCK...

YET THE AVENGERS COULD ONLY GASP IN UNUTTERABLE HORROR AS THEY SEIZED THE MASQUERADER WITH VIOLENCE, AND FOUND THE GRAVE CEREMENTS AND CORPSE LIKE MASK UNTENANTED BY ANY TANGIBLE FORM!



AND NOW WAS ACKNOWLEDGED THE PRESENCE OF THE RED DEATH! HE HAD COME LIKE A THIEF IN THE NIGHT, AND ONE BY ONE DROPPED THE REVELLERS IN THE BLOOD BEDREWED HALLS OF THEIR REVEL, AND DIED EACH IN THE DESPAIRING POSTURE OF HIS FALL!



AND THE LIFE OF THE EBONY CLOCK WENT OUT WITH THAT OF THE LAST OF THE GAY, AND THE FLAMES OF THE TRIPODS EXPIRED, AND DARKNESS AND DECAY AND THE RED DEATH HELD ILLIMITABLE DOMINION OVER ALL!!

HOPE WE DIDN'T PLAGUE YOU TOO MUCH WITH THIS YELL YARN, FEAR-SOME FIENDIES, BUT IF WE DID... BOY, WILL YOUR FACE BE RED!

