

I WAS *SICK*...SICK NEAR TO *DEATH*  
AT THE HANDS OF THE *SPANISH*  
*INQUISITION* IN TOLEDO!

BLACK ROBED *JUDGES* SAT BEFORE  
ME! I WATCHED THEIR LIPS MOVE  
*SLOWLY* TO SHAPE THE WORDS THAT  
WOULD BE MY *SENTENCE*!

AND MY *SENTENCE*...  
WAS *DEATH*!



IN THE  
NAME OF  
EVERYTHING  
HOLY... THIS  
CANNOT  
BE!

IT IS  
PURIFICATION  
IN THE SIGHT OF  
GOD... SO LET IT  
BE DONE!

NO! THIS  
CANNOT  
BE!



EDGAR ALLAN POE'S

# THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM



THIS IS A PERVERSION OF GOD! A MOCKERY!

GETTING DIZZY... CAN'T STAND... MIND GOING BLANK... UHHH!

MY HEAD SPUN WILDEST AS THE HARSH REALITY OF MY JUDGEMENT OVERTOOK ME, AND MY BODY FELT AS IF IT WERE DESCENDING SLOWLY INTO THE BLACKNESS OF HELL!



THEN SILENCE STILLNESS, AND NIGHT WERE MY UNIVERSE!



I HAD PASSED OUT IN THE WORLD OF THE LIVING...

UHH... WHERE AM I--?

... AND AWOKE IN A STRANGE DARKNESS, NOT UNLIKE THAT OF WHAT MUST BE DEATH!



MY MIND RACED WILDLY TRYING TO UNDERSTAND MY FATE!

BUMP BUMP... BUMP... BUMP...

CAN'T HEAR A SINGLE SOUND... EXCEPT FOR THE FRANTIC BEATING OF MY OWN HEART!



THE ATMOSPHERE WAS INTOLERABLY CLOSE! A PARADOX, BUT THE EBON EMPTINESS OPPRESSED AND STIFLED ME!

THERE IS ONLY ONE PLACE LIKE THIS IN EXISTENCE THAT I KNOW OF...

AND SOON, MY SENSES AND WIT CAME ABOUT ME... AND I KNEW.



THE WORDS FORMED RELUCTANTLY, BUT REALITY COULD STILL NOT BE DENIED!

...THE DUNGEON OF TOLEDO!





I CONTINUED TO EXPLORE THE DIM CONFINES OF MY CELL! I WALKED NOT MORE THAN A SCORE OF PACES... BEFORE SLIPPING ON A SLICKLY-DAMP FLAGSTONE...

NOT THAT, OF COURSE, IT MADE MUCH DIFFERENCE, FOR ANY WAY IT WAS CUT, I'D SOON BE DEAD!



GROPING ABOUT THE COLD, DAMP FLOOR... I LIFTED A SMALL PIECE OF MASONRY...

HERE! A STONE CHIP! I CAN USE THIS!



...AND LET IT FALL INTO THE ABYSS!



FOR MANY, NEAR-TIMELESS SECONDS, IT PLUNGED THRU EMPTY AIR... UNTIL, AT LENGTH, IT STUCK AN OILY POOL OF STAGNANT WATER, WITH A HOLLOW, SULLEN SOUND!



SO THAT'S THE DESTINY I WAS SUPPOSED TO MEET... DEATH IN THE PIT!

UNKNOWN TO ME, HOWEVER, MY TORMENT WAS FAR FROM OVER! THE LIQUID WITHIN THE PITCHER HAD BEEN DRUGGED BY THE INQUISITION!



GOOD THING I ESCAPED SO GHASTLY A FATE!

BUT... I'M SWEATING LIKE THE DEVIL!

HOT AS HELL DOWN HERE! AND THAT CLOSE CALL ON THE PRECIPICE DIDN'T HELP MATTERS!



NEED A COOL DRINK OF WATER... EVEN IF IT IS FLAT AND TASTELESS!



...AND MY MIND SOON WENT AS DARK AS MY SORDID SURROUNDINGS!

AND THEN, I AWOKE FOR A SECOND TIME...

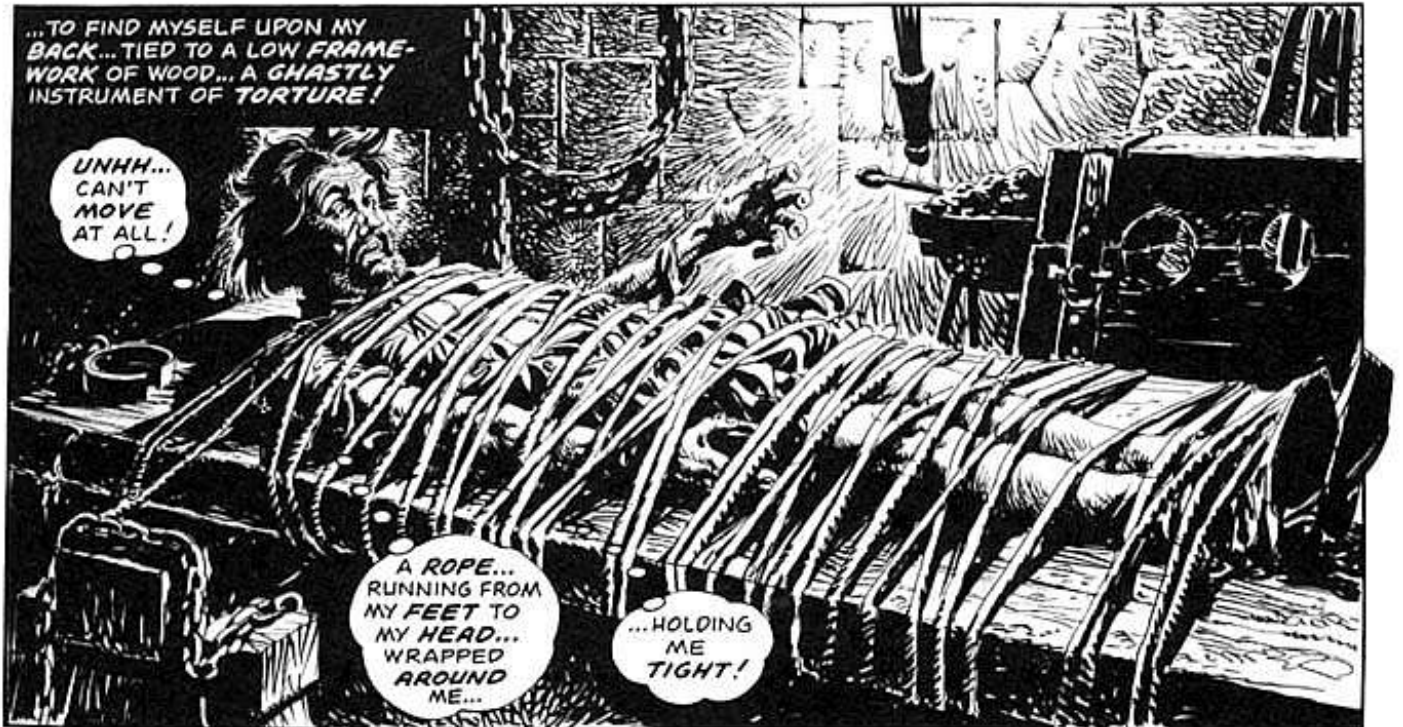


...TO FIND MYSELF UPON MY BACK... TIED TO A LOW FRAME-  
WORK OF WOOD... A GHASTLY  
INSTRUMENT OF TORTURE!

UNHH...  
CAN'T  
MOVE  
AT ALL!

A ROPE...  
RUNNING FROM  
MY FEET TO  
MY HEAD...  
WRAPPED  
AROUND  
ME...

...HOLDING  
ME  
TIGHT!



FOR ALL I COULD REACH WAS A PLATE OF  
HEAVILY-SALTED MEAT... TO INCREASE MY  
THIRST WHILE WAITING FOR DEATH TO  
CLAIM ME!

MY LEFT ARM IS  
FREE... BUT FREE ONLY  
TO FURTHER TORTURE  
ME!



AND, IT  
SEEMS, I WAS  
NOT THE ONLY  
ONE WITH  
THOUGHTS ON  
THE FOOD!

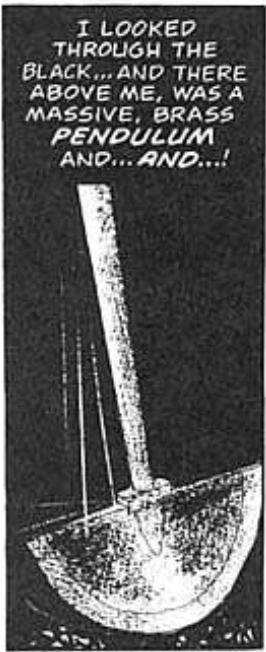




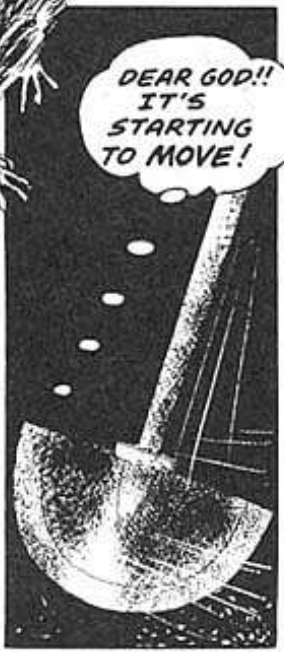
LORD! I'VE NEVER SEEN SO MANY HUNGRY RATS AT ONE TIME!



BUT THEN, THE GREATEST *TERROR* OF ALL MADE ITS PRESENCE KNOWN TO MY *STUNNED* SENSES!



I LOOKED THROUGH THE BLACK... AND THERE ABOVE ME, WAS A MASSIVE, BRASS *PENDULUM* AND... AND...!



DEAR GOD!! IT'S STARTING TO MOVE!

THE END CLOSEST ME *TERMINATED* IN A CRESCENT OF *GLITTERING STEEL*... ABOUT A FOOT IN LENGTH FROM HORN TO HORN!



THE WAY IT *GLINTS* IN THE TORCHLIGHT! IT MUST BE KEEN AS A *RAZOR*!

THE *MONSTROUS PENDULUM* HISSED THRU THE AIR AS IT *SWEPT* OVER MY BOUND FORM!



WORST OF ALL... THE **DEADLY DEVICE** LOWERED ITSELF INCH BY **LETHAL INCH** AS IT SWUNG!

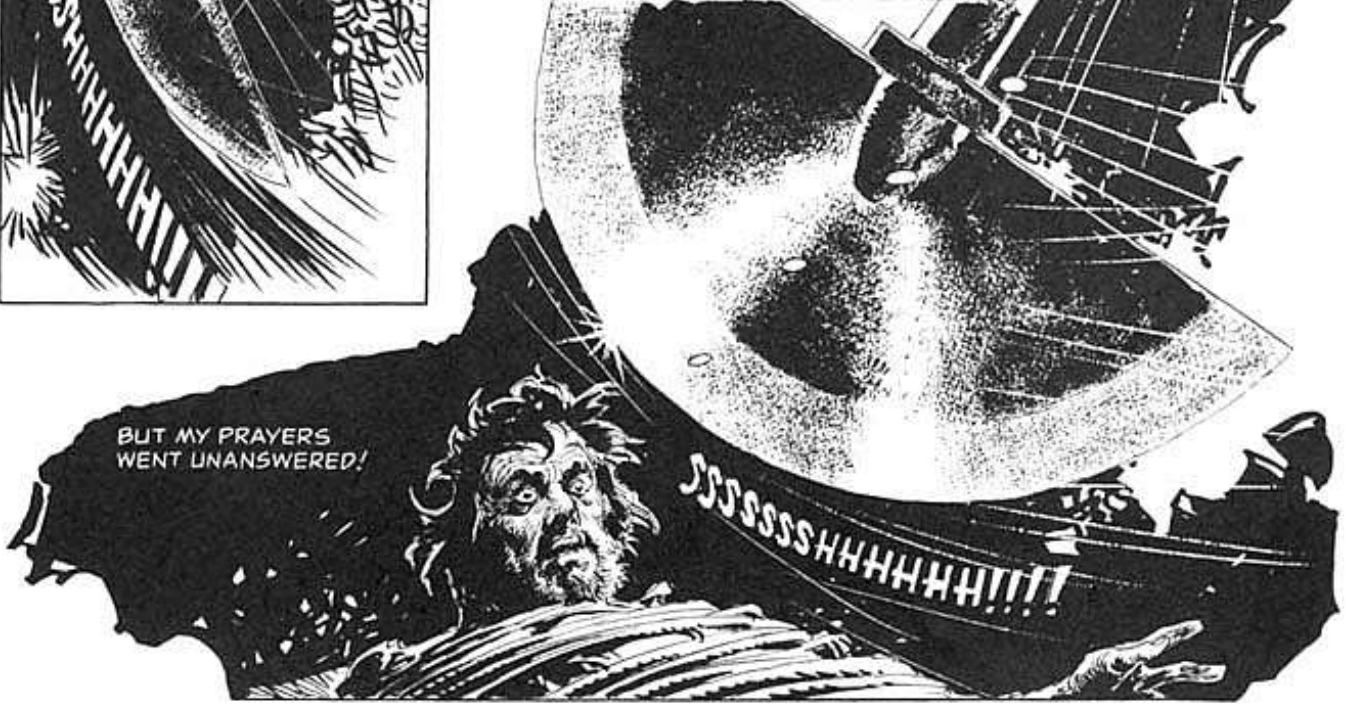


I CALLED TO **HEAVEN** THAT THE **BLADE'S** DESCENT WOULD BE **RAPID**... THAT **SWIFT** DEATH MIGHT RELEASE ME FROM THIS **NERVE-NUMBING** TORMENT!



DEAR **GOD**... IN YOUR NAME, I **IMPLORE** YOU! MAKE MY PASSING **FAST** AND **PAINLESS!**

BUT MY **PRAYERS** WENT **UNANSWERED!**



THEN, AS THE **PENDULUM** VIBRATED TO AND FRO, A **SCANT** FOOT ABOVE ME... AN **AWESOME CALM** OVERTOOK MY SENSES!



MY **THOUGHTS** DWELT ENTIRELY UPON **ESCAPE!** WHY SUBMIT SO CALMLY TO **DEATH?**

PERHAPS I CAN USE MY **LEFT ARM** TO **HALT** THE **RAZOR** WHILE IN **MID-SWING?**



BUT... **NO!** MY **ARM** WOULD EITHER BE **BRUTALLY GASHED**... OR **TORN** FROM ITS **SOCKET** BY THE **MOMENTUM!**



THERE MUST BE **ANOTHER** WAY!

DESPERATION CLOSED IN ABOUT ME... AND WHEN HOPE HAD ALL BUT EVAPORATED, I ESPIED...



A MAD PLAN SUDDENLY TOOK SHAPE!



LIKE A MAN POSSESSED... I GRABBED A CHUNK OF SALTED MEAT AND RUBBED IT VIGOROUSLY AGAINST THE ROPE THAT KEPT ME LASHED TO THE WOODEN BENCH!



FOR WHAT SEEMED TO BE HOURS, I HAD WAVED MY LEFT ARM IN ORDER TO KEEP THE RODENTS AWAY!



NOW I WAS INVITING THE VERMIN TO COME CLOSER! AND THE HORDE APPEARED PUZZLED BY MY BEHAVIOR...



...AND ONLY WATCHED FROM PROTECTIVE SHADOWS...!





THEN, A BIG RAT, FINALLY OVERCOME WITH HUNGER, MADE A MINDLESS DASH FOR THE MEAT-SCENTED ROPE!



THAT'S IT!  
COME CLOSER!  
DON'T BE  
AFRAID!

IT WAS AS IF A SIGNAL HAD BEEN GIVEN! THE OTHER ANIMALS BLINDLY FOLLOWED THE FIRST... AND STARTED TO CHEW RAVENOUSLY AT THE MEAT UPON MY SINGLE BOND!



THEY CLUNG TO THE WOOD... THEY OVER-RAN IT... THEY LEAPED IN DOZENS ONTO MY BODY!

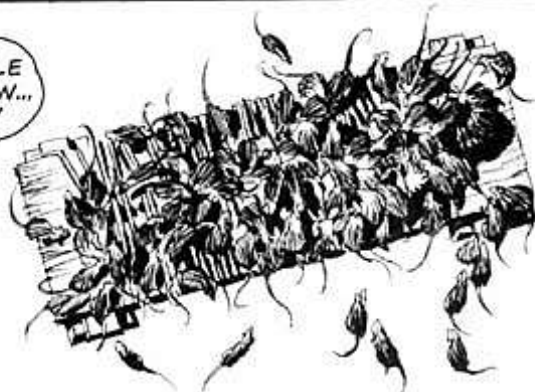
THEIR STENCH IS TERRIBLE... BUT I MUST NOT VOMIT! MUSTN'T EVEN DARE TO BREATHE!

THE SCIMITAR-LIKE BLADE CUT A THIN SLASH INTO MY CHEST... AND FIERY PAIN SHOT THRU EVERY NERVE!



JUST A LITTLE LONGER NOW...  
AARRGH!

I'M CUT...  
BLEEDING!



AND WHILE I BLED FROM A WICKED SLICE, THE RATS PERSISTED WITH THEIR INSANE FEEDING FRENZY!



IN THE NAME OF HEAVEN...  
**HURRY!** I'VE ONLY **SECONDS**  
LEFT... BEFORE I'M **CHOPPED TO**  
**BLOODY RIBBONS!**



THEN, PRAISE  
GOD, I FELT  
THE ROPE **YIELD**  
AROUND ME AND  
I WAS...

...**FREE!**



THIS IS IT!  
I'LL **FIGHT** THEM  
AND PERHAPS, AT  
LEAST, **DIE** LIKE  
A **MAN!**

BUT INSTEAD OF THE  
**SPANISH MONKS** I  
FEARED, IT WAS  
**GENERAL LASALLE,**  
ENEMY OF THE  
**INQUISITION!** THE  
**FRENCH ARMY** HAD  
DEFEATED THE  
**FORCES OF TOLEDO**  
IN HEATED **BATTLE!**

**YES... FREE... BUT**  
STILL IN THE HANDS  
OF THE **INQUISITION!**  
I WATCHED AS **DOORS**  
WERE THROWN BACK  
AND PREPARED TO  
GREET MY  
**TORMENTORS!**

THE **INQUISITION**  
WAS **OVER.** THE  
**BLOODBATH** WAS  
BEHIND US!



AND I WAS SAFE FROM  
THE HORRORS OF THE  
DEEP **PIT** AND ITS  
SLASHING **PENDULUM!**  
THE **NIGHTMARE** WAS,  
THANK **GOD,** AT AN  
**END.**