

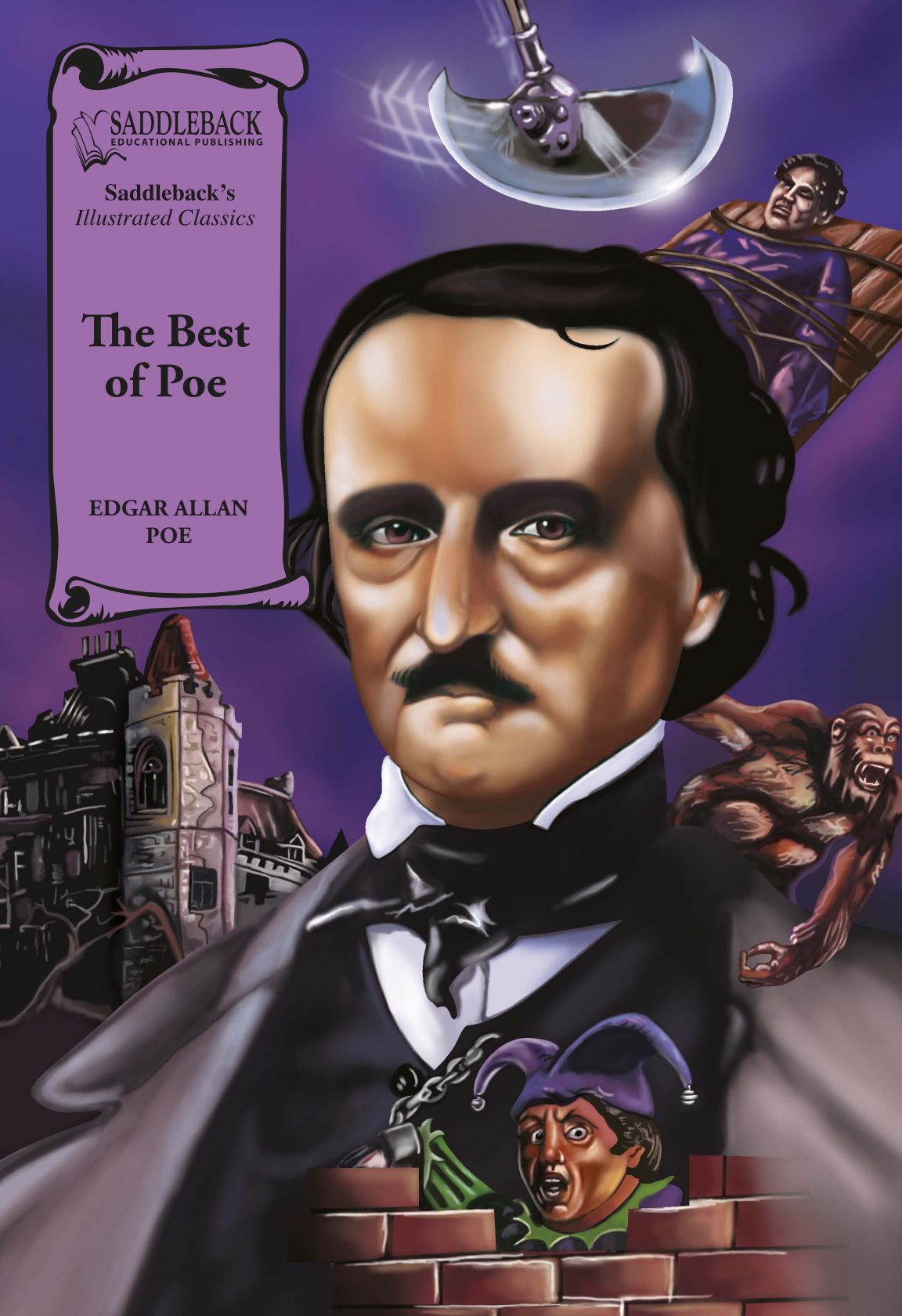


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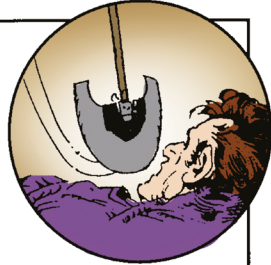
The Best of Poe

**EDGAR ALLAN
POE**



Edgar Allan Poe

The Best of Poe



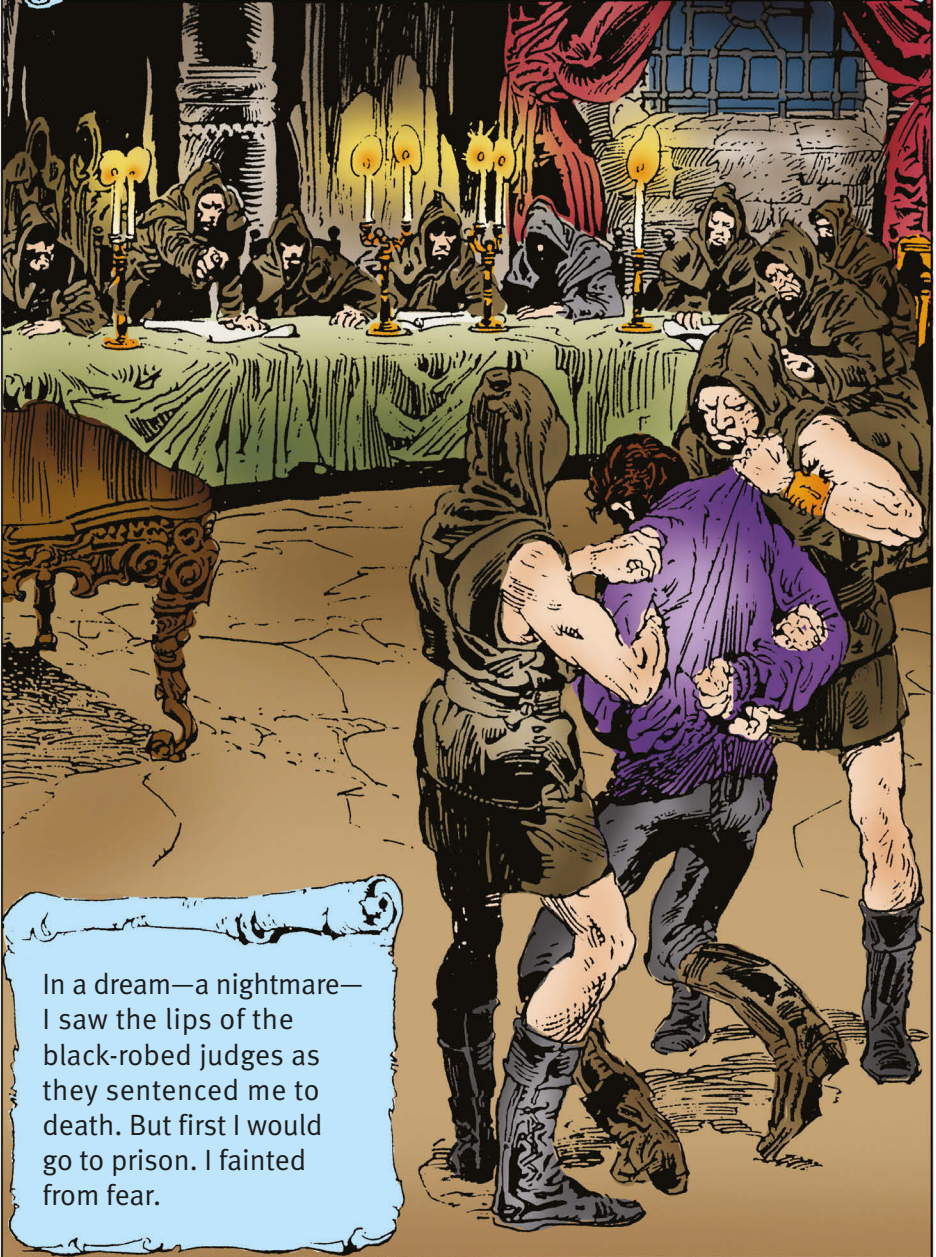
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The Pit and the Pendulum

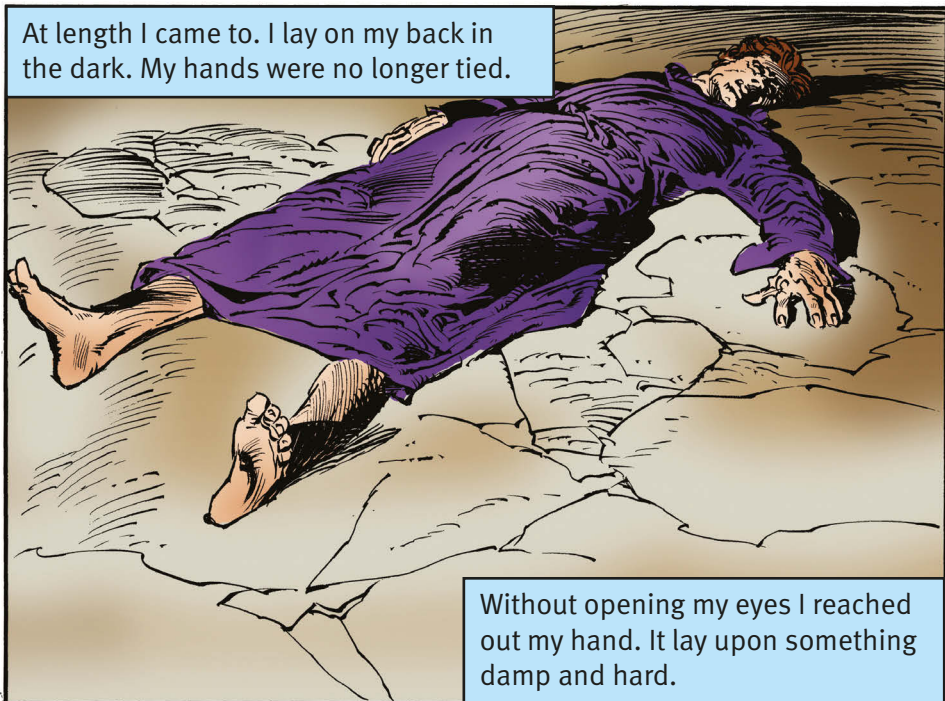


In a dream—a nightmare—I saw the lips of the black-robed judges as they sentenced me to death. But first I would go to prison. I fainted from fear.

There were shadow memories of tall figures that lifted and carried me down....



At length I came to. I lay on my back in the dark. My hands were no longer tied.



Without opening my eyes I reached out my hand. It lay upon something damp and hard.

I was afraid to open my eyes, afraid that I would see—nothing! I tried, and it was so! There was only the dark.



I leaped to my feet and reached wildly in all directions. I was afraid I would feel the walls of a tomb!



At length my hands found a wall, smooth, slimy, and cold. I walked around it trying to figure out the size of my prison.

The ground was slippery. Soon I stumbled and fell.



Too tired to get up again, I remained there and fell asleep.



Awakening, I felt bread and water beside me. I ate and drank eagerly. Then I decided to explore further. I would try to cross my prison.

I stepped out carefully at first, then more freely. Suddenly I stumbled on the torn hem of my robe and fell forward.



I lay on my face. My chin rested on the prison floor. But from my lips up, my head touched nothing!



I put forward my arm, and trembled to find that I had fallen at the edge of a circular pit.



A piece of stone fell into the pit. For seconds I heard it echo far, far below.

Shaking all over, I felt my way back to the wall. Finally I fell into a heavy sleep. When I awoke, everything had changed.

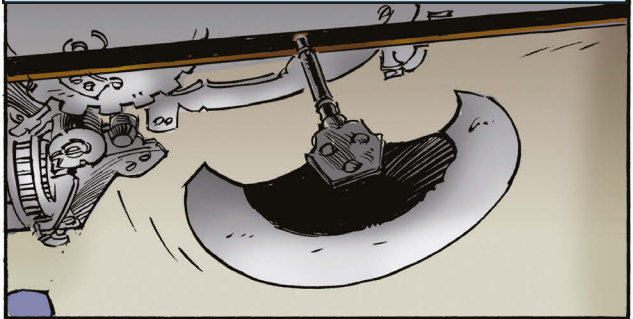


A light came from somewhere above me, and I raised my head to look around. Frightening figures were painted on the walls. The circular pit lay in the exact center of my prison.



Above me on the high ceiling was painted a figure of old Father Time, with a clock's pendulum in place of his scythe.

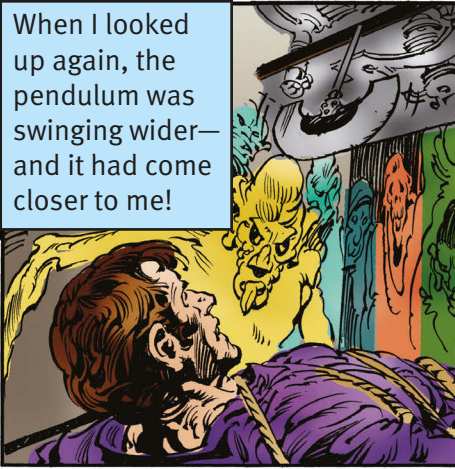
Was the pendulum, as I first thought, part of the painting? Or did it really move?



A slight noise made me turn my head. Looking at the floor, I saw troops of large rats coming from the pit. They were after some meat that had been left beside me.



When I looked up again, the pendulum was swinging wider—and it had come closer to me!



At its end was a half-circle of steel—like a giant razor blade!



For hours—perhaps days—I watched in terror as it swung above me:

closer ...



and closer ...



... and yet closer.



And then, almost too late, I began to think. I reached for the remains of the meat and rubbed the straps that were holding me. Then I lay still.



The rats leaped in hundreds upon me and chewed at the straps.

Just as the blade began to cut through my robe, I felt the straps loosen. Carefully I rolled away and off the platform. I was free!



Then the pendulum stopped. It was drawn up to the ceiling. But the metal walls began to glow with heat!



My prison grew terribly hot—and the walls began to close in on me!

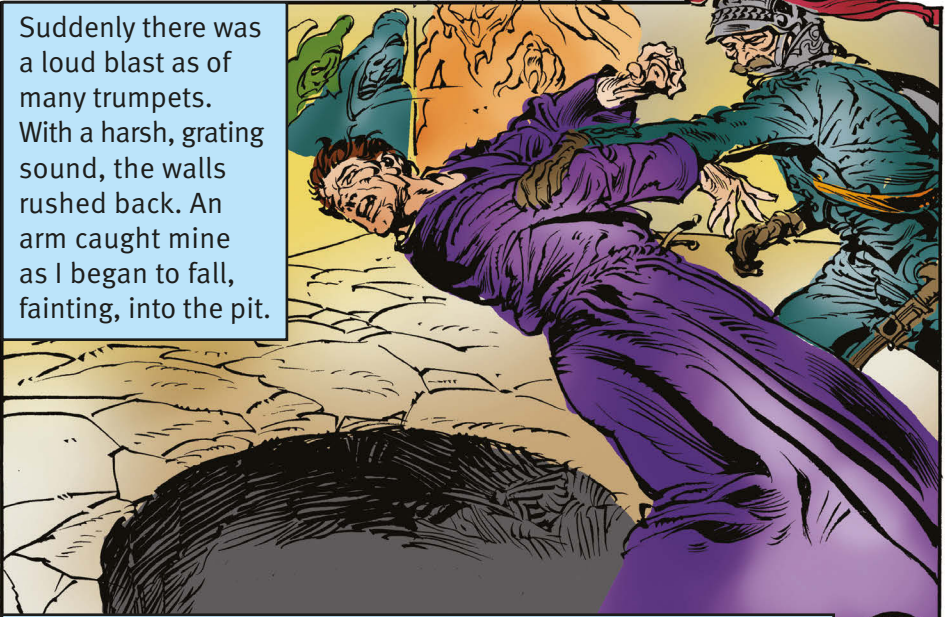


I gasped for breath. The burning walls pressed me toward the pit.



Moments later, I trembled on its edge. I was lost. I gave one loud, long, and final scream of terror.

Suddenly there was a loud blast as of many trumpets. With a harsh, grating sound, the walls rushed back. An arm caught mine as I began to fall, fainting, into the pit.



It was the arm of General Lasalle. The French army had entered Toledo. My enemies had been overthrown, and I was safe at last!

THE
END

The Best of Poe

You'll be kept in suspense with these four Edgar Allan Poe short stories!

In *The Pit and the Pendulum*, the frightening details of the ordeal in the pit will keep you on the edge of your seat!

Find out about the terrible end of a suffering artist, his sister, and their house in *The Fall of the House of Usher*.

Read about one man's horrible revenge and the other's hideous death in *The Cask of Amontillado*.

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