

THE BLACK CAT

A Dramatic Monolog

by
Edgar Allen Poe



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From the story by the same title.

For the wild, yet homely narrative which I am about to relate, I neither expect nor solicit belief. Mad indeed would I be to expect it, in a case where my very senses reject their own evidence. Yet, mad am I not--and very surely do I not dream. But tomorrow I die, and today I would unburden my soul. My immediate purpose is to place before the world, and without comment, a series of mere household events. In their consequences, these events have terrified--have tortured--have destroyed me. Hereafter, perhaps, some intellect may be found which will perceive, in the circumstances I detail with awe, nothing more than an ordinary succession of very natural causes and effects.

From my infancy I was especially fond of animals, and was indulged by my parents with a great variety of pets. With these I spent most of my time, and never was so happy as when feeding and caressing them. This peculiarity of character grew with my growth, and, in my manhood, I derived from it one of my principal sources of pleasure.

I married early, and was happy to find in my wife a disposition not uncongenial with my own. Observing my partiality for domestic pets, she lost no opportunity of procuring those of the most agreeable kind. We had birds, goldfish, a fine dog, rabbits, a small monkey, and a cat.

This latter was a large and beautiful animal, entirely black, and sagacious to an astounding degree. In speaking of his intelligence, my wife made frequent allusion to the ancient notion that all black cats are witches in disguise. Not that she was serious upon this point--and I mention the matter for no better reason than that it happens, just now, to be remembered.

Pluto--this was the cat's name--was my favorite pet and playmate. I alone fed him, and he attended me wherever I went about the house.

Our friendship lasted for several years, during which my temperament and character--through the instrumentality of the Fiend Intemperance--had (I blush to confess it) experienced a radical alteration for the worse. I grew more moody, more irritable, more regardless of the feelings of others. I suffered myself to use intemperate language to my wife. At length, I even offered her personal violence. My pets, of course, were made to feel the change in my disposition. I not only neglected, but ill-used them. For Pluto, however, I still retained sufficient regard to restrain me from maltreating him. But my disease grew upon me--for what disease is like Alcohol!--and at length even Pluto began to experience the effects of my ill temper.

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