

The black cat -tete-a-tete for the observer

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Edgar A. Poe's story, "The Black Cat," was published in The Saturday Evening Post in 1843. The story follows the narrator, who is a former animal lover turned alcoholic that mismanages his wife and black cat. By the time we reach the end of the story the narrator finds his own mentality falling apart and murders his wife while his black cat reports his crime to the police afterwards. It was later included in Tales by Edgar Allan Poe in the 1845 short story collection.

Even amongst most of Poe's works 'The Black Cat' shows the human capability of regarding the mental deterioration of one's self and the inability of the mind to stop it from happening. Narrator of this short story is acutely and completely aware of his mental failure, and at bound points within the story, he recognizes the changes that occur at varied moments to him, and he attempts to try and do something concerning it. Nonetheless he fails to reverse the mental instability he suffers.

Like most of Poe's stories, this one is not out of the ordinary and thus not an exception, we are not aware and know nothing of the narrator's past or background. While the narrator declares he is not mad, his actions are obviously that of a madman who realizes clearly he is going insane, but at times he is able to comment on the situation of his torn and twain psyche.

The Narrator starts his telling by looking back to a time he was thought to be a traditional, animal-loving, docile individual with greatly humane concern for his neighboring folks and animals. His parents were the initial reason for his innate fondness for animals, since they indulged him and allowed him to own many pets, furthermore he was lucky to marry a woman who was also

fond of animals herself. One of the numerous animals they had was a black cat named Pluto. Pluto, also known as the Roman God of Death and patron of witches, is a fitting name for the black cat since the narrator's wife made note of the popular implication that all black cats are witches in disguise. This makes the name significant for the entirety of the story. The other popular opinion related to this story is the superstition that all cats have nine lives. This becomes a relevant to the story when the second cat is assumed by the narrator to be the reincarnation of the cat he killed and hanged with only one minor difference, being the outline of a tree at it's breast.

Surprisingly, a very special and intimate relationship existed between the cat Pluto and the narrator, as it was his favorite animal for several years, despite the many pets they owned. Suddenly, however, a change took hold of the teller, significantly because of alcohol, he went through a strange and different change, quote, " I grew, day by day, more moody, more irritable, more regardless of the feelings of others.' One evening when the narrator arrives home intoxicated and imagined his beloved cat took effort to avoid him the change in his demeanor and personality becomes most apparent. He grabs the cat by it's neck, and with a knife pops out of on it's eyes. This is the first of such acts done by the narrator throughout the story, and far from the last.

Next day the narrator notes that he was terrified of the events that took place and what he had done. In time, the cat healed yet it now deliberately avoided the teller. This caused another malicious event as it enraged the narrator and sparked a spirit of perverseness that made him do wrong fort

he sake of doing wrong only. One morning he placed a noose around the neck of the cat and took it to hang it from a branch of a tree. Even as he did, he was clearly embarrassed, ashamed and sad of what he was doing, since he was aware that the cat had indeed loved him, and gave him no reason whatsoever to hang him to begin with.

That night the house of the narrator catches fire, and burns to ashes and cinder. This happens sometime after the horrifying act he commits, yet he acts analytical and rational, giving no thought that there may be relation to the deed of killing the cat and the event that destroyed his home. Here we see the crippled mind of the narrator offering a rational reason instead of anything remotely superstitious. And rejecting that the burning of the house might be a small retribution for his mutilation and slaughter of his pet.

Nonetheless he visits the shambles of his former home to see a gathering of people about the wreckage. Here he observes a wall that was still standing. He recognizes it to be the one beside his bed, and whatsmore engraved into the plaster was a striking figure of a cat, with a rope detailed about it's neck.

Here we see again how the narrator with his madness try to rationalize the occurrence. He thinks someone found the dead cat and tossed it into the flames to wake him up. Along with this the ammonia inside the cat, burning of the house and the collapse of the walls, all of these assembled the grave encounter. Long after the events prior the narrator still could not take the image of his cat and what had happened out of his mind. One evening while he was intoxicated an unreasonable amount he saw another cat, black just like Pluto, yet without a white splash of color on it's chest. He questions who

he knows and no one claims to know anything of this cat. So, he takes it home to take care of it and care for it. This new cat becomes the center of the attention between the narrator and his wife. Yet, the madness sprouting in the narrator causes in him yet another change. The cat and its affection for the duo begins to revolt him.

He loathes the cat and hates it, and his disgust for it is only fueled by one detail: that the cat is missing an eye, just like Pluto. The narrator begins to assume that this new cat is actually Pluto, only reincarnated. In the mind of the narrator, this cat was obviously a reincarnation of Pluto. Around here the narrator notes of his newfound state of mind, or rather, his state of mind acquired after losing the previous shred of humanity he had, as he says that it is now completely gone and that he is aware of it. This is in part related to the introduction bit of how the insane can observe from a far and watch the deteriorating state of his mind and change in his own personality.

At last, the narrator begins to fear the cat. He is scared and horrified of it, especially after the splash of color on its torso assumes the terrifying image of the gallows the cat Pluto had. Eventually he cries out in dismay and agony at this revelation. It is likely this change appears in this mind of the narrator's addled and everchanging mad mind, in the same way that he thinks this creature as the reincarnation of the cat he hanged and killed.

Eventually things take a grim tone when the cat steps before the narrator while he and his wife walk down to the cellar and nearly trips him. Filled with hatred and animosity towards the cat, he grabs an axe to kill the creature but ultimately fails to do so when his wife steps in before him and hold him

back. He pulls back only momentarily before landing the axe straight on her head. He delivers an untimely death to his wife, one that is not prepared or expected and it absolutely wrecks the man. Poe makes it clear in writing that the narrator loves his wife unconditionally, and this turn of events shifts the story somewhat into an even darker region of tale that displays the narrators current state of distress and madness. It is an act much more cruel and evil than the hanging of the cat.

Narrator knows he must take care of the body and dispose of it at once. He thinks of cutting it into fragments and pieces, much like in another story of Poe's, "The Tell-Tale Heart." Yet, instead of chopping his wife to bits to get rid of her body the narrator places his wife in the cellar and walls her body so that nobody finds her and suspects him. He plants the evidence behind the suitable spot in the chimney and cleans everything up in a way that no clue as to what happened may be realized by anyone, and buries the axe he used to split the head of his wife. After all of this, the narrator decides to kill the accursed cat and be done with it's miserable existence at once, yet to his surprise the cat is nowhere to be found and has escaped without so much as a trace. After several days he decides the monster that was the cat has disappeared to forever be amiss and will not return.

Here he is able to sleep properly and safely in his bed, without a shred of remorse or guilt despite what he has done in days prior. This change in attitude is different from what and how his feelings were at the beginning of the story. It is a huge leap from the domestic man who loved animals and his fellows he once was.

Four days after the murder he committed a patrol of police officers suddenly and unusually show up in his home to search and inspect the property. Much like in “ The Tell-Tale Heart” here we see that the narrator is confident that he left no evidence, not even one bit. He believes throughly that nothing can give him away, as he did a thorough job of hiding his tracks. There is nothing that alerts the police to come searching the place, yet there they are, mysteriously and suddenly just like in “ The Tell-Tale Heart.”

Be that as it may, while the police were searching he knocks on the wall that keep the corpse of his wife hidden so heavily with a mad, careless courage that to his immediate fright and terror a muffled sound is heard from the other side, answering his rapping with an inhuman and animalistic howl and wailing shriek, half cry and half scream. The sound comes as if it can only come from several affixed throats of the hell-bound and from the creatures of the nether that inflict their horrendous punishment.

Officers start to rip the bricks apart at once and toss them aside to remove the brick wall with haste. They discover the putrid, decaying remains of the narrator’s wife. What they see other than that and is of great note, however, is the cat the narrator describes as, “ hideous beast whose craft had seduced me into murder . . . I had walled the monster up within the tomb.” In his blindness, the very creature, or perhaps it’s resurrection, or an entirely different one, or even the divine retribution in the form of an animal was what gave away his horrendous deed. In the end we see that the narrator, commenting on his own state of affairs admits himself to the insanity he denied so feverishly at the introduction of the tale.