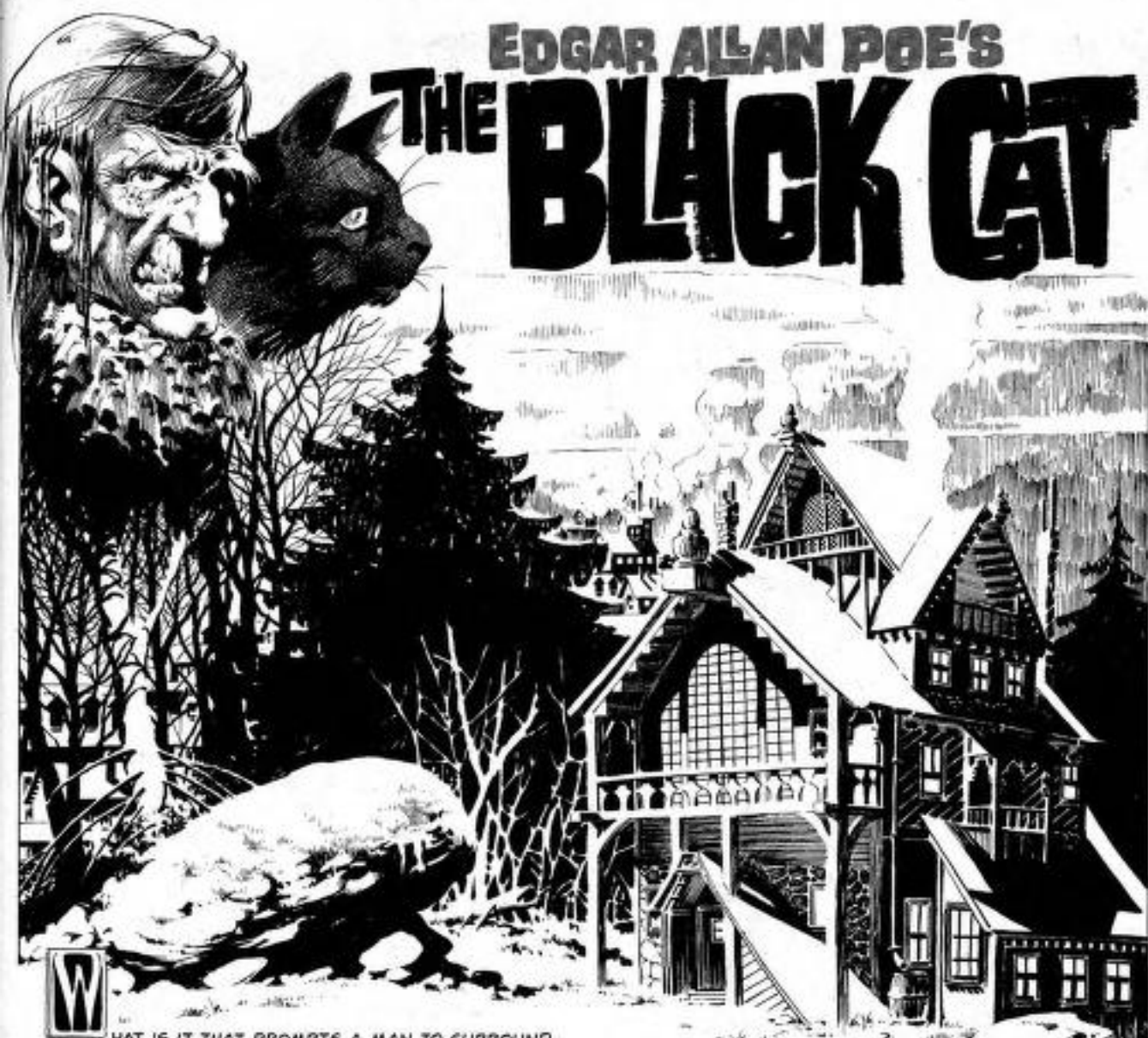


EDGAR ALLAN POE'S THE BLACK CAT



W

HAT IS IT THAT PROMPTS A MAN TO SURROUND HIMSELF WITH *BEAST-FOLK*? PERHAPS IT IS A NEED TO REAFFIRM HIS *SUPERIORITY*... PERHAPS AS A REMINDER OF HIS BESTIAL ORIGINS...

...WE LIVED, MY WIFE AND I, FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS, IN A QUIET TOWN IN THE MOUNTAINS... HERE, WE LOVED AND CARED FOR OUR MENAGERIE ...

WRIGHTSON



...RABBITS, BIRDS, GOLD-FISH... WE LOVED THEM ALL WITH AN *ARDOR* THAT ONLY THE TRUE *ANIMAL LOVER* COULD UNDERSTAND...

...AND OUR FAVORITE, OF ALL OUR PETS, WAS *PLUTO*, A FINE, LARGE, HANDSOME *BLACK CAT*...

...WE LOVED THE CAT COMPLETELY,
AND, AS TIME WORE ON, HE SEEMED
TO RETURN OUR AFFECTION...



...WE TOOK A PARTICULAR
LIKING TO ME, MAKING
MY LAP HIS PERMANENT
THRONE...



...EVEN FOLLOWING ME
THROUGH THE STREETS
ON MY DAILY WALKS...



... AT FIRST, I WELCOMED HIS CONSTANT PRESENCE, AND WE BECAME A FAMILIAR SIGHT AT THE TAVERNS I WAS WONT TO FREQUENT. THEN, LITTLE BY LITTLE, MY BLACK COMPANION BEGAN TO GRATE ON MY NERVES... I FOUND MYSELF TURNING AWAY WHEN I REALIZED HIS EYES WERE UPON ME... I IGNORED HIS PURRS AND TREMBLED WITH DISGUST AT HIS LOATHSOME CARESSES...



...BEFORE LONG, MY CAREFUL
AVOIDANCE TURNED TO DREAD
LOATHING, AND FINALLY...

KEEP AWAY
FROM ME...
FILTHY BEAST!



...TO OUTHATE!

KEEP AWAY
DAMN YOU!





... THEN, ONE NIGHT, FEELING UNUSUALLY *KINDLY*, DUE, NO DOUBT, TO THE GREAT QUANTITIES OF *WINE* I'D CONSUMED...

... HERE, KITTY, KITTY, KITTY...



... THE CAT SEEMED TO *SENSE* MY INTOXICATION AND *AVOIDED* MY APPROACHES...

... HERE, *PLUTO*... COME, BOY... **AGGHHH!**

... THE BLACK DEVIL *BIT* ME...



... IN A DRUNKEN *RAGE*, I SNATCHED THE BEAST UP, AND TOOK A *PEN-KNIFE* FROM MY POCKET...

... FILTHY, LOATHSOME *MONSTER!* I'LL *TEACH* YOU...



... AND CUT ITS *EYE* OUT!

... AT FIRST, MY INSANE ACTION
REVOLTED ME, AND I SANK INTO THE
DEEPEST OF *DESPAIR* AND *REMORSE*...



... BUT, AT LENGTH, AS THE CAT
RECOVERED, AN ICY RAGE
BEGAN TO BURN IN MY HEART...



... FOR, THE *BEAST*, AS MIGHT WELL BE EXPECTED, NOW CAREFULLY *AVOIDED* ME... THIS THING THAT ONCE HAD
LOVED ME, ITS *MASTER* AND *PROTECTOR*, NOW SHRANK AWAY AS FROM A *LEPER*! MY *REMORSE* AND MY
HATRED BEGAN TO *BOIL*... TO *BLEED* INTO ONE ANOTHER... GIVING BIRTH TO A FINELY DEVELOPED SPIRIT
OF *PERVERSENESS*... I MISSED NO OPPORTUNITY TO *TEASE* AND *TAUNT* THE DREAD CREATURE... HIS VERY
PRESENCE *GOADED* ME INTO EVERY CONCEIVABLE *ATROCITY*...



... THEN, ONE MORNING, I
SLIPPED A *NOOSE* ABOUT
ITS NECK, AND WITH *TEARS*
STREAMING FROM MY EYES,
HUNG IT FROM THE LIMB
OF A TREE...



... THAT VERY NIGHT, I WAS
ROUSED FROM SLEEP BY CRIES
OF **FIRE! FIRE!**



... IT WAS ONLY WITH THE GREATEST
DIFFICULTY THAT WE **ESCAPED...**



... TO STAND IN THE
CHILL OF MIDNIGHT AND
WATCH OUR HOPES, OUR
DREAMS, OUR LIVES
DIE IN THE VIOLENT
CONFLAGATION...



... ON THE MORNING
FOLLOWING THE
BLAZE, I VISITED THE
STILL-SMOULDERING
RUINS OF THE
HOUSE ...



... ON THE ONE REMAINING
WALL, AS IF CARVED IN **BAS-**
RELIEF, WAS THE IMAGE
OF A **GIGANTIC CAT**, PERFECT
TO THE **TINIEST** DETAIL ...

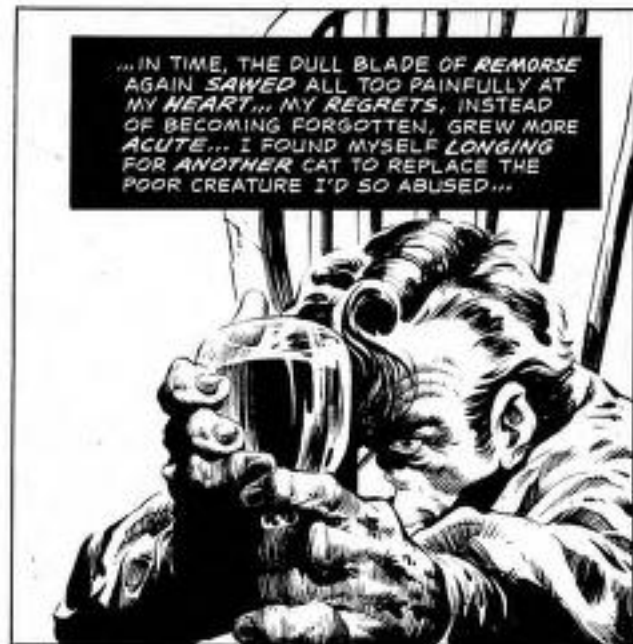
... THERE WAS A
ROPE AROUND THE
CREATURE'S **NECK...**



... SO AFFECTED WAS I BY THESE EVENTS, THAT I BEGAN TO LOSE MYSELF MORE AND MORE TO THE DUBIOUS COMFORT AND SOLACE OF LIQUOR...



... IN TIME, THE DULL BLADE OF REMORSE AGAIN SAWED ALL TOO PAINFULLY AT MY HEART... MY REGRETS, INSTEAD OF BECOMING FORGOTTEN, GREW MORE ACUTE... I FOUND MYSELF LONGING FOR ANOTHER CAT TO REPLACE THE POOR CREATURE I'D SO ABUSED...



... AND THEN, ONE NIGHT, IN A DIRTY, SMOKE-FILLED TAVERN, I FOUND IT!



... NO ONE LAID CLAIM TO THE ANIMAL, AND WITH A LITTLE COAXING, IT FOLLOWED ME HOME...



... IT WASN'T TILL THE FOLLOWING DAY THAT I DISCOVERED THAT THE BEAST HAD BUT ONE EYE!



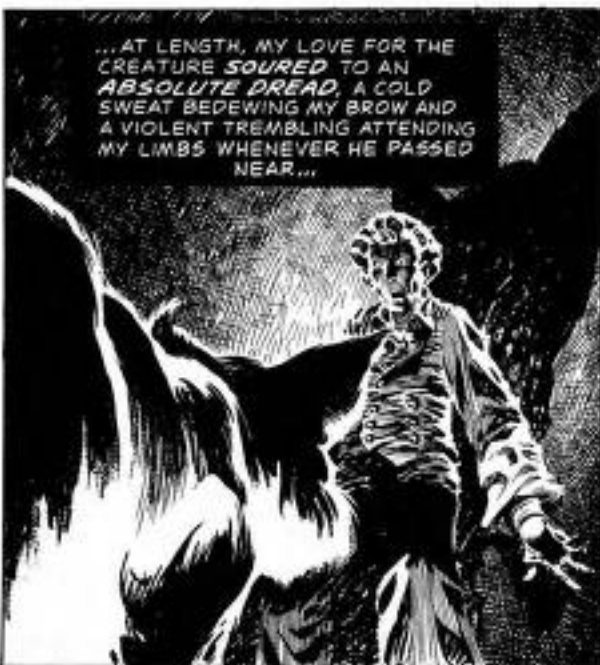
... WE QUICKLY BECAME THE **BEST** OF FRIENDS... OUR MUTUAL AFFECTION SEEMED A TOUCH OF WELCOME **WARMTH** IN OUR NEW HOUSE, AND FOR A WHILE, AT LEAST, ALL BECAME AS HAPPY AS BEFORE...



... THEN, TO MY **SHAME** AND **HORROR**, THE BEAST BEGAN TO AFFECT ME **ADVERSELY**... HE TOOK TO PURRING INCESSENTLY, RUBBING AT MY LEGS, EVEN FASTENING HIS **CLAWS** IN MY CLOTHING AND CLAMBERING UP TO COVER MY FACE WITH HIS LOATHSOME MEWS AND LAPPINGS...



... AT LENGTH, MY LOVE FOR THE CREATURE **SOURD** TO AN **ABSOLUTE DREAD**, A COLD SWEAT BEDEWING MY BROW AND A VIOLENT TREMBLING ATTENDING MY LIMBS WHENEVER HE PASSED NEAR...



... AND, TO **HEIGHTEN** MY LOATHING OF THE BEAST WAS THE CONTRAST OF THE SPECTACLE OF MY WIFE'S **BOUNDLESS AFFECTION** FOR IT... THE THOUGHT THAT SHE COULD LOVE SO FREELY THE THING WHICH WAS **DESTROYING** MY SOUL...



... THEN ONE DAY, MY WIFE
ASKED ME TO ACCOMPANY
HER TO THE CELLAR ON
SOME ERRAND...



... HALFWAY DOWN THE STAIRS,
THE CAT, IN WALKING WITH ME,
IN AND OUT, BETWEEN MY
FEET, CAUGHT ITS TAIL
UNDER MY SHOE, AND IN JUMPING,
THREW ME HEAVILY TO THE FLOOR...



... UPON RECOVERING
MYSELF, MY HAND FELL
UPON AN AXE, WHICH I
IMMEDIATELY RAISED
TO CHOP THE DAMNED
BEAST INTO OBLIVION...



... MY WIFE, HOWEVER,
INTERVENED, THROWING
A PROTECTIVE ARM ABOUT
THE ANIMAL ...





... IN A RAGE MORE THAN DEMONIAL, I ALTERED MY AIM, AND BURIED THE AXE IN HER BRAIN...



... THIS HIDEOUS MURDER ACCOMPLISHED, I SET MYSELF FORTHWITH, AND WITH ENTIRE DELIBERATION, TO THE TASK OF CONCEALING THE BODY...

...THERE WAS A SHALLOW PROJECTION ON ONE WALL, A FALSE CHIMNEY, PERHAPS, THAT HAD BEEN FILLED IN AND MADE TO RESEMBLE THE REST OF THE CELLAR...



...WITH A CROW BAR, I BROKE AWAY THE PLASTER AND REMOVED THE LOOSELY-FITTED BRICKS...



...UNTIL I HAD EXCAVATED A LARGE HOLE...



...WITH GREAT DIFFICULTY, I DRAGGED THE BODY TO THE WALL AND SECURED IT WITHIN THE TOMB. THEN, MIXING A TUBFUL OF MORTAR, PROCEEDED TO LAY THE BRICKS BACK IN PLACE...



... IN SEVERAL HOURS, THE WORK WAS DONE, FRESH PLASTER SPREAD, AND EVERYTHING AGAIN AS IT WAS...



... OF THE CAT, THERE WAS NO SIGN...
THE BEAST MUST HAVE FLED IN TERROR
AT MY VIOLENCE...
... FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MONTHS,
I SLEPT SOUNDLY...



...AFTER FOUR DAYS, THE
POLICE CAME TO
INSPECT THE PREMISES...

... THEY SUBJECTED THE ENTIRE HOUSE TO EVERY
MANNER OF RIGOROUS INVESTIGATION, AND WHEN
THEY, AT LAST, HAD FINISHED AND WERE ABOUT TO
LEAVE, THE TRIUMPH IN MY HEART WAS TOO STRONG
TO BE RESTRAINED...



... GENTLEMEN...

... I
DELIGHT IN
HAVING ALLAYED
YOUR SUSPICIONS...
I WISH YOU
WELL...



... BYE THE BYE,
GENTLEMEN, THIS...
THIS IS A VERY
WELL CONSTRUCTED
HOUSE...



I MIGHT SAY
AN EXCELLENTLY
CONSTRUCTED HOUSE
... THESE WALLS...



... A SCREAM
CAME FROM BE-
HIND THE WALL...

...IN AN *INSTANT*, THEY WERE AT THE WALL, TEARING AT THE *PLASTER*, PRYING LOOSE THE *BRICKS*...



...I HAD WALLED THE MONSTER UP WITHIN THE TOMB...

THE END