



The Black Cat

By Edgar Allan Poe

جامعة ساوة

كلية التربية

قسم اللغة الانكليزية

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CHARACTERS

- The story focuses on a limited, yet intense, cast.
- **The Narrator/Protagonist:** An unnamed, highly unreliable narrator. He begins as a gentle, animal-loving man, but his addiction to alcohol transforms him into a violent and perverse individual, eventually a murderer. His descent into madness and guilt drives the entire story.
- **The Wife:** Described as "having that humanity of feeling," she is a loyal, kind, and passive figure who becomes a victim of the narrator's depravity.
- **Pluto (The First Black Cat):** The narrator's favorite pet, whose namesake is the Roman god of the Underworld. His rejection of the narrator after the initial abuse (blinding) triggers the narrator's perverse urge to commit violence, leading to his hanging. He symbolizes the narrator's fading morality.
- **The Second Black Cat:** Found by the narrator, this cat is nearly identical to Pluto but has a distinctive white patch that slowly takes the shape of a gallows. It serves as a physical and psychological embodiment of the narrator's guilt and foreshadows his ultimate fate (execution).

PLOT

- The plot follows a classic dramatic structure, detailing the narrator's irreversible decline.
- **Exposition:** The narrator introduces himself as a formerly kind man who had a great love for animals, including his black cat, Pluto. He reveals his alcoholism and pending execution.
- **Rising Action:**
 - The narrator's increasing violence due to alcohol.
 - He mutilates Pluto by cutting out one of its eyes.
 - Driven by "perverseness," he hangs Pluto.
 - His house burns down, leaving only a wall with the bas-relief image of a hanged cat.
 - He finds the second, similar black cat.
 - The white patch on the second cat's chest gradually forms the shape of a gallows.

PLOT

- **Climax:** In a fit of rage, the narrator attempts to kill the second cat with an axe but is prevented by his wife. He turns the weapon on her and murders her instead.
- **Falling Action:** The narrator walls up his wife's body in the cellar, believing he has successfully concealed his crime and that the cat has fled.
- **Resolution (Denouement):** The police arrive to search the premises. The narrator, in his overconfidence, raps on the wall to boast of its sturdy construction. A terrifying wail issues from behind the wall, revealing his wife's corpse and the second cat, which he had accidentally sealed in with her. The narrator is brought to justice.

POINT OF VIEW

- **First-Person Narrative:** The story is told entirely from the perspective of the unnamed main character ("I"). This technique is crucial for a tale of psychological horror, as it plunges the reader directly into the narrator's decaying mind.
- **Unreliable Narrator:** Because the narrator is insane, alcoholic, and confessing his crimes to justify himself, his account is heavily biased and cannot be fully trusted. This makes the reader question the reality of events (is the cat truly supernatural, or is it a hallucination brought on by his madness?).

THEMES

- The central messages or ideas explored in the story include:
- **Psychological Deterioration/Insanity:** The story is a deep dive into a man's complete moral and mental collapse, driven by addiction and guilt.
- **Perverseness:** Poe explores the human tendency to commit acts of evil solely because they know they should not, an impulse the narrator attributes to the "unfathomable longing of the soul to vex itself."
- **Guilt and Justice:** The second cat serves as a relentless symbol of the narrator's guilt, which ultimately leads to his downfall and the revelation of his crime, bringing about justice.
- **Superstition:** The black cat is tied to folklore and superstition (the wife's remark that all black cats are witches), which the narrator uses to explain away his own demonic impulses.