

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 ...

ORIGHTSON



... 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*...



... 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...







... 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 **LEMB** 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 ...





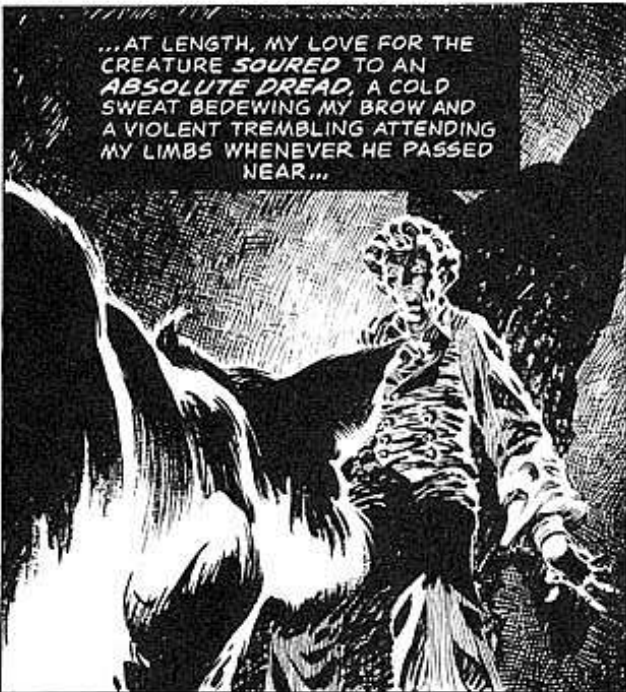
...WE QUICKLY BECAME THE **BEST** OF FRIENDS... OUR MUTUAL AFFECTION SEEMED A TOUCH OF WELCOME **WARMTH** IN OUR NEW HOUSE, AND FOR A WHILE, AT LEAST, ALL BECAME AS HAPPY AS BEFORE...



...THEN, TO MY **SHAME** AND **HORROR**, THE BEAST BEGAN TO AFFECT ME **ADVERSELY**... HE TOOK TO PURRRING INCESSANTLY, 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**ED 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...



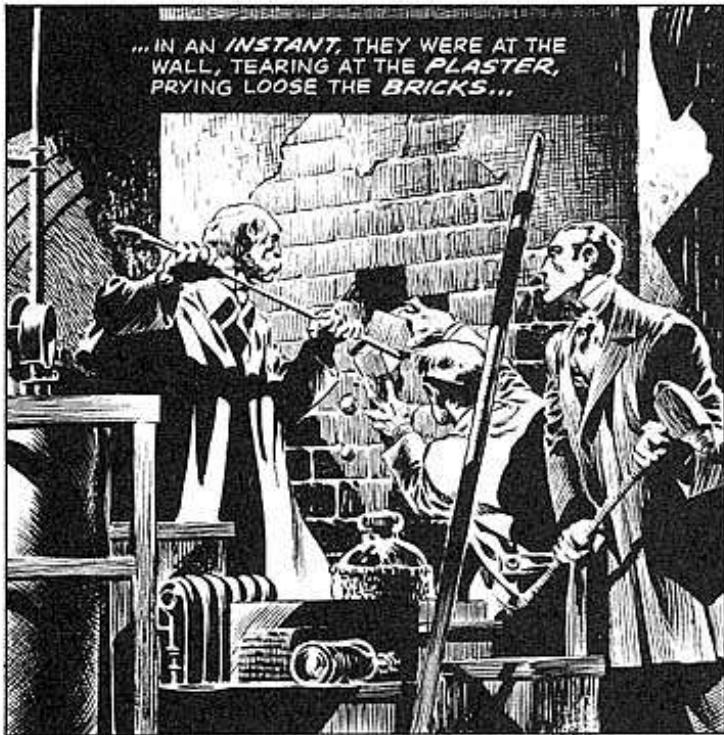
I MIGHT SAY
AN EXCELLENTLY
CONSTRUCTED HOUSE
... THESE WALLS...

WHUMP



... 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