

## The Black Cat (SEMPLOCATO)

You are not going to believe this story. But it is a true story, as true as I sit here writing it – as true as I will die in the morning. Yes, this story ends with *my* end, with my death tomorrow.

I have always been a kind and loving person – everyone will tell you this. They will also tell you that I have always loved animals more than anything. When I was a little boy, my family always had many different animals round the house. As I grew up, I spent most of my time with them, giving them their food and cleaning them.

I married when I was very young, and I was happy to find that my wife loved all of our animal friends as much as I did. She bought us the most beautiful animals. We had all sorts of birds, gold fish, a fine dog and a *cat*.

The cat was a very large and beautiful animal. He was black, black all over, and *very* intelligent. He was so intelligent that my wife often laughed about what some people believe; some people believe that all black cats are evil, enemies in a cat's body.

Pluto – this was the cat's name – was my favourite. It was always I who gave him his food, and he followed me everywhere. I often had to stop him from following me through the streets! For years, he and I lived happily together, the best of friends.

But during those years I was slowly changing. It was that evil enemy of Man called *Drink* who was changing me. I was not the kind, loving person people knew before. I grew more and more selfish. I was often suddenly angry about unimportant things. I began to use bad language, most of all with my

## The Black Cat (ORIGINAL)

FOR THE MOST wild yet most homely narrative which I am about to pen, 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 to-morrow I die, and to-day I would unburden my soul. My immediate purpose is to place before the world, plainly, succinctly, and without comment, a series of mere household events. In their consequences, these events have terrified—have tortured—have destroyed me. Yet I will not attempt to expound them. To me, they have presented little but horror—to many they will seem less terrible than *baroques*. Hereafter, perhaps, some intellect may be found which will reduce my phantasm to the commonplace—some intellect more calm, more logical, and far less excitable than my own, 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 noted for the docility and humanity of my disposition. My tenderness of heart was even so conspicuous as to make me the jest of my companions. 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. To those who have cherished an affection for a faithful and sagacious dog, I need hardly be at the trouble of explaining the nature or the intensity of the gratification thus derivable. There is something in the unselfish and self-sacrificing love of a brute, which goes directly to the heart of him who has had frequent occasion to