Introduction to Psychology Essay

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1. **Summary**

Edgar Ellen Poe's short story The Black Cat has been written in first-person narrative. The narrator tells his tender relationship with a black cat Pluto. Pluto is his dearer creature than any other person in his house. He beats his wife and children while he is drunk, but he does never get angry over Pluto. One night, he comes back from the bar and notices Pluto ignoring him. He cannot tolerate this indifference and snatches out the cat's eye. Its wound recovers, but it does not give up ignoring him, he hangs the cat in fury. His house burns down suddenly and becomes desperate. One more cat-like Pluto encounters him coincidently and gets attached to him. It reminds him of Pluto. She is black like Pluto but has a white gallows symbol on its chest that reminds him of how he hanged Pluto. He cannot endure the second cat's presence and plans to kill it too. His wife resists his act and gets killed by his knife. He hides her corpse behind a secret wall. Police visit him enquiring about the sudden disappearance of his wife and the cat helps the police to find the corpse. Interestingly, he did not know that he had hidden the cat with his wife's corpse unknowingly.

1. **Identified Course Competency**

The narrator of the story has *Psychobiological Disorder* of being too self-centered that he beats his wife and all his pets except Pluto when he finds them opposite to his expectations while dealing with him. He stays drunk all the time and spends a large amount of his time at a bar. His health is deteriorating and he is unable to control his actions and mood swings. He is too self-haunted that he does not spare an animal (Pluto) when it shows (according to the narrator) indifference to him. He kills his dearest Pluto and then kills his wife while attempting to kill another cat. He admits that his behavior changed after a particular age as he had been living a normal life before that. It could be the result of some socio-economic pressure that he lost his original normal self.

1. **Explicit Psychological Process**

The narrator tells his autobiography after describing his wish to commit suicide. He reveals his profound interest in having pets and taking care of them. One of his pets is his dearest: Pluto. “I was especially fond of animals, and was indulged by my parents with a great variety of pets”, He notes. He mentions his happy life before and after marriage. He praises his wife being a perfect soul mate, and recalls Pluto in these words: “Pluto—this was the cat’s name—was my favorite pet and playmate”. Then he says that unnoticeably his attitude started transforming which led to the all destruction described in the first paragraph.

1. **Implicit Psychological Process**

Apparently, the story is about the love-hate relationship between a cat (Pluto) and the narrator, but the cause of sudden change in his behavior is unknown. Edgar Ellen Poe's biography is much similar to the life of the narrator in this story. Poe was also an alcoholic because of socio-economic setbacks. He had followers and friends in society but his close relationship was with his wife Virginia who was 13 years younger than him. He used to call her the only consolation in his life. His wife died of tuberculosis when she was 24. She was on the deathbed when this story was published. Viktor Frankl says that a human being loses senses when s/he realizes that s/he has no meaning in life. Poe was suffering because he had no definite meaning to live; his beloved was dying and he had no fortune to live a prosperous life. His wife was caring until she fell to her deathbed. Pluto’s sudden indifference perhaps indicates Virginia’s unavailability to console Poe in depression.

1. **Relationship to My Life**

This story really relates to my life because I also had a tender relationship with my pet that was gifted to me by my ex-fiancée. This was the first love affair when I met my new neighbor. She had a cute baby cat with long white hair. That cat was more beautiful when in her hands. She gifted me that cat on my insistence. We had a great time and we planned to marry. One day, she suddenly told me that she is going to shift Europe permanently with her mom. I do not know the reason but I much by that sudden and unexpected decision of Kathy. I could not control myself and started alcoholism. Looking at the cat was painful then. I punched the cat and dragged out of my home. My parents were shocked because of my sudden alcoholism. The world appeared as hell to me. Fortunately, I was admitted to hospital where I recovered after many therapies and psychological treatments. Now I feel that that was not I, but after reading Poe's story, I realized that a man can be affected anytime by apparently minor issues. But those issues can cause catastrophe for the person.

1. **Quotes**

Viktor Frankl says:

1. When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves.
2. I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: The salvation of man is through love and in love.
3. Live as if you were living a second time, and as though you had acted wrongly the first time.

**Response:**

Meaning in life is a very important thing to live a happy life. Sometimes, we face some incidents in life that leave our way foggy and we do not know how to behave after that incident. I have learned that not a single incident in our life is the last until our heartbeat stops. Therefore, we should live every moment with fresh breath and we should not lose our senses for one or two naughty incident(s) in our life.

**References**

Frankl, V. E. (1985). *Man's search for meaning*. Simon and Schuster.

Matheson, T. J. (1986). Poe's" The Black Cat" as a Critique of Temperance Literature. *Mosaic*, *19*(3), 69.