Paulina Jakimowicz

The Black Cat Takes the Stand

Your Honor, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, the prosecution and the defense, allow me to partake in this brief moment of honesty. It seems to me that you are surprised to see a cat talk. Do not ask me by which means I am capable of human speech – I do not know. You should rather ask how it is that you can hear me and understand me. I am not a witch, I assure you. If you consider that, then perhaps you are as mad as the defendant.

I knew the one you called Pluto. I met him in a human garden. He had a missing eye, which I recognized easily as the result of a violent act of a man, as I am missing an eye myself. One day, when I came into the garden, I witnessed what had become of my sweet friend. I saw his limp body swaying in the wind. A brutal act, but of no concern to the human race. Killing one of us on a whim is not a murder, but an eccentricity, at most it is called alarming by the more empathetic of you. A stepping stone in becoming a murderer, but not the thing immediately making you one. And because of this, I stand here today before you to confess.

I want it to be known, as I say it loud and clear for all those gathered here in this strange time when they can hear my voice: I set fire to that wretched house.

Was it a mere coincidence or a force of will? I am sure you will decide. Maybe it was just some terrible luck that my paw found its way to the lit lantern that was left unattended for a moment on the table by the back door of the house. Perhaps, as I pushed it, it was for the common amusement of a bored feline. An unknown spirit is this perversion, I must admit. It seems like every species has its own.

I fled before the flames devoured the house. I did it all, either with thought or by instinct, but who's to say? Am I incapable of planning a revenge, or is it that the lamp falling was too improbable to happen without intent? If you ask me, what is even more impossible is the accusation that it was I who pushed that man to kill his wife, for I have never seen a murderer in need of encouragement. For the second killing, I will let you decide his fate. For the first, I made my verdict. But you, Your Honor, have no choice but to let me go.

There are no crimes between animals and men. That is my curse and my delight.



Wiktoria Szamotulska