



Chapter 19

Blind Cat and Me

Let me share something personal, unrelated to Marakos but still a significant event in my life.

Our family once had a male cat named "Shide." This wasn't related to the Zen poet Hanshan, popular among American hippies at the time, but simply because we picked him up off the street. This story spans over twelve years and is well-known to many, so I can't help but document it in a chapter.

At that time, our household of four was relatively peaceful. My son had just completed his military service and found a suitable job. My wife was focused on her traditional Chinese painting of flowers and birds, and my daughter had just turned twenty. This was during the 67th year of the Republic of China (1978). One day, my daughter came home holding a tiny kitten. Both my wife and I were against keeping a cat, given we lived in an apartment where pets were inconvenient, even if they didn't need to be taken out for

walks. My daughter pleaded, saying the kitten could be her twentieth birthday gift. With that said, who could refuse? Thus, our family of four became five, albeit adding only a tiny member, which nonetheless brought considerable trouble.

Shide wasn't always a troublemaker; he was initially very likable. He solved his bathroom issues with a litter box and took care of his food and water needs by himself. Whether it was eating or eliminating, he would clean up after himself, either by

grooming or by covering his waste in the litter box — truly living up to the phrase "cleanliness is next to godliness." He played with toy balls, mimicking hunting techniques in the wild, which made me hopeful he would grow up capable of catching pests and maintaining some order.

However, it wasn't long before his behavior changed. It started with him knocking over a drinking cup, which required a significant effort to clean up. Not long after, he stood opposite the litter box and

began yowling loudly. I thought he had seen something alarming but found nothing unusual — it was just that he was urgently in need of a bathroom. I picked him up by the neck and put him in the litter box, where he stopped yelling, squatted, and did his business, covering it with litter — scattering it around the box this time.

For those who've never owned a cat, the gravity of this situation might not be apparent. When my daughter returned home from work, I explained the issue to her. Her

immediate reaction was a shocked exclamation:

"Could Shide be blind?"

Unfortunately, she was right. Since my daughter had to work, it fell on me to take Shide to the nearest pet hospital the next day. I discovered that pets also need detailed medical records, even more comprehensive than those for humans. Besides standard details like address, phone number, name, and sex, there was a "breed" section. Shide, being a typical tabby with different colors on his

ears, paws, and tail, wasn't from any notable lineage, and it felt incorrect to label him simply as a "domestic cat." So, I wrote "Chinese cat."

The vet, upon seeing this, didn't look at Shide but instead asked me with a peculiar expression:

"How do you know he's a Chinese cat?"

I had no idea how to respond, stammering:

"My daughter found him by a trash pile, so I guess he's a

stray."

"You can't use 'Chinese cat,' much less 'stray cat,'" he said, crossing out "Chinese" and writing "mixed breed." This was when I learned that domestic cats and dogs couldn't be classified as such but rather as "mixed breed."

The vet then asked, "What's wrong with him?"

"He's blind," I replied.

The vet withdrew his hand from petting Shide and looked at me as if I were an alien,

"How do you know he's blind?
Can cats go blind?"

How peculiar — if humans can go blind, why can't cats?
Besides, determining whether a cat is blind or not should be the vet's responsibility, shouldn't it?

"You could test his eyesight," I suggested.

The vet stood up immediately. Looking around, I didn't see any eye test charts, maybe he had a special method for testing animals' vision? But his

straightforward response was,

"Take him back home; I don't know if he's blind."

"Shouldn't you prescribe some eye medication or something? If left like this, he might stumble around blindly, and something could happen."

The vet paused, now sagely scrutinizing me as if determining what my problem was, saying,

"You might want to see an ophthalmologist for him, or perhaps even a psychiatrist."

With that, he dismissed me.

And so, we ended up with a blind cat.

Who would have thought having a blind cat could be such news? Our friends and acquaintances, even our neighbors, knew about it, some of whom brought their children and the children's friends to see the cat.

Surprisingly, the blind cat cooperated. Visitors always got to see him. He loved sitting on the TV, striking a pose. People unaware of the situation

couldn't tell he was blind and wouldn't know we put him there. Yet, the cat believed that the people gathered were watching him, not the TV drama — in his mind, he was the star, not the television.

In our house, with the youngest person being over twenty, dealing with the unintended fame brought by having a blind cat wasn't something anyone enjoyed. For me, it was downright painful. For a time, I hated the cat, feeling like strangling him, though that wouldn't get my daughter's consent, and

practically, it was impossible. Desperately, I devised my psychological remedy. Incidentally, a colleague with strong drawing skills occasionally doodled creative cartoons. So, one day, chatting at work, I suggested,

"Brother Zhan, how about we write a book together?"

His response was surprisingly enthusiastic, asking:

"What kind of book? If it's about weather or stars, count me in. I've always wanted to work on something scientific. I

think Brother Feng's books would be even better with good illustrations..."

"No, it's unrelated to science. I want to write a book titled..." At this point, I hadn't thought of a title yet.

What to do? How could I reveal I was just seeking psychological relief? After pondering, I finally told him:

"The title is '99 Ways to Hang a Cat.' What do you think of the title?"

Though Brother Zhan was

about forty, the expression on his face seemed like that of a fourteen-year-old boy seeing a thirty-year-old woman naked for the first time — the title "99 Ways to Hang a Cat" had such a shocking effect.

Consequently, I decided to go with that and start writing, mainly to achieve inner balance. I patted Brother Zhan's shoulder to calm him and said:

"Alright, let's settle on that—we'll each prepare our parts."

In my silent curses not just

directed at the blind cat but at all the cats in the world. Cats are truly bizarre, arrogant, and inexplicable creatures, part of the comedy and tragedy of our lives. In my planned book, each chapter would have three major sections:

Part One: The reasons why it is necessary to hang the cat to death. There are many reasons, definitely more than ninety-nine.

Part Two: The cat must be slowly tortured before it is allowed to die, and only "hanging" methods can be

used—no other means allowed. This is a matter of principle; despite the extra effort required, it must be adhered to.

Part Three: Draw accompanying illustrations to match the content.

During those days, I endured the stench of cleaning the litter box while planning the book's contents. Life was relatively normal because I realized that one must wholeheartedly accept reality to stay grounded. Reality is harsh and beyond human change. Once

you are immersed in it, you must first learn to accept it; everything else can be dealt with later.

Continuous self-suggestion can indeed make someone believe in so-called truths that don't even exist. In my view, if the world allows capital punishment by hanging, then the cat should be the first to be hanged. Cats are hypocritical creatures. They snuggle up to you, making you think they need you. But at the slightest hint of danger, they will escape to protect themselves, clearly not regarding you at all. Cats

pose as philosophers, sitting quietly as if in deep thought, making you believe they're pondering profound truths, but in reality, they are not. Even if they were, they wouldn't share it with you, for they only conclude that "humans are easily deceived creatures." Could they really say that?

Cats always perceive themselves as stars, believing that wherever they go or sit, cameras follow. They position themselves elegantly, rarely letting you see them in embarrassing moments, out of fear you might capture an

unflattering photo that could tarnish their reputation.

If you carefully observe a cat's eyes, you will see that they are cold and heartless, often looking at you with disdain, making you feel utterly insignificant. Wherever the cat goes, it acts as if everything around it—the door, the table, the vase, the ashtray, even the tassel on the lampshade—is there for it. Meanwhile, the men, women, elderly, and children around, all towering over it, are nothing but its attendants and servants, who are acknowledged only when

the cat needs something. Compare this to dogs owned by our neighbors, who can't wag their tails enough to please their owners. Cats, on the other hand, are not just indifferent; they are utterly dismissive.

In summary, my book plans nearly reached ninety-nine ways, and "99 Ways to Hang a Cat" was about to be penned when Shide died in 1990. My daughter cried over his sudden death.

As for me, I couldn't always pretend otherwise. Honestly, I

too felt some regret, for with a few more chapters, my book would have been completed. Shide's sudden death left me without the inspiration to continue creating the content. The book title remained, but any attempt to write the content felt like lifting a thousand-pound pen—I simply couldn't move it.

So how could I not remember the blind cat? How could I not remember the blind cat?