El Diablo

Donald T. McCoy

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El Diablo

Abstract
In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"As El Diablo sailed gracefully over the back fence, he took a glance over his shoulder at Sam, who was befuddled. If Sam were capable of detecting the various expressions on Diablo's face, he would have noticed that the most prominent feature was a roguish grin, smeared from ear to ear. As Diablo's feet touched the grass on the other side, his mind raced with ideas as to how he would enjoy his newfound freedom. Escaping was simple this morning. The humans must have been up too late watching television--typical. He would probably stop by to occasionally look in on them, from afar, until he decided to actually come home. Oh, he was planning to return perhaps he wasn't human, but he wasn't stupid either; he knew which side his bread was buttered on. He simply felt that he was due for a holiday."

Cover Page Footnote
"Third Prize Winner" Appeared in the issue: April 1998.
Third Prize Winner

El Diablo

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When it came right down to it, Diablo actually enjoyed living with Sam and Holly. They were affectionate, considerate, they fed him well and what's more they gave him a cool name. He could have been a Fido or a Rex, and that wouldn't be too dignified for a fine specimen of Great Dane such as himself. As much as he loved them, he was too sad to conclude that they probably wouldn't last together at the rate they were going. The big dog decided that he wouldn't worry about how he was going to save their relationship at that moment. He was on vacation. Of course, there was that one piece of business first.

Yes sir, Diablo was one lucky dog, and for a little while he would be the master of his own fate; at least to the extent that anyone else was of theirs. Actually, not only was he the master of his own fate on this fine morning, but also the master of the fate of Sam's and Holly's slime-ball mailman. Yeah, yeah, the dog is always the aggressor in
these altercations; anyone ever wonder why? No self-respecting dog can stand idly by and observe this rotund Postman violating his peoples’ privacy. It is against K-9 guild policy. Anyway, on numerous occasions Diablo had observed this particular parcel-jockey standing before the gates of the various houses in the neighborhood and taunting the resident dogs. This guy had a face that was fit for neither man nor beast. Diablo had wanted to lock horns with this son-of-a-bitch for some time now.

Diablo’s grudge was well founded. You see, ever since there has been a postal service (some say all the way back to the days of the pony express) there has been an unwritten code of conduct between Postmen and K-9s. When both parties follow this framework of mutual respect, each half gets their job done and nobody gets hurt. If one or the other of this unlikely pair violates the terms of mutual respect to which each is honor bound, there is great potential for disaster. Such is the situation that set Diablo at odds with this government derelict to begin with, a little over a year ago.

It was magazine day, and the Mailman was late. Diablo was cold, the snow that day was up to his elbows. He waited for a few minutes near the mailbox as usual, preparing to give the guy a deep, guttural growl. When his opposite finally arrived, he had Holly’s Cosmo in his pocket, and was holding an envelope up to the light of the sun, attempting to see what he could. As far as K-9s were concerned, this was worse than bad form. If a Postman violates the residents’ mail in the presence of the family dog, he may as well thumb his nose at the angry beast. In light of this, the huge dog forwent the growl and simply went berserk. As the Mail carrier departed that fateful morning, he let fly with a stinging ice-ball hastily composed of the filthy sludge that fell into the driveway from various car tires. The makeshift missile made a flat slap as it impacted on Diablo’s face. Holly never got her magazine. Nobody on the planet enjoys revenge like a dog, and today Diablo would have his.

His people were at work, eliminating the threat to his liberty that would be posed by hanging around the area in
their presence. Diablo went to a house at the end of the street so as not to associate this assault with his home; he hunkered down in a short hedgerow near the mailbox to await the arrival of his unsuspecting quarry. For a moment he was glad his coat was brown as opposed to having the black and white flecks of some of his brethren; definitely not suited for these cloak-and-dagger operations.

When the Mailman was still a house or two away, Diablo eyed him with a steely gaze, he could hardly keep himself from charging in and nailing the bastard. Patience.

He began to feel that he could wait no more; what was he, a cat? Did he need to Shanghai his prey to assure success? It's not as though he would need to contend with any resistance and his target certainly couldn’t outrun him. Okay, perhaps the mace was a little daunting, but so were Diablo’s colossal incisors!

What’s this? The Mailman paused in the drive of Diablo’s hideout. Did he sense the imminent danger to his very existence? Like a spooked white-tail perking up and sniffing for danger, the fat man in grey paused, squinted into the bushes, and stood still with his hand poised like a gunfighter’s over the little can on his belt.

“Come on pig-face, just a little closer,” Diablo thought to himself. Then he realized that he had been thinking out-loud—Dammit! He was always doing that! Not that the Mailman understood *pooch*, but he was a quick draw, and grabbed for his mace can. Diablo, even angrier now that he had blown his own cover, exploded into action.

It was all in slow motion. The searing stream and hiss from the nozzle of the can, the white flash of the teeth in the hazy sun; the two bellowing worriers locked in momentary combat. One screaming in rage, one screaming in mortal terror. Then it was over. The delinquent mailman’s aim was untrue, and he had missed El Diablo entirely. The huge dog, on the other hand, came away with the entire seat of grey-boy’s pants.
“Mission completed,” thought the hound, “...and now for some breakfast.”

--Donald T. McCoy Jr.