The Devil's Redhead
Author's Note

The Devil's Redhead takes as its background a time in the recent past, during which a continental shift took place in the drug world. Wildcat operators—who saw marijuana smuggling not so much as a criminal enterprise as a call to adventure, and many of whom were arguably a great deal less cynical, dangerous or depraved than the average hyper-capitalist—were driven from the scene both by the blunt-instrument efficiency of organized syndicates and a law enforcement strategy that targeted them as easy prey. The call to adventure thus became a run for cover, and many were imprisoned, their lives all but destroyed.

It was a turn of events made inevitable by the players themselves, of course, blind or wildly stupid in the face of the demons they were tempting. But they were also abetted cravenly or through willful ignorance by sanctimonious policymakers enthralled by—some might say addicted to—the symbolism of punishment. Add to that the corruption of money men who made the lucre go 'round, and a bureaucratic devotion to numbers that resonated eerily with the body counts of Viet Nam, and you have the principal outlines of the era—a time when a renegade variety of native wiliness didn't just dissolve in its own absurdities, it got soundly crushed by brutal, muscular greed on the one hand, and garden variety careerism on the other.

We inhabit the ruins of that era today. The mutts are gone. The wolves remain.

With this as a backdrop, the story concerns the particular devotion of two people to each other despite the separation, hardship and penury prison inflicted—the meaning of guilt, forgiveness and compassion in their lives—the application by Dan of the example of the Good Thief in his life, and by Shel that of the Good Samaritan (both parables premised on the virtuous outcast)—their near helplessness in the murderous milieu the drug world has become--and their recognition that, but for the force of their love for each other, their lives merely drift.

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