

My Enemy the Dog

Nemesis was a brute of a German shepherd who lived about a block down the road from where my wife and I resided in Quito, Ecuador. I love animals of all sorts...except for spiders and Nemesis. The Hound of the Baskervilles is an anemic poodle compared to this beast. A little broader head, and he would pass for a lion...and not a friendly one either.

This brute had a favorite game, which if he could speak, he would probably call “ambush the gringo.” His master’s house had a thick hedge with an iron fence tracing its interior length. There was a gap in the greenery at the corner, and the iron bars were spaced so the monster could lunge his head through with a deafening roar. Yes, roar, not bark. I didn’t know any dog could roar, but this one did.

Nemesis would hide behind the hedge, and when I would stroll around the corner, he would attack. Don’t tell me dogs cannot grin. A dog that can roar can also grin.

Why did I fail to anticipate these attacks? Matters exist more sublime to contemplate than the bad manners of overgrown house pets. So Nemesis slipped my mind most of the time...until the day I plotted revenge.

Nemesis was someone else’s property. I couldn’t harm him, but I had to devise an incident by which this dog would remember me with regret. Guilty musings skipped through my mind one evening as I strolled home, eating a bag of peanuts. Not *guilty* because of the dog but because of the peanuts. A certain female diet chairperson in my house had developed the notion that peanuts are fattening, so I was trying to finish off the bag before arriving home.

Taken again completely by surprise by Nemesis, reflex caused me to fling an entire handful of peanuts right in his face. The effect was astounding. He stopped attacking and said, “Woof?” And began lapping up the peanuts.

This gave me an idea. The next day I armed myself with some bread, since bread is cheaper than peanuts. A few seconds before Nemesis’ attack, I tossed some bread his way. No lunge. Just a feeding frenzy.

The following day Nemesis was not lurking behind the hedge. His paws were up on the railing, and his tail was wagging as I approached. No roaring. No lunging. I fed him some stale croissant, pondering a new dilemma: Before I left the country, how could I give a parting shot to a creature that imagined I was his friend?

I was coming out on the short end of this deal. Nemesis had a grin and a half-dozen stale croissants. All I got was the peculiar sensation that maybe I had stumbled on a novel strategy for dealing with enemies.

