

The Devil is in the Details

By Phillip Hall

Richard B. Winthrop sat in his comfortable chair and looked over a stack of papers. He finished reading the final page and smiled. He looked up at the tall, powerfully built man in front of him.

“I’m sorry son, but what’s your name again?” Winthrop asked.

“It’s Douglas, sir. Henry Douglas. I’m the head of the local UBC here in Glendale.”

“Well Mr. Douglas, this proposal, or should I say threat, is quite intriguing.”

“It’s not a threat, Mr. Winthrop.”

“Your offer is for the United Brotherhood of Carpenters to do one hundred percent of all labor for anything I build in this city. That is followed by the clause that if I use anyone who is not a member of the UBC then all work completed by the UBC up to that point would be, let me find it here.”

Winthrop flipped through the pages of the offer in front of him. He finally settled on the final page and ran his finger along it.

“Oh yes, here it is. It says if I use anyone outside of the UBC then all work completed up to that point would be destroyed and no monies would be returned. That sounds pretty threatening to me. You’re the fifth contractor to come by this week. Why even bother coming here today Mr. Douglas?”

“You’ve been buying up a lot of land and word is you’re intent on doing a lot of building on that land. Eighty-seven percent of carpenters and construction men in Glendale are members of the UBC.”

“What I intend to do with that land is my business. Oh, and I’ve heard of your little UBC group and I think you’re nothing more than the mafia of the construction world.”

“Mr. Winthrop, I assure you, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters is nothing like the mafia. I come before you offering our services and you insult us. This

may be how business is conducted in New York but I assure you sir, it is not how we do things in Glendale.”

Winthrop watched as Douglas grappled with his growing anger. He stood from his chair and leaned towards the large man. He stared directly into Douglas’ face and smiled.

“I don’t rightly care how you do business in Glendale. My intention isn’t to put money into this town. It’s to extract every last penny I can. I don’t care about you, your little brotherhood or even your stupid backwater wives and children. What I do care about is money, Mr. Douglas,” Winthrop yelled, then paused for a moment to calm down. “My work crew arrives tonight, anyway. So you and your moronic Brotherhood of Carpenters can go straight to hell!”

“Oh I’m afraid we’ve already been there,” Douglas said with a smirk.

Winthrop slammed his fist down on the table and instantly the lights went out in his office. He was surrounded by a deep penetrating blackness.

“What type of trickery is this? I will call the authorities and have you arrested for this!” Winthrop shouted.

The only response was a long, terrible silence. Winthrop stepped around the desk but his foot caught on something and he fell. He hit the floor hard and he could tell he was lying in a puddle of water.

“Damn you Douglas! Damn you and your brotherhood of scoundrels!”

There was still no response and he started to push himself up from the sticky substance. He was covered in it now but couldn’t tell what it was. He knew nothing had been spilled before the lights went out so he could only assume it was part of the trick.

A deep, low growl came from the other side of the room. Winthrop froze. He couldn’t see a thing in the darkness.

“Do you still think you can scare me? I’ve been in this business for over thirty years and I’ve dealt with the mob, street gangs and crooked cops, so a bunch of carpenters aren’t going to stop me!”

The lights came back on and Winthrop was covered in blood. It ran down his hands and soaked his clothing. He panicked and stepped backwards, tripping again but this time landing in his large desk chair. He looked down to see he’d tripped over a human head. Winthrop screamed. It took a moment in his terror filled state

to recognize that the head belonged to his foreman, John Kiggons. The lifeless eyes stared up at Winthrop. He felt his heart pounding in his chest and it became harder to breathe. He tore his eyes away from the head and looked over to see Douglas standing on the other side of his desk.

Douglas' eyes were red like fire and he had horns sticking out from his head. He had a wicked and vile air about him. He smiled, showing off rows of razor sharp teeth and a forked tongue.

“Mr. Winthrop, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters is more than the mob, street gangs and crooked cops all rolled in to one.”

“Are... you the... the devil?” Winthrop squeaked.

“Am I the devil? Heavens no. I'm Henry Douglas, the head of the UBC for Glendale,” Douglas replied, then leaned closer to the desk. “The proper question would be, did I make a deal with the devil? The answer to that is yes, Mr. Winthrop. Yes I did.”

Winthrop started to pass out but Douglas stepped forward and slapped him hard. He snapped back from the brink of unconsciousness only to feel a pain in his chest.

“Now listen carefully to my new offer. You will accept the brotherhood's help on every contract you do for the rest of your life. End of story.”

“But... I can't. I just mean... I can't make deals with the devil.”

Douglas reached across the desk and dug his clawed fingers into the side of Winthrop's head. He pulled the fat business man face to face.

“You're making a deal with me Mr. Winthrop, not the devil.”

Winthrop broke down and began crying uncontrollably. He sobbed and cried until the beastly man let go of him. His head smacked onto the top of the desk and he felt dizzy. He closed his eyes and when he opened them again the room had returned to normal. He blinked several times to orient himself. He looked to the floor and there was no head or blood. Douglas stood before him as normal as a man can be.

“Everything is okay again,” Winthrop said.

Douglas stepped towards the desk and smiled.

“Everything will be okay once you accept my offer.”

Winthrop gasped, then scrambled for his ink pen. After finding it he signed all the paperwork and handed it back to Douglas.

“Wonderful, we’ll start work tomorrow.”

Winthrop lowered his head and whimpered. He had no clue what he was getting into but he just wanted Douglas gone.

Douglas walked into the office of the local UBC and handed the contract over to his secretary.

“Make sure and get these filed with the Glendale city manager before 8am tomorrow, okay?” Douglas said.

“Sure thing boss. How in the world did you persuade that nasty business man into signing the papers? I mean, he turned down every person that’s made him an offer so far.”

“The devil is in the details, Sue,” Douglas said with a smile.