

The Misadventures of Donald and Paco

Groundhog Day

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By

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The early morning sun beamed in all its glory, yet it was chilly. Very chilly, thought Paco as he followed Donald through the forest, his teeth chattering like an old typewriter at ninety words a minute. Paco dragged an old burlap bag along as he lamented last night's heavy drinking with Esmerelda at Slinky's.

Donald stopped and pointed at an opening in the side of a hill.

Paco stared at the freshly piled dirt fronting the opening, lifted his ball cap and rubbed his forehead.

"Ok," Donald nodded, "you hold the bag." Then he rummaged in the brush and stood up with a four-foot stick. Smiling, he swung it like a sword and lunged toward the opening and kneeled. He poked the stick into the opening and felt a spongy object – which provoked a surely growl.

Paco stepped back. "Do groundhogs growl?"

Donald shrugged and poked into the hole again, resulting in an even nastier snarl.

Paco took another step backward.

Donald smiled back at Paco and said, "Get ready."

Paco shook his head. "I don't know about this."

"Whaaaat!? It's only a groundhog. You know like the one Bill Murray had in that movie, like a pet." Donald motioned for Paco to move back into position.

"Ok." Paco hesitantly crept forward with the bag held in outstretched hands. The bag opening shivered like a sail in rough winds. His eyes scrunched close to a slit as his head turned away from the hole. The chatter of his teeth now steeled to a clinch.

Donald poked at the hole again, invoking a raspy snarl of exasperation from the darkness. The stick was ripped from his hands followed by a rustling and scratching, then a snapping head appeared.

"Eeyie!" Paco screamed and lurched backward, somersaulting, landing on his knees, staring at the creatures menacing gaze.

Donald had rolled to the left and scrambled to his feet. He scratched at the back of his neck as he watched the head vanish back into the darkness. All became quiet in the forest again.

Paco stood up. “That a groundhog?” The flat broad head of the creature was light gray with two black stripes across its cheeks.

“Yeah, I think so.” Still scratching at the back of his neck. “Must be a male. They’re bigger, I think.”

“Oh.” Said Paco.

Donald knelt back down before the hole and grabbed the stick. Without looking, he waved Paco into position. “Get the bag tight over the hole.”

Paco pressed the mouth of the bag against the dirt surrounding the hole. He was unable to quell the anxious shaking of his hands, and knees.

Donald looked up at Paco. “Ready?”

Paco nodded, staring wide-eyed at the hole, and whispered, “Ok.”

Donald jabbed and wobbled the stick in the hole sure this would scare the prey from the comfort of its den.

The creature's guttural grumble, no doubt tired of this unsolicited encroachment on its late winter slumber, had an ‘I’m going to put an end to this shit once and for all’ tone, as it scrambled toward the entrance.

Looking down, Paco saw a gray flash enter the sack, then felt a sharp pain in his knee cap. The snarling creature shook its head and clawed upward, shredding the burlap, and ripping at his jeans, too close for comfort.

“Eeyie!” Paco screamed as he grabbed at the whirling dervish, trying to free himself from its grip.

Donald rolled back when the critter launched itself out of the hole straight into Paco’s sack. He jumped to his feet and backed away, watching Paco’s efforts to free himself.

Sensing that it had made its point, the creature released the intruder and tore itself free of what remained of the thing that surrounded it. It scurried back to the mouth of its home and turned to watch its adversaries, one limping noticeably, scampering away. With a snort, it scratched at the dirt as if cleaning its paws of the offensive stench of the perpetrators. Then it settled back into the comfort of its home, ready to resume its slumber.

Donald and Paco sat at the bar of Slinky’s Tavern, Donald replaying their close encounter to the patrons crowded around them. Paco sat on a stool, messaging the shredded, blood-soaked jeans over his right knee. When their audience dissipated, Donald tapped his beer against Paco’s and said, “Better get you to the hospital for that rabies shot.”

Paco swallowed the last bit of his beer and said, “OK.”

