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David Foster Wallace

Short story writer, journalist, and essayist David Foster Wallace (1962–2008) is best known for his over one thousand-page book *Infinite Jest*, published in 1996. Wallace grew up in Chicago, became a writer and a teacher, and was a professor of creative writing at Pomona College in California.

In 2000, he covered the Republican presidential primary and the campaign of John McCain for *Rolling Stone* magazine. He was a frequent writer for *Harper's*, *The Nation*, and other journals. Wallace often wrote on culture, art, and sports and of the irony of the human condition and the healing power of language. He suffered from depression for most of his life and committed suicide in 2008. An unfinished novel, *The Pale King*, was published in 2011.

hierbabuena: mint

abrazos: hugs, embraces

cuentos: stories, tales

The Devil Is a Busy Man

Three weeks ago, I did a nice thing for someone. I can not say more than this, or it will empty what I did of any of its true, ultimate value. I can only say: a nice thing. In a general context, it involved money. It was not a matter of out and out “giving money” to someone. But it was close. It was more classifiable as “diverting” money to someone in “need.” For me, this is as specific as I can be.

It was two weeks, six days, ago that the nice thing I did occurred. I can also mention that I was out of town—meaning, in other words, I was not where I live. Explaining why I was out of town, or where I was, or what the overall situation that was going on was, however, unfortunately, would endanger the value of what I did further. Thus, I was explicit with the lady that the person who would receive the money was to in no way know who had diverted it to them. Steps were explicitly taken so that my namelessness was structured into the arrangement which led to the diversion of the money. (Although the money was, technically, not mine, the secretive arrangement by which I diverted it was properly legal. This may lead one to wonder in what way the money was not “mine,” but, unfortunately, I am unable to explain in detail. It is, however, true.) This is the reason. A lack of namelessness on my part would destroy the ultimate value of the nice act. Meaning, it would infect the “motivation” for my nice gesture—meaning, in other words, that part of my motivation for it would be, not generosity, but desiring gratitude, affection, and approval towards me to result. Despairingly, this selfish motive would empty the nice gesture of any ultimate value, and cause me to once again fail in my efforts to be classifiable as a nice or “good” person.

Thus, I was very intransigent^o about the secrecy of my own name in the arrangement, and the lady, who was the only other person with any knowing part in the arrangement (she, because of her job, could be classified as “the instrument” of the diversion of the money) whatsoever, acquiesced, to the best of my knowledge, in full to this.

Two weeks, five days, later, one of the people I had done the nice thing for (the generous diversion of funds was to two people—more specifically, a common law married couple—but only one of them called) called, and said, “hello,” and that did I, by any possible chance, know anything about who was responsible for _____, because he just wanted to tell that person, “thank you!” and what a God-send

intransigent: inflexible, obstinant