



Oct. 16, 2017

We used to joke that we should have named our first sighthound “Diabalo.” In the right light, he certainly looked eerily diabolical.

[Cuchulain](#) was a lurcher, half Scottish deerhound and half Irish wolfhound. He had a deerhound’s curvy elegance and a wolfhound’s staggering height. Cuchulain was parked on a long set of sinewy legs. He was black as night, the original long-legged beastie.

He also had a wicked sense of humor. Intelligence and wit

smoldered in his black eyes.

Before we fenced in our back yard, we let him out to do his business on a 50-foot lead anchored on a sturdy spike by the front porch. I took him on long rambling walks and let him run loose on a friend's farm for exercise, but at home, he'd shuffle out on his lead and enjoyed time on his own in the yard for ten or 15 minutes at a time. It was a system that kept everybody happy. Until one Halloween night...

The neighborhood kids were still young enough then to trick-or-treat. In those years, I took my own son and daughter door to door, too, and stamped in the cold while they came running back, dragging pillowcases of sugary loot behind them. The spook parade started at 4:30 when it just got dark and was usually over by 8 p.m. Cuchulain stayed safely inside for the duration.

That fateful Halloween, he was crossing his legs and making urgent whimpering sounds, letting us know that if we didn't let him go outside quick he was just going to cut loose and drown a corner of the wall. It was nearly 8. I stuck my head out the door. Silence up and down the street. No little zombies or fairy princesses lumbering under the street lights. The coast was apparently clear.

Cuchulain zipped out into the pitch-black yard. I couldn't see him, but I heard him lustily watering the lawn. And then I heard another sound. A pack of teenagers was turning the corner in front of our house, snickering and hooting. They weren't in costume and they weren't carrying candy sacks. They were there for the "trick" part of trick-or-treating.

There's a street light in front of our house, but a row of trees blots out its light in our yard where Cuchulain lurked. They couldn't see our black giant, but he was taking a long, silent look at them. Cuchulain was a pro at reading people. He knew they were up to no

good. He was safely tethered so I left the porch light off and stood there on the porch watching the scene unfold.

One of the kids turned and crept up our driveway with what looked like an egg in his hand. Just as he was winding back to toss it, Cuchulain stepped out into the light, four feet high, his eyes glittering in the street light. I could hear the kid's friends flinch. Egg Boy himself stood rigidly still, eyeing our hellhound. Cuchulain playfully leaned towards him and said, "Woof." The kid should have been on his school track team. He vanished in a jibbering blur. His pals did, too. I saw them clattering down the road from street light to street light. Cuchulain came jauntily back inside, grinning from ear to ear. He *liked* Halloween now.

And that was the last year anyone tried to come to our house on Halloween. Occasionally I'd see a kid getting off the bus at the end of street walk by our place verrrry fast, giving our house the stink eye. And Cuchulain lounged on the couch, eyeing them out the window, happy with himself that he was now an urban legend, The Halloween Hellhound of Buck Mountain....