
Furious Sound

The noise was frightful. Bells and gongs. Whole orchestras consisting of out of tune instruments. It was a cacophony of ear discomfort and tympanic torment. But all that aside, it was the level. Constant and intense with absolutely no counterpoint of quiet. The sound was akin to a rock band without any melody or harmony ... but an ample supply of volume. Archibald Coppersmith would have held his hands over his ears except being chained to the wall precluded any such resolution.

Smoke and flame bellowed out of cracks in the black stone floor, creating a thick layer of vapor which shrouded the room in gloom. Calling it a floor was a bit of an oversimplification. It was more like a huge slice of a rough volcanic sea floor, worn smooth by the passage of demonic feet over countless years. An odd liquid dripped from the walls, it had an oily texture, but didn't seem to burn. It merely sizzled upon contact with flame and let off even more noxious gasses into the chamber.

Salacious D. Polk entered carrying a clipboard. His skin was bleached white and stretched over hard chest muscles dripping with foul smelling liquid. His arms were thin and wiry, with bags of loose flesh waving between shoulder and elbow, hanging down like an old man's. Salacious lacked eyes, except for a pair of the darkest black pebbles deep in almost empty sockets. The creature's ears were pointy at the top, like some horror film version of an elf. His legs were an odd mix of loose flesh with the knees bent in reverse, ending, not in feet, but cracked and filth-covered hooves. Perhaps the most disturbing part of Salacious though, were the twin horns of bone protruding from the sides of his head. They were not particularly large, but they had all the malevolent ambiance of the devil about them.

Polk lifted his eyes to the man restrained on the wall, "Archibald Coppersmith, is it?"

"What?" Archie replied, "I can't make out what you're saying over the noise."

"Ah, yes," Salacious increase his volume, "But that's to be expected."

"Where am I?" Archie had to scream to even hear his own voice.

"Honestly? Do I have to spell it out for you?"

"This is Hell then?"

"How very perceptive of you." Polk snickered.

"Shouldn't there be a trial or something? A judgement?" Archie pleaded, "You know. To determine the fate of my soul?"

"Not in the case of dictators, CEO's and those in advertising," Polk explained loudly, "For them, we skip all the formality and go right to the punishment."

"I don't understand. What did I do?"

"Didn't you write advertisements?" Salacious looked down to check his clipboard. "It says here you worked for Ernest, Fredrick and Young."

“Well yes ...”

“I have it in my notes you created commercials which were 225% above the volume of the associated programming.” Polk beamed, “Most impressive. I imagine that’s why the noise in here.”

“It was standard practice,” Archie yelled, “Everybody did it. Customers always left the room when the commercials came on, so we had to up the volume so people would get the message.”

“It says here,” Salacious tapped his clipboard with his pen, “you mostly created Web and computer ads. Do people walk away from their computers?”

“No, but,” Archie had to scream at the top of his lungs to be heard, “Like I said, it was standard practice.”

“Effectively you’d say then, you were just following orders?” Salacious grinned, showing off a mouth full of long interlaced, sharp white teeth. It could best be described as a Cheshire Cat grin of dismemberment.

“Well, I wouldn’t put it quite that way,” Archie protested.

“Oh, you’ve come to the right place all right,” Polk laughed the laugh of the manically insane.

“How long?” Archie asked, his throat now sore from screaming over the din.

“Why, eternity, Mr. Coppersmith, eternity.” The little gremlin-like man responded, “Are you uncomfortable?”

“Yes,” Archie screamed, “why would you think otherwise?”

“Good, I’ll turn the sound up when I leave” Salacious put his pen down and turned to exit the way he had come. “Oh,” he announced, “Amon Goeth will be dropping by later to entertain you. You’ll like him. Very fashionable black uniform. I rather like the twin lightning bolt symbol. The silver death’s head tops it off nicely. You’ll find he enjoys paying special attention to his prisoners. He was only following orders too. Well I must go now to leave you to your torment ... It’s standard practice you understand. We only want to make sure you get the message.”

True to his word, Salacious D. Polk turned the volume up as he left the smoke-filled chamber.