

I Am Trudy Besser

by David P. Gontar (May 2015)

“I am Trudy Besser. Identify yourself.”

“711419543-120.”

“Formerly?”

“Benjamin Grant.”

It was a small plain cell with two doors. A desk of deal and chair were the only furnishings. A viewing screen occupied one wall. Hanging behind the desk was a simple Alpine landscape. A solitary bulb hung from the ceiling.

Aside from a pair of horns sprouting from her forehead and a sinuous tail protruding from beneath a tight dress, Trudy Besser appeared as a reasonably attractive – if somewhat severe – female, whose iridescent green complexion resembled that of a reptile basking in the warm sun. Her eyes were twin orbs of radium. The interviewee was a slight, unclothed male figure, barely distinguishable from the untold quadrillions of others groaning in the sulphurous pits that filled a barren landscape to the horizon, as a thin haze of acrid pitch blew from above. He stood with downcast gaze awaiting instructions.

“Direct your attention to the events of September 2, 2175.”

“Yes.”

On the screen Benjamin Grant was shown seducing an innocent young creature while his wife labored in a sweat shop. Acts of wanton concupiscence were plainly visible.

“Do you confess these deeds?”

“Yes.”

“Do you condemn them?”

“Yes.”

“What penalty do you wish?”

"Ten thousand years in Volcanic Ash Distribution, Quadrant H."

"Accepted."

Over the course of the next hour this grave exchange was repeated as 100 sins were reviewed in painstaking detail, some so grim and revolting that 711419543-120 found it necessary to shield his gaze from the spectacle. A long itinerary of condign punishment was meted out and recorded by Trudy Besser in a thick black ledger. She then excused herself to attend to personal matters while 711419543-120 was fixed to the wall by a pair of sadistic imps and flogged mercilessly.

She then returned for summation.

"Beg for forgiveness."

"Please forgive my most heinous sins."

"Hell hath no forgiveness."

"Let it be. I am content."

"Be gone."

Trudy Besser rose, straightened her dress and strode to the door. As her foot crossed the threshold she unexpectedly heard the penitent address her.

"Trudy Besser looked particularly lovely tonight."

She wheeled about in shock.

"*That* sort of interjection, Benjamin, is a direct violation of protocol. It will be reported to the administration immediately, and will have serious repercussions." And as she swished her tail in contempt and turned to leave, he thought he noticed just the faintest hint of a smile flicker across her lips.

David P. Gontar's latest book is [*Hamlet Made Simple and Other Essays*](#), New English Review Press, 2013.

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