

PIPSQUEAK

by Anita Breitling

“Come on, A’real, we need a new strategy this year, not one of your hair-brain schemes to kill everything in sight.” Kie’s voice bounced loudly off the stone walls of the underground cavern. “Here it is a new century and we’re not even close to our goal of souls.” Kie tapped hardened nails on the arm of his stone throne.

A’real cleared his throat as he bowed before Kie. “As always you are correct, my lord, and I do agree that we need something different for this next generation. However, I do not have any other ideas.”

“Maybe you could use an entirely new way of enticing young people.” A feeble voice squeaked behind A’real’s gigantic body.

All heads turned to see where the tiny voice had come from. At first there was nothing to see then slowly a wavy image came into focus. Good grief! It was Pipsqueak who had spoken.

The horde of demons laughed and poked one another, even Kie smiled, sharpened fangs glowing in the dim light.

“Ah, Pipsqueak, is that you that has been so brave as to speak? Come here where I can see you better.” Kie beckoned the small demon to him.

Pipsqueak slipped out from behind A’real and cautiously approached the leader of the demons. He was a short, pathetic creature even by demon standards. His small body supported a rather round head with a small nose on top of a short neck. Pipsqueak trembled so much his skinny knees knocked together as he stood before Kie.

Bending over to look the short being in the eye Kie spoke softly, “Now, what is this idea of yours about enticing young people?”

Pipsqueak shuffled his tiny feet, looking down at the floor as he hesitated. This was his big chance to impress his master, but the words wouldn’t come.

“Come, come, Pipsqueak, we haven’t got all eternity you know,” an impatient A’real grumbled.

With a wave of his hand Kie silenced the commander. All eyes returned to the pale, shivering creature that’d been so brave or so stupid to speak to their leader.

Pipsqueak squared his rounded shoulders and lifted his face to Kie’s craggy one. “I think we could convince young humans that they have little or no self-worth then we could undermine their futures.”

Loud snorting and guffaws echoed around the rock walls at this suggestion.

Kie stood tall and made a motion with his hand again, this time for silence. Looking down upon Pipsqueak’s upturned face, he grunted. “You know very well that low self-esteem has been with us since the fall of Adam. What makes you think your plan is any different from what we have used for centuries?”

Pipsqueak ducked his head and monetarily closed his eyes. It was now or never to convince his master that his plan was different and would work. Inhaling slowly he gazed up into Kie’s huge eyes and then very plainly told him his plan and what he hoped to accomplish with it.

Sometime later all those assembled were excitedly talking about Pipsqueak’s idea. Some said they had seen signs of the same thing all along, but had not considered it worth mentioning. They grudgingly agreed that the plan needed a particular demon to carry it out and it looked like that demon was the timid Pipsqueak. That fact alone amazed the horde.

Pipsqueak left soon after the meeting to implement his plan. His puny body had grown at least an inch and his round face had lost some of its timid look. He was excited about this opportunity and by the end of the month he had plenty to report to Kie.

Kie roared with satisfaction as he listened to Pipsqueak's report then he shook his huge head and grinned at the now taller demon. "I can see that this fine idea of yours is to have a far reaching effect on the minds of young humans and for that I am glad. I do, however, see a need to make one change."

Pipsqueak cringed and wondered what he had done wrong. Wasn't everything carried out perfectly?

Kie paced back and forth, claws scratching his bony chin. Suddenly he stopped and bellowed with laughter. (A demon's laugh can be *so* unnerving, even for another demon.)

"I will change your name to fit your improved status. No longer will you be called Pipsqueak; I name you PEER PRESSURE."

Hearing his new name, Pipsqueak grew six more inches and his round face became very bright indeed.