

# The Voice of Ignition

The voice of ignition had suggested it and now Anton felt the glowing satisfaction of a job well done. The flames caressed his ego as he watched them from a safe distance. They embraced the ill-fated building, lapped and licked at it like a lover. From his shadowy nook he could observe the authorities without them spotting him. He couldn't do another stint, he *wouldn't*. Here they were now, their sirens the voices of mermaid-demons, the intrusive lights chasing blue shards over everything. This was all for him, all because of him.

This must be how new fathers feel, he thought, wringing his hands with difficult to contain delight. He paced a little as he'd seen expectant fathers do on screen. Then the beautiful, golden mosaic-lights of the fire insinuated themselves into the corner of his eye and he turned back to the fire, snapping his head round as if he were about to salute it on a march-past. He fancied he could feel its heat on his already flushed face but he was too far away, it was just another of his whims. He adjusted his erection. Unfortunately he could only get hard if he burned something, though it always did do the trick, just as it had tonight. Joyfully he gave it a little rub as he watched the firemen darting to and fro, an urban ballet that he had choreographed. He controlled them, they came at his bidding; he knew where they'd all be before they did.

From somewhere came the painful sound of glass shattering and a woman screaming. Silly bitch, he thought absently. There were ladders and hoses now, a thrilling sense of urgency lacing the whole scene together. To him, in their neo-fascist outfits, the scurrying men resembled a swarming wrath of ants bringing down a much larger foe, the corporate Nazis of the insect world.

His senses were overflowing. He adored the way the smoke prickled his nostrils. His dick, already hard, was twitching with excitement. The sounds of abstract chaos that the fire flung out were like a lover's cries to his experienced ears. He loved the blue-purple-green marks that the flames stained onto his retina, wishing they were indelible so there would be the mark of fire wherever he looked. To run heedlessly into the flames, into its welcoming embrace, was his favourite fantasy. But he couldn't, he had a duty to carry on his work, the voice had told him so. He saw himself as a sort of anti-artist: creating negation, an artwork in reverse. Destruction was his medium and chaos his style. He loved to read his reviews and would cut them out of the local paper and stick them into a scrapbook. It was all part of the delightful power trip of fooling everyone while playing with their lives.

A fireman was pulling a bag of rags out from a smoking window. It was actually a woman but Anton was unmoved for he knew that he was the instrument of karma. If people were meant to survive then they would, and if not then he was the agent of fate, just and righteous. He sighed in contentment as the newly arrived paramedics commenced CPR on the rescued woman. It certainly was satisfying to be a fire god.

A few days later and the voice of ignition was insisting once more, craving fulfilment, prompting pyromania. 'Burn it down!' it would silkily whisper in the numb quiet his mind habitually fell into. 'Wouldn't it be good to see it all burn? Fire cleanses. Reduce it to a smoking ruin and start again! Fiddle while

Rome burns! You'll be the talk of the town, it'll be in the local rag. This is what you were born for, it's your calling like a doctor or a priest. And you can watch it all happen, laughing at the police as you get sweet revenge for what they did to you. You were born to cause as much mayhem as possible!

In his detailed fantasy world he was Lord of the Flames – he could summon fire with a click of his fingers and extinguish it with the copious ejaculation from his hose-like cock. Fire danced for him on command and died away when he was spent. What woman could compare? At first he imagined women would be as aroused as he was by the multi-sensorial experience of fire but he soon learnt otherwise. He saw fire everywhere he looked, its potential locked in everyday objects, waiting for him to liberate it. Everybody else did not.

As a baby he had stared at candle-flames for hours, endlessly fascinated by the undulating variety of the tiny flame. Its potential to grow into something grand spoke to his young heart in a way no adult could ever experience. As soon as he learned to light a match he would sneak off into the woods and play with fire all day, the only companion he needed. He was testing the limits of his power and control. Soon he mastered the summoning of fire in the absence of matches or lighter and he prided himself on building and keeping a fire lit all day, even in summer. When it was time to return home he would carefully extinguish the fire and prepare it to be re-lit the next morning.

He'd half-expected his unusual compulsion to dissipate as he grew older—just as his mother had confidently asserted all childhood preoccupations did. But it didn't. With the arrival of puberty, as his school friends became frantically interested in sex, Anton's fire fetish grew. So little was he interested in girls that he wondered if he might be gay. But as a result of various experiments with online porn he was certain that he preferred girls to boys but much preferred fire to both. The sudden flare of a fire catching light, thrusting upwards from nothing, was orgasmic to him. And he soon found a way to enjoy sex and fire together. He would spend hours selecting the perfect pornographic picture for his needs and then set fire to a paper copy of it, masturbating while it burned. Watching the flames lick at and then consume the nude woman gave him such an intense orgasm that he stayed in his room for three days straight, making himself savagely sore. Not that anyone noticed, which he considered rather lucky. His mother didn't even register the smoke initially and when she did she automatically blamed his father's pungent cigars. Living in comfortable, middle-class neglect was perfect for him; no one noticed his strange proclivities and behaviour or the absence of the usual teenage boy preoccupations, such as girls and sport.

But he had also experimented with girls and was never short of a willing participant. He was good-looking and his obvious disinterestedness seemed to spur the girls on. And there was one particular incident that defined his sexual desires forever. There was a pretty girl at school called Lacey who was rather proud of her red hair, long and pre-Raphaelite as it was. He preferred redheads, for obvious reasons and had no trouble persuading Lacey to come to the woods with him. He prepared carefully: he chose his favourite clearing, put up his tent (he now spent all his free time out there) and made it comfortable inside with cushions and blankets. The focus and centrepiece of it all was the huge bonfire he had constructed.

He left to fetch Lacey and when she stepped into the clearing she was nervous but smiling. But one glance around and Lacey's pretty mouth was suddenly much less important to him. While he was gone someone had trashed everything – pulled down and torn up the tent and its contents and worst of all, had scattered his carefully constructed fire. He was completely enraged and hardly spoke to poor Lacey as he re-built it. Her smile was gone and her brown eyes darted around the clearing like a pair of spooked sparrows. Just as he was almost finished he remembered that he had planned to help Lacey to light it as a sort of romantic gesture or ritual. But he needed a hit of the fire-buzz that motivated him and so the fire was soon flaming and roaring without Lacey having moved. But he was still angry, very angry. He tried to hide it and soothe Lacey at the same time. Feathers drifted onto the fire and released their characteristically wicked smoke. She objected to it and got up to move further away. However she tripped on a root and hurtled head first towards the now extremely hot fire. Anton was quick and caught her in his arms but something made him freeze like that, with Lacey hanging precariously over the eager flames. She struggled, feeling the heat but he held her there, feeling power course through him. He could save her or drop her into the fire it was totally up to him—he could just say that she fell, why would anyone suggest any different? She cried out and he lowered her a few inches. As she struggled her hair freed itself and dangled into the flames. It started to smoulder, another distinctive smell to add to the feathers. She begged and cursed at the same time, jerking her head up and away but unable to hold it for long. He dropped her further and her hair sizzled and withered, curling away into smoke. This chance meeting of anger and arousal was a revelation, a state of enhanced excitement. Surely, he thought in the desperate moment before orgasm, this was the pinnacle of human experience. Close to dropping her into it, he pushed her roughly away from him and the fire. She lay there, too startled for more tears, feeling her singed hair with her hands. 'You fucking cunt!' she hollered at him as she fled.

And the years had not changed him: Lacey still occupied his fantasies, although when he replayed it in his mind he actually dropped her and watched the fire consume first her beauty and then her life.

The voice's incessancy soon drove him out onto the prowl once more, cans of fuel on his back seat and intent to commit arson in his heart. At eighteen, not too long after the Lacey incident, the voice had emerged when he'd had a major breakdown. Psychiatrists had told him it was just a shard of his fragmented personality, that it was all really him but he knew better. The voice came because he was special and needed guidance to achieve the greatness he was so clearly destined for. Later, in his early twenties, he'd had a brief relationship with a fire-breather, but she left him once he admitted it was the fire that inflamed his arousal, not her. He had few real friends but considered himself a super-star on AOL—his handle was FireLord74—where he bragged of his work and his experiments (he thought of himself as scientifically minded). It was at the voice's prompting that one particular experiment got out of hand. His local church was destroyed and he spent a hideous eighteen months in detention before he could convince them he was cured. The many indignities he'd suffered there – unfairly according to his

interpretation of events – lead him to vow vengeance on the authorities and to go down fighting if they ever tried to put him in detention again.

But none of that was on his mind now as the excitement began to rise and his dick twitched in Pavlovian anticipation. He carefully selected a house with the curtains left open after dark so the windows would be all lit up. He found it so easy to observe what went on. To his surprise and delight the daughter of the family bore a passing resemblance to Lacey and this triggered both vivid memories and detailed fantasies. Another factor in his choice was the conjunction of front door, hall and stair-way. Ideally the door would open onto the stairs, so that the main exit would be blocked by a fire started by lighting fuel poured in through the letterbox. Victims selected, he crept up to the front door, petrol-can in hand. It was a cloudy night, the moon and stars sulking behind their water vapour veils. So it was dark but he didn't want to draw attention to himself with a torch so he didn't carry one. With a funnel he poured the fuel through the little metal slot, now almost entirely preoccupied with anticipation and fantasy. He didn't notice that some of the fluid was dribbling back through under the door and forming a puddle, in which he unwittingly stood.

Smiling like the Cheshire Cat on Ecstasy, he lit some rags to push through the letterbox. An ember, independent salamander, fluttered to the floor. Aggressive flames ambushed him and it wasn't delicious or exquisite as he'd fantasised, it was agony. When he tried to scream the fire found his throat and lungs. He dropped to the floor, trying to roll to put the fire out, but all he did was soak up more petrol. The flames rose heavenwards. Soon sirens sang in the distance. As the pain of being cooked alive took him to the edge of oblivion, the charred faces of his victims presented themselves, a deathly roll-call he was about to join, their charred arms out-stretched, ready to welcome him into their ranks. And the voice of ignition that had prompted all of this, cried out for the final time, orgasmically, achieving the ghastly gratification it had ultimately craved.