“No Screaming”

By Eric Detweiler

Textshop Experiments 5 (2018)
http://textshopexperiments.org/textshop05/weirdness-of-rhetoric

TRANSCRIPT

[echoing acoustic music plays]

Voiceover: You are alone in the room. The walls are blank except for a single sign that reads, “NO SCREAMING.”

“Hello?” you ask. A tall, spindly creature, its face bearing no features except a wide, slavering mouth appears in front of you. It approaches you slowly and curiously, its toothy head tilting side to side.

“Hello,” you say, nervously. Behind you, something laughs. The laughter grows louder and closer until you can feel warm pulses of air on the back of your neck every time the something catches its breath.

You gulp. More laughter. The mouth creature puts its head so close to your hand that your arm hairs stand on end. “Help,” you murmur.

A man in khakis and a hoodie that looks somehow expensive appears in the room. “Yes, how can I help you?” You gesture slowly toward the creatures surrounding you. Something slimy encircles your left ankle.

“We recognize that we’ve created a bit of a situation here,” says the man, a little too cheerfully. “We’re doing our best to resolve it.”

“I—” you start to speak, but something encircles your right ankle. It is too warm and too cold at the same time, and you let out a gasp.

“Please do be careful,” says the man in the khakis. “Gasping is okay, but I must remind you of our policy.” He gestures to the sign on the wall: NO SCREAMING.
“But could you just—” The laughter grows even louder. The man in the khakis steps back. The spindly creature opens its mouth and presses its teeth gently against your forearm. You scream as you try to pull your arm back, but something is holding it in place. The floor begins to open beneath you, and you hear the sound of feet that aren’t quite human skittering in the darkness below.

“I am sorry,” says the man. “But I’m afraid you’ve violated our terms of service. If you’d like to appeal our decision—” but you start to fall and his voice fades away.

You are surrounded. Birdlike shapes move toward you in the darkness, joined by the creatures from the room above. You call out for help, trying to keep your voice measured and calm. The creatures draw closer.

This message brought to you by Twitter.

Twitter: NO SCREAMING.

[music fades to foreground, then back out to silence]