

I resolved to win Satan's favor with an Austrian Trabuco from a fine rosewood box. I had removed their commonplace wrappers, and replaced them with the bands of the most expensive Austrian brand I could find. I fell into luck the day I found a crooked shop owner to sell me those bands in bulk. Satan stood, took the cigar gingerly and bent towards me for a light. He puffed thoughtfully on my ruse, and then smiled triumphantly down at me through a shroud of smoke. I was struck by the satisfaction on his face, sure that I had succeeded in making even Satan a convert in favor of my special supply.

"It seems that my trip was well worth the effort. I came looking for you. Remember that I told you that I was an old friend, and an ardent admirer? I have been watching you for some time now. You're self-absorbed, judgmental, petty, cheap, and deceitful. You're quite perfect for us, Sam."

"I'm not sure I follow, *Durchlauschtigst*."

"I have searched the world for you, my good man. I spent much time in America, of course, since tobacconists in your corner of the world seem to have many of the qualities that will qualify one for this position of which I speak. You can't fool the Devil with a cheap cigar, friend. But it warms my heart that you have tried. And now you must do something for me."

"Please forgive me, *Ihro Majestät*. I only meant to please you. I must respectfully ask that you go now, as I suddenly feel a bit ill."

"There's no escape, Sam. The match is done. You'll start in the morning."

"Oh, Dear God, what would you have me do?"

"I need you to run my cigar-shop, of course."