

NINE
THE SNARLSGRRRRRIAN INVASION

*F*or what now unfolded was exactly how beneath the confusion, besides the then still murky machination of the plot to wipe Osanto from the face of the earth, Snarlsgrrrr perfected and step by step executed the plan to take over Mystifu mind, body, soul, and—of all most luscious and mouth watering—pocket book.

At first, it's now clear, Lily's new Super Invader ComConBots were so gauche and subject to embarrassing errors that both Libs and Cons often laughed at them. Delightedly they dubbed them "the lunatic fringe."

They were welcomed with open arms, however, by the religious zealots and a knot of billionaires with winter homes in Snarlsgrrrr and summer homes in Mystifu.

"There's gold in these babies," it was said that Rolf the Ruthless told Randall the Righteous, and forthwith huge sums were shoved into the perfection of this new device.

The new ComConBots were garbed in better clothes and given the most advanced and costly of microchips and programming to make them look and sound and act like everybody else.

Most importantly they were programmed to disarm and charm the Cons and to project camaraderie and reasonableness to the Libs. And soon, sure enough, instead of the "lunatic fringe" they were called "Comers," and "New thinkers," and "Just what we need," and "Fresh blood," by many of the Cons. The Libs, however, remained leery.

Out of this shift then came perhaps the most fascinating twist for the

burgeoning technology of ComConBotism. For so delicate was the programming of their facial muscles that by all those whom the Powers designated as of Lower Intelligence—which they agreed was not only the most likely but also the most logical target for their move—the lips of the Super ComConBots were seen to curve upward with the most welcoming and reassuring of smiles.

At the same time—and indeed the difference was little short of magic—their lips were seen by those they mocked but feared, of Higher Intelligence, to shade downward into the most arrogant and contempt-u-ous of sneers.

Indeed, as the months went by, this sneer became a most effective subliminal badge of office for the Snarlsgrrrrian invasion.

This did create a problem in some quarters, but by and large the combination excelled the new Powers' highest aspirations. For by lull-ing the Cons with smiles, and angering the Libs with sneers, these most perfected of ComConBots were gaining election to significant political posts in southern and western Mystifu—with of course behind scenes electronic control by the increasingly gratified Powers That Be.

There was, however, always the fly in the soup. For by now the Libs were beginning to squeeze into the media outraged columns and outraged books making outrageous charges against Everybody That Really Mattered.

For a while they held the Libs at bay with a counter barrage of the truth, as increasingly apparent to the abused and outraged New Snarlsgrrrrians.

Post office boxes throughout Mystifu were stuffed to the limit with fat envelopes charging the Libs with, at first, the borderline criminality of being out to dangerously cut the military, foment class warfare, and coddle the dumb bells, the shiftless, and the “poor little me” whining homeless. Then, as to them this didn't even begin to cover the evil of the Libs, they moved on to the charge of the outright criminality of ungodliness, amoralism, immoralism, treason, and killing full grown babies in utero.

But still the unmerited and vicious attack by Libs continued. For a while the New Powers took it like good sports. But one could take just so much. One dark night, with the wind snaking and whispering among the trees and the clarion call of the moon at the full, they gathered for a great private howling, and thereafter went into crash production of Item Q—Insider code for the new generation of ComConBots tailored to look, sound, and act like the preferred likeness for leaders of every organization or field with a voice in shaping the politics, economics, education, or religion of Mystifu.

Targeted for the business community, for example, were the astronomically-rewarded CEOs and CEO-selected Board Members of large corporations, presidents of big banks, big financial services, big Chambers of Commerce, corporate and individual tax-free foundations, and heads of rating agencies and (at least worth a set of gold clubs or new car at the annual High Holiday) heads of governmental regulating agencies. For this prime partner, government at all levels, Mayors, Governors, Presidents (considered “the big kahuna,” or “Jack Pot,” as they put it), as well as the horde of Senators and Congressmen customarily on the payroll. For academia, for Higher Education, College and University Presidents and Department Heads, and for Lower Education, school superintendents and school board members (but of course never teachers, for here it was felt the system was infested with a horde of suck ups who were repressing dangerous thoughts and feelings through fear of being fired).

For religion, above all fire-breathing pastors with large radio or television congregations (always sure to be there looking for a big time hand out). For Media, owners, publishers, and editors (but never reporters or any other small fry who typically took orders from on high).

With billionaires it was felt one needn’t bother, as most of them were already aboard with no further sweat needed. Doctors were also on occasion were to be included (for here it was felt that it could pay to have your eyes open for opportunities for half a dozen or so of this model, for

corporations and financial services loved to appoint them to lard their boards with M.D.s, thereby tapping into the subliminal reassurance of the Old Doc Jones salt of the earth image).

This the men felt pretty much completed the list. But then the lone woman considered reliable enough to sit in to be photographed among the Insiders spoke up.

Properly deferential, but with the steel in her voice that albeit her sex commanded respect, she proposed models for two more lesser targets.

“Marketwise you really must remember that more than half of the people you want to gull into compliance are women.” Here she proposed that female ComConBots simulating the hair dresser and the prostitute be developed.

“The hair dressers can be programmed to slyly bad mouth all dangerous political figures that refuse to go along with us, and the prostitutes can take pictures and threaten to expose and ruin them unless they knuckle under and do our bidding.”

And so it was done with uncanny attention to the verisimilitude, evocation, and status signaling of gestures, voices, and clothes.

Down through all these communities the specifications for properly disarming attire went on in far too much detail for recording here. Two models, however, merit observation.

As a general rule the squared off conservative sheen of the business model with shoes of fabulously expensive Italian design, known within the trade as the Eastern Model, prevailed. However, among the canny, increasingly the bets were on what came to be known as the Southern and Western models.

Distinguishing characteristics for the Southern Model were a touch of the “aw shucks” kind of southern drawl and projection of the smiling essence of “good old boy.”

Distinguishing characteristics for the Western Model were a slight roll to the walk, as if one had just got down off a horse. This was to be

followed with a wipe to the mouth, as if one had just got done aiming a chaw-bang or juicy whammer at—and hitting squarely—the old saloon spittoon.

However soon the excitement was over success for a particular combination of the Southern and Western Models plus the Master Touch of Touches, as it was known. For it sank in that for Mystifuians the Image of Images was that of the most beloved, trusted, and spell-binding of characters that had seized the psyche in the movies they had most often flocked to over many, many years.

Tall in the saddle, as it was said; gun at the hip; with hesitations in one's talk (as if one was searching for words and therefore obviously not one of the snooty upper crust that tried to put everybody down); programmed for either a big smile or a big frown on the turn of a dime, as they say—this model of models, it was felt, they could ride with for a long time.

At first there were those of in Mystifu who, like poor Oswald earlier, sensed “something fishy going on,” and wrote columns and letters to editors and congresspersons calling for investigation. But no sooner did they speak out than they too mysteriously disappeared from all the media—or even entirely!

One day they were here. Next day they were gone.

Everywhere one turned—on costly posters, flyers, road signs, sky writing against the sunset, even during every chain break on radio or television and of course by dutiful leadership model ComConBots—the word spread.

Alternately cooed or hammered across was the message of how the Mystifuians were being offered this glorious chance to share their destiny with the mighty power of Snarlsgrrrr by the two-pronged new leadership. Playing to the desperation in Mystifu for some sense of clarity, purpose in life, and hope for a better life was the attractively passionate blessing of the zealots—who for practical purposes temporarily downplayed their

affirmation of The One and Only God Above All Others and Death to Anyone Who Tried to Deny It. And playing to the greed in Mystifu for the endlessly expanding bounty of glittering goods and secure investments was assurance by the dispassionate and irreligious new Powers that in Mystifu they would, by unquestionable fiat, establish the kind of no nonsense, money-making efficiency that was the trademark for the might of Snarlsgrrrrrr.

More goods, more money, more of everything that made life ever better and better—in short, trumpeted through the land by the super friendly Snarlsgrrrrrrian ComConBots were more good times for the poor, misguided, contentious, unhappy, massively dysfunctional and just all around plain wonky village of Mystifu.