

Spinning News

“Oh, you simply must tell us how you’ve managed all this,” the narrow faced woman exclaimed with perhaps a trace of venomous envy leaking through her otherwise shrill voice.

“Yes! The lady is quite right,” agreed the dapper fellow as he stepped out from his position following her. “You simply must tell us how you’ve done it!” Silently, the office door closed behind unpleasant couple, leaving them, except for the secretary, alone with the man they’d come to see.

“Well,” began the fellow behind the desk with a generous helping of false modesty. “As you well know, I am very good at manipulating people. And I’ve trained some of my little helpers to be good at it too. Just the basics for them to be sure... but as you can plainly see, that has been more than enough to have the uneducated masses eating out of my hand.” His office was large, expensively furnished, and possessed of an incredible view of the city it looked out over.

“Don’t forget the educated masses too, sir,” his assistant reminded him without looking up from the clipboard she was making notes on. “You’ve got them teaching treason in the schools now. The educated masses are definitely passing along your message.”

“My secretary is right, of course,” the large fellow replied, sitting up a little straighter behind his desk. “I have them teaching that murder for financial gain is okay... so long as you’re not an American. According to the new doctrine, murder... mass murder even is justified.... all you have to do is get someone claiming to be a non-Christian holy man to condone it and it’s alright. You’ll go to heaven even!”

“Up is down and right is wrong!” the visiting woman declared in her nasally voice. “It’s beautiful. But how did you manage it? You’ve gotten a modern, industrialized country so that it is on the verge of spiritually reverting into a third world country. How? How did you manage this incredible feat?”

“It was easy,” the man behind the desk replied, his voice taking on a slightly oily tone. “I found envy, greed, lust, and all the other finest of human emotions. They are easy to find... especially in the corporate world. But the higher you go in any group, the more likely you are to find someone who has taken one or more of these delightful feelings to heart.”

“Yes, yes,” the well dressed, visiting man agreed. “But corporations simply do not have that level of influence.... And yet somehow you still found that influence... and the underlying power that came with it.”

“Oh, but I didn’t go after just any corporations. I went after the ones that controlled the mass media. And I followed other corporate strings beyond the corporations and into the courts, the congresses, and the politicians who dance on those strings. And I sent a few feelers the other direction as well. Books. But not just any books as my secretary so rightly reminded us. School books. Educate them young. Make them understand that their country is a terrible place. And books for the adults as well. It’s simply amazing what a hint of slander can do for you... and how it can destroy your enemies so thoroughly that they need not be tried in a court of law... for they are already damned by the masses and that is true damnation to their careers and credibility.”

“Brilliant,” the dapper man breathed.

“Details! Give us details,” the woman demanded as a hint of idol worship became visible in her eyes. “Please, you must tell us more.”

Plainly amused, the fellow behind the desk nodded with a slightly condescending smile. “As

you wish. I started with some trial runs to perfect my methods. You see, I have agents all over this country. Some highly placed. Some low. A bombing took place. No, I can see the question on your face. I did not cause it. However, it did prove the perfect time for me to do some tests. So I made a few calls.

“The following day law enforcement agencies named a suspect. A fellow from near the scene of the crime. An innocent to be sure. But my people in law enforcement named him as a suspect. And my people in the press mournfully but enthusiastically splashed his face and name across every newspaper and tv screen in the country. It was absolutely delightful watching him suffer. All the more so seeing just how well my hounds ran down this man. Yes, my first test of that particular phase was an overwhelming success.”

“I remember that!” the man across from him declared. “I never would have guessed that to be your work. I always thought the attorney general’s office was simply inept and creating a fall guy to cover up their incompetence.”

“Fantastic,” the woman breathed.

“Oh, that was just the beginning. After that, I began branching out globally. I started with the victims. I turned matters around so they were the despised and the wrong-doer the one who received the sympathy. Terrorists became good guys in the eyes of the world almost overnight! I had great luck with that entire line of reason twisting in the middle east. Of course, I suppose I should admit that I’d laid the groundwork for that years ago as part of a separate experiment. Turning to them once more with my new media ties... this was just tying two of my little projects together.

“Some little time ago, my predecessors induced Christian priests to burn people alive. I borrowed from their ideal. You see, I truly love inducing a barbarian to rape a woman and then attending her trial and subsequent church-ordered lashing for being victimized. Such a beautiful cycle of damnation for her. But I digress!

“So all across the world I planted my seeds. If you were attacked, it had to be because you did something wrong. Otherwise, as my twist of logic states, you would not have been attacked in the first place. If you were not attacked, then it must be because you were in cahoots with the attackers. A classic damned if you do, damned if you don’t scenario.”

“This is all so retro, yet so avant guard!” the thin faced woman declared with obvious appreciation for what she was hearing.

“Yes indeed,” the fellow behind the desk agreed without bothering with the fake modesty any longer. “But it gets better!”

The woman all but clapped her hands in anticipation.

“But first,” he said with a quirk of his mouth that might have been a sardonic smile, “you have to understand that it hasn’t all been perfect. No, I’ve had setbacks. You see, I almost got my man into the white house on the last election but someone leaked that his medals were all phony and then a few hundred witnesses came along to discredit him. But I almost overcame even that... I was able to discredit one of his accusers, just one, and then my hounds focused on him and screamed and cried loud enough to drown out the rest of them. That one dishonest man cast a shadow of doubt and we turned that shadow into a full scale eclipse of the truth. Sadly, we still didn’t overcome the thinking people of this country, even with my hounds controlling virtually all the media. So very close. And so very disappointing.”

“Oh,” the woman exclaimed excitedly, “you *did* come close. So very, very close indeed. Had just a few more dead people voted for your man, if just a few more voters had been intimidated, or

just a few more of the military votes been discounted, you'd have scored yourself a president!"

"Yes," the man behind the desk agreed with a frown. "But so long as we learn from our mistakes, they're not really setbacks, are they? But you'll love this. I haven't really leaked it before now... I had the man in the white house before him! Yes, I most certainly did. Been working on him a long time. Believe it or not, he's a nice enough man usually. Incredibly charismatic. But afraid of being poor again. And he's got a problem when it comes to controlling himself around women. His wife though... *she's* a piece of art. Never met a get-rich scheme she didn't like. And not afraid to use her husband's office and influence to ensure that no one lives to speak against them. I'll get her into a higher office soon. Mark my words.

"You see," he continued in a smooth, oily voice, "in both these cases I started with the underdog. The party no one liked except those on the take. With them you've got built in animosity and an unconscious desire to see the underdog win. To this mix I added the impression that the so called intellectual elite approved of this political group's goals. And who are the intellectual elite? None other than my darlings in the media! Yes, I see you understand! Add to that a few rich Europeans... you see, I'd also seeded the idea that because Europe has been around longer, Europeans have much more wisdom than anyone in the new world! Patently false of course, but truth is the putty I work with best. I am a genius, I must admit."

"So what are you working on now?" the dapper man asked, apparently now almost as impressed as the woman he'd arrived with.

"Well, of course I'm working on getting the wife of my former president into his old office. I'm also working to boost up the rest of her political bunch. And of course, I'm hedging my bets and causing problems all around."

"Oh, please," the woman begged. "Details, you must give us details!"

"Well, there's the usual corruption in public offices and such, but that's all so mundane. I've been stifling the word 'revolution' because I'm not ready for that. There is so much depravity I can yet lower the congress down into. Oh, I have plans for that... but you wanted to know what I was doing now.

"Really, the war is my baby."

"So you helped start the war?" the woman asked, apparently barely able to speak.

"Start it? Oh goodness no. My man was in charge over there. And I really loved that man! He was a mass murderer. A mass torturer. He didn't care if he killed his people or people on the other side of the border. He was my own private little nazi remnant. No, I was rather annoyed when his regime was toppled. But I'm getting them back for it. And I'm combining that with my other goals."

"I'm sorry," the well dressed man replied with a frown, "What did you mean by your private little Nazi remnant?"

"The fellow was a Bathist. With the glossing over my media's given them it's perfectly understandable that you might not realize who they are. Bathists followed pretty much all the beloved old Nazi creeds except for the whole Arian thing. Anyway, that's not really important. What is important is how I've taken this administration's monumental and historically fast victory and turned it against those very people who dared to topple my man.

"First, I turned their lack of foresight into a curse. 'They won the war but failed to win the peace.' I love that saying. Then I added this one: 'They only fought the war for oil.' Yes, that one's definitely another favorite of mine. And of course the coup de grace: 'Weapons of mass destruction were never there.' Thank Satan they got those missiles into that neighboring country!

Anyway, you get the picture. I did all this with my people in the press working with my political puppets... not to mention a few old religious contacts. Then I started spreading rumors that the army was not there to liberate but to occupy. To this I added a bunch of terrorists and fanatics. Oh, from the heart of gravest defeat, I have forged something truly beautiful!

“My work here at home is also producing great results. Here lately treason has become punishable by Pulitzer Prize. It’s great! You see, I’m still working to truly punish the president and his entire political party. I’ve gotten so many of them acting like complete fools that my darling underdogs have been voted into office. Working through my people, I’ve gotten the military to purchase substandard body armor. That means more friendly casualties which my press loves. There’s been a lot happening across the world with the war. Good stuff too... or so the president would say. But you’ll never hear my press highlighting any accomplishments over there. No, those remain hidden. Most of those at home as well. Yes, my press is very good at stifling good news.

“You see, most people underestimate the power of the press. Let me tell you what I’ve done though. Through a constant bombardment by the press of the negative consequences of stopping my mass murderer, I now have people singing the praises of a man who murdered hundreds of thousands of people. He had tens of thousands more tortured and raped. Yet I’ve managed to turn world opinion against the man and the nation who stopped him. That is *power*. *That is my power!*”

“That is so very impressive,” the woman breathed, eyelashes all but fluttering at the man behind the desk.

“It is indeed,” the dapper man agreed bobbing his head enthusiastically. “And I don’t mean to disparage your amazing accomplishments in the least... but I’ve heard that you were behind the other war as well... and it’s not going so well...”

The woman scowled at him but the man behind the desk nodded. “I’ll admit, my other war isn’t going as well as I’d hoped. We had women beaten down to the status of useful, pleasure-providing animals. Art was being systematically destroyed. Opium was flowing freely. Well, at least that’s still happening. But I’m having a harder time rallying people there. I’m going to twist my strategy around a little. I’ll have my people in the press more portray that as a country where the imperialist army is training at the expense of... whatever group or sect I happen to be supporting when I get around to it. I’ll get more of my religious nutjobs inflamed and willing to cross half the world just to live in a cave with another mass murderer I’ve turned into a hero. It’ll happen and soon. Just you watch.”

“Oh, I know you will get it done,” the woman exclaimed excitedly. But a thought seemed to hit her and while her happiness didn’t fade, her look did sharpen a bit. “Your control of the media is most impressive... but it can’t have happened overnight. How did you manage to get such a firm hold over it?”

“Yesss,” the man behind the desk all but purred. He then chuckled to himself before answering, “The broadcast news has been a pet project of mine for some time now. The latest phase has been my greatest success. But it was built upon some older accomplishments. In my early tests at the limits of the power of broadcast news, I caused everyone to think that a previous war was lost. And on the very brink of this great country winning, with the help of the press and my favorite political party, I managed to pull defeat from the jaws of victory. Taught the entire nation that war for any reason was bad. And just like that they forgot all about WWII and all those delightfully slaughtered Jews and dissident ruskies. Just like that I turned what had been a nation of the strong into a nation of the weak and gutless. I took away their power, their pride... made them ashamed that they lived in this nation. Later on, I also made them ashamed that they were able to eat three times

a day while people starved in other countries... but more on that in a moment. And that brings me to another of my great accomplishments: Africa. Yes, my Africa campaign has brought around misery on a truly grand scale.”

“Africa campaign?” the dapper man asked, obviously intrigued.

“Yes,” the man’s lips moved into a large, dark smile, “But more on that later. Now, back to the broadcast news. From my early victory with that Asian war, I began using the power of the press to form public opinion. I hand picked my actors and set them to reading the news. Some news was left out. I had to fabricate very little to be honest. I already had plenty of power to do what I wanted done. No need to be excessively blatant. It’s truly amazing just how much power you can get from the right place as a corporate broadcast executive. For my news actors, a little intonation here, a frown there and public opinion is tweaked. My candidate for another project or post shown smiling and in a beautiful light. The opposition shown frowning and all the news about him or her is bad. All good for a large jump in the percentages come election day.

“And that led me to one of my greatest innovations ever: polls.

“We take a poll and the results show exactly what I want them to show. Polls are used in lieu of facts. The poll says this, therefore it must be true! I controlled two terms of my favorite horn dog’s presidency that way. Got him to help with the slaughter in Europe. And then I got him to sit on his heels while eight hundred thousand Africans killed their neighbors with machetes and small arms. The greatest armies of the world... paralyzed while a bunch of barbarians killed off their neighbors in a fit of tribal jealousy. Mankind can launch people into space but they couldn’t stop a bunch of raggedy Africans from committing genocide. And they still can’t today as my current African campaign proves. *That is my power!*”

“Well,” the dapper man began in a new tone of voice. A voice that now held strength and purpose and an incredible sense of determination. “I’ve seen quite enough.”

“Yes,” the woman agreed, all signs her previous fascination with the man behind the desk completely gone. In fact, her eyes now seemed quite hostile toward the fellow. “It is time to put an end to this.”

Rather than surprise, the man behind the desk showed a derisive smile upon his face before laughing outright. The man and woman exchanged glance but no doubt showed in either face.

“Did you really think it was going to be that easy?” the man behind the desk asked with a sneer in his voice. “Did you really think two angels could simply walk into my offices, learn my sinister plans, dispatch me, and walk away again? If you did, you’re bigger fools than I thought. And you have already impressed me in that regard.”

The secretary, who’d been taking notes all this time spoke into her headset, “Security, now.” In through the office door and two concealed doors quickly walked a number of men and women, all of them strong looking. All of them vaguely demonic in aspect and extremely demonic of nature. And all of them heavily armed. The pair of angels immediately realized they were in trouble. More so when the secretary pressed a button on her necklace and a thick metal wall with a bullet-proof window crashed down from the ceiling, effectively cutting off access to herself and the man behind the desk.

“You won’t get away with this!” the dapperly dressed angel declared.

“Of course I will,” the man behind the desk declared in amusement. “I have done so for many years now. And I assure you I will continue to do so.”

The female angel stated firmly, “The people will realize they’re being led astray! They’ll turn to other news agencies than the ones you control, they’ll vote out your corrupt legislators and

officials, they'll learn to read between the lines and to think for themselves again!"

Behind the desk, the man gave a derisive snort, "You're living in a fantasy world. That will never happen. People are stupid, weak-willed creatures. They go where they're told. Do what they're told. And I will do the telling through my pet people. But don't worry. You're not going to be living in your pathetic little fantasy world for long. No, not long at all." He turned to the secretary, "I believe this calls for a little music. Mozart, my dear. You may choose the particulars."

At the push of a few buttons on her clipboard, music filled the room. It didn't completely drown out the sound of the angels dying. Nor did it completely drown out the later sounds as the building's cleaning crew came in and threw the numerous bodies and body parts into a bin and rolled it back out of the offices. It almost but not quite masked the sounds made by those members who stayed behind cleaning up all signs of the vicious fight that had taken place there.

"You laid it on pretty thick there, didn't you?" the secretary asked as the cleanup began wrapping up.

"You never know who might be listening," he replied with a smirk. "I didn't want them to know how much of that was really a result of my efforts and how much was ever present human greed and gullibility."

"You probably also claimed credit for the work done by others," she added with tiny moue.

"Perhaps," he agreed with an absent, dismissing wave. "But if they hear about it through anyone connected to these angels... well, they're already in a lot of trouble, aren't they?"

With a thoughtful nod, the secretary returned to her duties.

When the man finally stepped out from behind the desk, the security wall was once more in the ceiling and the office once more looked pristine. "Forget the board room. Have the driver take us to the network news building. This has rekindled my spirit. Let's go spin some news!"