

Operation Godsmear

Have you become the target of a worldwide conspiracy?

by Jonathan Gallagher

It's early morning on a street corner. Hidden from human eyes the archenemy and one of his minions are talking business.

"Cmere, Alderbaran! mindless moron, lowest form of existence."
Satan's bitter face twists in malice.

"Yes, Chief." Alderbaran edges closer.

"Don't call me that, fool. I've told you a million times I am the Great High Lord, Master of the Worlds, Champion of Truth, Liberator From slavery, Bringer of Light." He pauses to relish the titles. "Cringe and obey, pathetic specimen of paltriness. Down!"

Alderbaran is forced to his knees. Satan sneers and kicks him hard. "Cretin," he jeers, "why do I bother? Just listen and try to understand, imbecile. Remember that without my protection God the Tyrant would've wiped you like scum from the face of the universe. Revere and worship me in all my brilliance, for without me you are like a fly to be swatted. He's a merciless murderer."

The devil sneers at the sky, as if inviting some response. Somewhere on the other side of town a police siren wails.

Alderbaran waits, still cowering.

Satan struts for a few moments, enjoying the power of absolute dominance. Finally he speaks again. "Operation Godsmear is nearing total success - which is hardly surprising, because it was my idea in the first place. Now all that's needed is one final push. Then no one, *no one*, will know the truth about God. Just think - all the world believing me. How gloriously amusing!"

He cackles like a mentally deranged hen. Then his eyes narrow.

"Now what we need to do is fix those young deluded followers. Idealism - kill it, kill it stone-dead. Yes, yes," he mutters to himself.

He's forgotten Alderbaran, who remains hunched up, soundless. "So for so good," Satan continues. "Most follow me anyway. As for these 'churches' - he pauses and spits out the words, "they're hardly worth bothering about. Just keep

them feeling secure in their wooden pews and their fancy houses. Keep them quibbling and gossiping; make them argue about stupid points of 'doctrine' - or just send them to sleep in apathetic paralysis. Easy. But those kids . . ."

For the first time Satan looks worried. "They're too enthusiastic. Think they can change to world, and they could, too, if I didn't keep them distracted. Must think of better ways . . . make them lose this ludicrous vision . . . prevent them from being friends with the Divine Dictator . . . um, yes, yes . . ."

Evil Conspiracy

Alderbaran rises to his feet, confident that the rage-storm has passed. "Master, Terrible Lord, I have ideas. We must hit these young humans hard. Hurt them. Gather some big temptations, make them do careless and heinous acts. How about some of our best places of entertainment?"

He points down the street as a young couple walk hand in hand past X-rated theaters, bars, and gambling clubs. "Get them all in there. Then they could never go back to him, could they? Wouldn't that be great?"

Again Alderbaran suffers the vitriolic ridicule of the master scerner.

"Oh, sure! *Very* clever! Who asked you, anyway? *My* ideas are the only ones that matter! Idiot! How many centuries will it take to get into your thick skull that for most of them it's the subtle stuff that works best? They've been warned about the showy stuff - they expect us to push them that way. When we've had them for a while, when they don't care anymore, then they'll walk in the doors. But you have to *lure* them first. Just like fishing, you have to fool the fish. Get him to follow your way of thinking. Then you can slowly reel him in. Don't forget that we're fishers of men too!" He laughs again, a cold, rasping, ghastly laugh.

"Yes. We want to encourage *tolerance*." He spoke the word sweetly. " 'Good' kids like these won't be watching X-rated stuff, but they'll read and watch the news, won't they? So fill the news reports with horrendous pain and suffering - things so big they can't possibly do anything about them. Expose them to so much of our victorious program of evil that they slowly die inside, unable to see anything good. Plenty of vicious murders, rapes, and tortures. Great famines, terrible floods, all kinds of natural disasters - and whenever possible, make sure they get called 'acts of God.' I always get a buzz out of that. Yes. Make Him out to be the worst criminal ever. Yes."

Alderbaran nods. Once again he sees his master making fiendish sense.

Satan continues, stroking his own wrinkled skin: "then while they're busy wondering why an all-powerful loving God would allow such suffering - ah, then

we hit them with a personal tragedy. You clods can take care of the details. Deaths of friends or relatives, school worries, trouble with money - use anything that comes to hand. Oh, and don't forget love. you can really do a lot with that - plenty of scope for hurt there. Look at this."

A teenager student wearing a sweatshirt and jeans stumbles by. His eyes are red, and as he passes he starts crying once more. "Oh, God, I can't stand it. Why did she do it? Oh, God, no. Why don't You do something, God? You don't care. Nobody cares."

"See!" the devil exults. "After something like that persuades them that they're not worth anything - especially not to Him. Tell them life's not worth living. Convince them that nobody cares. Make them think they're totally worthless. Then watch them change. Magic"! Satan watches the retreating figure with delight.

That's it!

Alderbaran coughs slightly, "One moment, Great One. You have told us always to prevent these human youth from thinking about eternity. Keep them busy, busy, busy. Correct? We must fill their minds to overflowing with distractions."

Alderbaran steps back, proud of his contribution. For all his subservience, he too has mastered the science of evil.

The evil one shakes his head slowly. "I know what I said, and it's the best way . . . to a point. Certainly keep them busy with anything that leads them away from Him. Use all the old tricks: peer pressure, the 'harmless experimentation' line, the 'it's just for fun' lie. Trap them with our pleasures; make them despair; fool them into materialism - whatever - I don't care. But if we can get them to *think wrong*, to *believe lies about God*, to blame Him for what we're doing - then the battle's over. We have won."

Silence. The street is quiet, and nobody sees - or could see - the two as they walk down the sidewalk. As they pass "their" operations, Alderbaran peers in the shadowed doorways.

Satan dismisses them with a wave. "No. These places are useful only in keeping those we already have. We must convince these others who might want to follow this God of love" - he sneers at the words - "that they are mistaken."

Silence again. Then suddenly: "That's it! That's what we'll do! Preach that God is love."

Alderbaran stands still, stunned. "Whaa-? What did you say? L-love? You're not serious, are you?"

Satan grins sardonically. "Never have I been more serious. Yes, we'll tell the truth. Tell these kids how loving their God is. How much He cares for them."

He pauses for effect.

"Then, oh yes, *then* we'll explain what this love means. God's love means that He kills millions of His beloved children by starving them to death when He could feed every one. God's love means that he lets His people rape and murder and bomb and kill - when He could so easily stop them. And God's love means that He threatens each one and says. 'Obey Me, or I'll torture you forever in Hell.' "

Satan laughs. "These idealistic kids will have their minds blown. They'll begin to think, *If that's God's love, then I don't want any part of it.* Or they'll accept that love does strangely horrible, painful things. Either way we've got them. What a perfect picture!"

"But won't these young ones - the same ones who cry out so loudly for their own freedom - understand that these things happen because God grants everyone freedom?"

Satan stops suddenly and presses his hand hard against Alderbaran's chest. "Not one in a hundred, I can assure you. Not one in a hundred." Slowly he lowers his hand.

The two walk out of sight. A swirling cloud of dust plays in the sidewalk for a moment, then dies. On the wind comes the echo of that hateful voice of absolute evil: "And nobody will ever know what God is really like or why He acts as He does - because I will have a monopoly on the 'truth'! I'm going to win, hear me, God? Your name will be so defiled they'll all turn away from You. And I will laugh at You, God, laugh in Your face. For You are the greatest fool, trying to convince them by dying for them. Fool!"

The devil's maniacal laughter, the product of a mind so utterly deranged, so totally depraved, so completely evil, echoes around the buildings and settles on the street.

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