

HOSTILE TAKE OVER

Greed lights up a man's eyes in ways which are impossible to duplicate. It's a powerful emotion, and one which is more addictive than even the most formidable drug you can imagine.

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There is no gold in loyalty. Sooner or later people always become a problem. You could count on it. This was Snorri Guilder's motto.

Snorri sat quietly in the reception area of the Bandersnatch Corporation. They were ripe prey. They had recently started outsourcing. Once a company started down this road. Well, it was the beginning of the end, wasn't it? Snorri knew he had them. Outsourcing was like a hunger. A demon who demanded constant feeding. Managers simply couldn't walk away. No matter how hard they tried.

Your average manager sits in quiet despair in their well-lit, well-cooled and odor-free offices. Evermore expensive healthcare bills piling up in their inbox. Hard to acquire talent using their new-found importance to demand an ever-increasing share of the company's profits. While at the same time, competitors were banging at the door like some great battering ram. It was enough to give one a headache. All you had to do was give one of those managers an aspirin and they were yours for life.

Sometimes you didn't even need to have the aspirin on you. You merely had to promise you'd bring it around the next day. They might worry about how this affected their staff for a few fleeting moments. But in the end, the staff wasn't piling up like the bills in the inbox. In fact, the whole system was built to keep the employees at bay. The pile in the inbox won out every time.

Oh, employees might imagine they are dedicated, efficient, hard-working, motivated, and reliable. It gives them the illusion they are irreplaceable. But, it's a morning mist before the blazing sun of resource management. No, as soon as someone can do your job half as well, for one-tenth the cost, you were worth less than animal fodder. Out the door faster than the speed of light.

Snorri looked around the plainly decorated room. It smelled of aerosol freshened air, a chemical impression of the floral harmony of nature. The walls were white. The mindless, inoffensive artwork hanging on the walls was a corporate standard. Nothing to offend anyone in those unidentifiable patterns of colors and textures. Only a single recognizable item was framed on the wall. It was a glowing media review of the company, but it was decades old. Old glories immortalized in a glittering frame.

But what caused Snorri to smile was there wasn't a single employee in sight. The reception area was fully automated. This made Bandersnatch Corporation ripe for remote IT support. Technology was one of the ways corporations devoured themselves. It was always sold with the promise of reducing costs, year over year. What it did was put the buyer in an endless trap, requiring the purchaser to spend untold sums on upgrades, repairs, and improved hardware. It was the snake oil of the future. Snorri would never consider selling technology to a company. He couldn't bring himself to be so despicable. No, it was outsourcing for him, plain and simple.

A door slid aside as a second table and chair rose up from those apertures in the floor. A common-looking corporate type walked through the door and sat in the newly arrived chair. He looked haggard, dispirited, and drawn ... perfect. He introduced himself as Mr. Huddleston. "So, you represent Exceptional Resources." he droned.

"Quite so."

Mr. Huddleston settled back in his chair. "Well, we already have an outsourcing firm, so I'm afraid you've wasted your time."

Snorri Guilder's expression didn't change one bit. "Yes, but I think you'll find our services are exceptional. We're interdimensional."

Mr. Huddleston blinked. "You're what?"

"Let me ask you this, what is your biggest problem?" Snorri left in the pause for the man to answer, but he was still too stunned for any meaningful comprehension to have taken place. He answered the question for the befuddled Bandersnatch Corporation executive. "It's people." Snorri smiled slightly as the executive gave him a wry grin. "Sure, you can save some money by moving your operations to other locations. But you're still spending money, aren't you? The sad truth is, no matter how much money you're saving today, the result is tenuous at best."

He paused a moment for the idea to sink in. "You see, no matter how much you save, you're still involving people. It's only a matter of time before they start demanding better wages, shorter hours, and worst yet ..." he gasped. "expensive health care programs."

The iris Mr. Huddleston's eyes widened. Snorri knew it. You could always tell the ones who were tortured, simply by walking into their offices every day, only to find a higher health care bill sitting on their desk. This sale was in the bag. This type was unable to resist the full range of services Exceptional Resources could provide.

"Sooner or later a new government will come to power. They'll tell the people how it is their right to have a better future. How they desire better pay and quality health care." He could see Mr. Huddleston wince when he mentioned healthcare; perfect. "It's tremendously easy for a politician to use this ploy to get elected. After all, the state won't have to provide the higher wages, you will. Those politicians won't have to figure out how to provide any medical cost coverage, they'll force you to do it." Snorri Guilder enjoyed this part, it was like twisting the knife in an open wound and pouring in salt.

"They'll naturally hear about all the luxuries your profits afford you and they'll want some of those. Sooner or later, they'll want all of those. People do this, it's in their very nature. Sure, right now, they are happy to have a job and any pay rate. They'll work for peanuts, without any health coverage at all, but it won't last. You know it, I know it. It's only a matter of time. You can't keep people cut off indefinitely. Sooner or later, no matter where you go on the planet, people are going to hear about a better life. And they are going to want what you have."

Mr. Huddleston looked disappointed. "So, what do you expect us to do, go off-world?" he laughed.

"Well, no. You see going off-world would only grossly increase your transportation costs, and in the end, the species there would still want the same things. No, what you need is workers in a different dimension. This is where Exceptional Resources can help you out because, at Exceptional Resources, we're interdimensional."

He gave it a moment for the idea to sink in.

"Imagine, if you will, another dimension where the workers are dedicated, efficient, hard-working, motivated, and reliable, but more importantly, they never heard of you. And never will. A place indescribably far away, but you can get there in seconds. So, not only to you have a population who will

work endless hours for you without complaint for next to nothing, but your transportation costs are virtually nil as well. Does this sound like something which might interest you?"

Greed lights up a man's eyes in ways which are impossible to duplicate. It's a powerful emotion, and one which is more addictive than even the most formidable drug you can imagine. Snorri Guilder could see this light in Mr. Huddleston's eyes as clearly as he could see the sun on a cloudless day. Corporate executives can be so selfish. Perhaps the most insidious combination of words ever stitched together in all the multiverses is the phrase, "what's in it for me?"

But such men were always waiting for the other shoe to drop. "You mentioned a cost," Mr. Huddleston mumbled.

"That's the beautiful part," Snorri smiled delightfully. "You and I can pass between the dimensions unaltered because we are living tissue, but physical objects change form. Let me ask you this, what's the one thing on this world no one wants?"

Mr. Huddleston stammered.

"Waste, that's what. No one wants garbage." Snorri's grin was irrepressible. "Yet, what's the vilest waste to you is changed into the unbelievably worthwhile materials in another dimension. Food, gold, fuel, you name it."

Huddleston though he'd found the catch. "What good is it for us to have these people make circuit boards for us if they change into snow peas when they get here?"

"Well, they won't be making circuit boards for you. They'll be hunting and collecting furs ... only they'll become circuit boards when to bring them back to this dimension."

"Wait a minute," Mr. Huddleston protested, "are any of these furs taken from endangered species?"

"What do you care? It's in a different dimension."

Mr. Huddleston shrugged his shoulders. Environment concerns in alternate dimensions never bothered even the most civic-minded corporations. Plus, you never had to file an EPA report. Not even once.

"Not only can we help you build your circuit boards at a fraction of the cost, but we can also take over all your support needs. No more messy phone banks answering questions for customers. No more rows and rows of employees you must manage. Forget about getting customers off the phone as quickly as possible. You can have the best of both worlds. There are dimensions of planets where they are thrilled to talk to people. Where we not only have a room full of operators but a whole planet of operators. And they are practically free."

"On top of this, we can provide all your technical support with an entire dimension of specially trained and highly skilled support staff."

"I know this one dimension, primitive place, you wouldn't believe; they use a very nasty product called crude oil. Nasty stuff, they burn it and it pollutes their atmosphere. They think it's made from ancient compressed organic material. But we put it there for them to find. We fill up subterranean holes with the stuff. They can't get enough of it. The best part of it is, waste in this dimension is crude oil in theirs."

“Think about it. They’re in another dimension. They are never going to hear about you. You don’t have to deal with any of their problems. You’re completely protected from all forms of liability. No politician is ever going to point to his people and say ... ‘You should have what they have.’”

Snorri Guilder smiled. “So, you see, the cost to you is nearly negligible. I’m mean, you have to collect the stuff anyway, am I right? It’s the perfect deal. You get rid of waste materials you don’t want in exchange for something you do, at a cost ... we’ll I don’t have to tell you ... can’t be beaten anywhere in this dimension. It’ll make your competitors cry. You won’t find lower costs even if you converted every one of your employees to interns. Think about it. It’s the culmination of every economic theory and doctrine in the universe. The perfect answer.”

Snorri could see his customer was going to need a little more convincing.

“We tried it once, your way. The result was centuries of wars, communist revolutions, social unrest. Sure, war is good for business, but let me tell you this, peace is much better for business. We mucked about for thousands of light-years across space, building a galactic empire. It didn’t help. Well, except to expand our marketplaces. I’m telling you it was a disaster. Resources dropping, wages up, healthcare costs skyrocketing, it wasn’t a pretty picture. Trust me when I tell you, interdimensional outsourcing is the way to go.”

“When you get rid of the costs ... well, profit takes care of everything else. You can conquer the universe.”



Snorri Guilder stepped out of the portal and back into his homeworld. The room was filled with the resources robbed from other worlds. Wealth beyond avarice. The ultimate materialism. If there was any such thing as the smell of success, Snorri’s world had it. The place was a hive of activity. Staff flying about, performing the operations vital to day to day business ... and profit collecting.

“Did you get him?” Snorri’s supervisor asked.

“It was a piece of cake. Couldn’t have been easier. Once they start outsourcing, they play right into our hands.”

“So, he bought the whole multidimensional thing?”

Snorri smiled, his mandibles practically gleamed. There was a shine in each part of his compound eyes. “It was like taking candy from a pupa,” he explained.

“We’ll take their waste and bury it on Itan 7. Then we’ll have our slave labor start turning out their circuit boards. If there is one thing we’ve learned on Exploitan is greed is a much better way to strip a planet of its wealth and resources than invasion. Your victims practically give it to you. So, these Earth people don’t suspect a thing?”

Snorri Guilder adjusted his suit over his outer insectoid carapace, “They don’t even have a clue.”

“Once we remove all their resources, we’ll have another nice, new slave planet. They’ll do whatever we tell them. Good work.”