

Darla Monica

By Sheila Naranja

## Chapter 7: Industrial-Strength Competition

Greta Garbo and Carry Grant hung out in Carry's office until the time appointed for their meeting with the boss. Carry had not heard Brad's Tech Talk on "Swiss Army Computing," but he got wind of it from one of the Musk-Koggi developmental engineers. He filled Greta in on what little he had learned about it. The whole thing affirmed the way Musk-Koggi functioned as both an engineering and a business organization. Greta greatly appreciated Carry's generosity in spending the time bringing her up to speed on the matter.

At the appointed time, Greta checked her watch and the two were off down the corridor to meet with the boss along with the two top sales associates on their team. The whole thing was planned for a small conference room that usually went unused because of its tight seating. It was the best available on such short notice, and would help make the discussion be more intimate. Besides, it was far better than squeezing all five into the boss' own private window office.

The only guys in the room were Carry and the boss. Musk-Koggi thrived on feminine sales talent. The male presence was mostly formal. The real substance was in the female staff, especially Greta. She was admired by the junior associates for her "manliness" and her quick wit. Were it not for her unfortunate virginal status, she would make an excellent partner to replace the decrepit Canine Lady. Both Carry and the boss focused on her as if she were a goddess. She sure acted like one.

Down north, in San Francisco, Brad Yayger wrapped up his research work to head out for a stroll through Golden Gate Park. He liked to take a Muni train to the beach for a beer at the Beach Chalet before his walk through the park to another brew-pub. He turned in his material at the page desk and headed out to the subway. The guy at the desk recognized him as a regular reference material patron. "What did you think of the Hakluyt volume?" Brad usually shared a bit of his reading experience with the guy, so he filled him in on the gnarly polar bear scene. This piqued his curiosity and got him thinking of reading the volume himself. Lead by example.

Musk-Koggi was ready to compete aggressively with their primary rival in the C.G.I. world: Industrially-Lighted Maggots (I.L.M.). That was the boss' primary message. Greta's suspicions were spot-on, as usual. Carry was a bit surprised. The other sales associates were curious about what that would mean for the sales team. It meant work. Lots of it, but good stuff. The boss was jazzed and he got the entire team revved up about the prospects for a major sales win. It would mean promotions and salary bumps. It might not seem possible, at first, but I.L.M. was suffering from conical inefficiencies that rendered them vulnerable to sales assaults.

Musk-Koggi had suffered such inefficiencies itself until one of their Board members got wind of a Tech Talk on conical inefficiency that Brad had given back in May. He invited the telecom lady who heard the talk to present the material at a Board meeting. She had done a bang-up job of laying out the idea of a cone of inefficiency suppressing a dome of efficiency. The Board was sold, so their executives had to either shape up or take a walk. It was a major restructuring that turned Musk-Koggi into a lean, mean creativity machine.

The boss outlined the basics of a sales campaign that would leverage engineering support and collaboration unknown in traditional business. The engineering managers were fully on-board and would support sales strategy development all the way. It was the best news Greta could have gotten. She had been a strong proponent of tighter collaboration with engineering. It was as if her dream had come true.

On the trip to the beach, Brad encountered a woman with a fish motif in her jewelry. She had fish earrings, a fish necklace, fish bracelets on each wrist. As a guy born under the sign of Pisces, and an expert on biblical symbolism, Brad's interest was sparked. As she passed him, he mentioned that there was something fishy about her jewelry. She chuckled. "I'll bet you get that all the time." Nope. It was her first encounter with such wry humor. She got off the train long before the beach, but he had left a lasting impression on her. He had also upgraded her Air Bonehead connection to the international level. For that, she would be eternally grateful.

The sales meeting took longer than any of the participants expected. The boss had hoped to take the team out for a celebration lunch, so his calendar was clear for the rest of the day. That was not the case for either Greta or Carry. They both had personal plans for lunch that excluded each other. As the meeting dragged on, they both got a bit nervous. What if they missed their lunch dates? Finally, the boss announced the good news from the firefight at Stow Rage. The Orbuncle hack had crippled Fun Macro servers at a number of I.L.M. customer sites.

Both Greta and Carry looked ambivalent. Was this really good news? The answer to that question would come in time. In the near term, they were obliged to postpone their lunch plans for a lunch with the boss. The world had changed dramatically for both. Their lunch dates would understand the circumstances. They were now part of a virtual family that kicked donkey on their respective physical families. This would be the first of many outings as family members. The date was set for lunch with the entire sales team. The boss knew of a place in Santa Monica where underemployed actors dance on the countertops.