

10.

Antonia unlocked the door and walked into the large, empty house. "So, this is my home now," she thought, still not quite believing that this beautiful mansion was hers. After dumping his suitcase in the middle of the living room, Mike went to his study, unpacked his personal computer, and started playing one of his favorite games, a personal computer version of Space Invaders.

Antonia came into the living room and saw Mike's suitcase vomiting its dirty laundry into the perfection of the vaulted living room. It made her angry. It reminded her of the mentality that had raped the Valley by replacing blossoms with pavement. She was determined to cultivate the beauty of this house and teach him to respect and appreciate it.

Antonia decorated expensively, but not ostentatiously. In her youth, she had crisscrossed California on visiting her relatives. These trips had taken her to the parts of rural California that had been abandoned when highways, railroads, or rivers had changed courses. Most of the things for sale in these towns were junk, but a few were antique treasures. She spent her weekends in search of these antiques. On these weekend outings, Mike chauffeured her in his Pontiac, since it was the largest and least conspicuous of their three cars. She could tell by the way he sat fidgeting in the car that he hated these trips. She consoled herself with the thought of how delighted he would be when the house was furnished.

After the house was decorated, Mike walked through the rooms with the vague sense that he no longer belonged there. He had loved the unbroken spaces inside the house when it was new. Now, the house was even more beautiful, but it was no longer his.

His feelings about the house didn't carry over to Antonia. He loved her more after they were married than before. When Prince Charles of England married Lady Diana, Antonia and Mike spent the morning in bed, holding hands and watching the event on TV.

Since Antonia was still working, Mike spent his weekdays alone. He missed her, but since he usually didn't get up until noon, he didn't find his days hard to fill. He spent most of his time sitting in his red overstuffed chair playing computer games. Because of its deteriorating condition, Antonia had been after him to throw the chair out, but he had steadfastly refused. It was a souvenir from his East Palo Alto apartment and he was very attached to it. Besides, the rest of the house was hers, but his computer room was his.

He tried designing a few computer games, but after years of programming a computer for a living, he found that now he greatly preferred playing computer games to creating them.

From the command post of his chair, he picked up his keyboard and entered the warrens of Adventure. He'd tried to get Antonia into playing Adventure. She learned the rules fairly quickly, but she had no interest in the game or in computers in general.

Mike loved the intellectual challenge of Adventure's riddles, but when he was in the mood for more mindless entertainment, he played the Apple II version of Space Invaders. He'd just obliterated another fleet of enemy space ships when the phone rang.

He resented the interruption. Since Mike had returned from his honeymoon, he hadn't much satisfying social contact. Members of Antonia's family visited often, but he wished they didn't. Her parents were all right, but many of her relatives hit up "Cousin Mike" for money the moment Antonia left the room. He'd given Antonia's relatives a little money, and out of a sense of guilt and fairness had given his father the money for the liquor store. The way Mike's family treated him made him like people less and suspect them more.

The phone rang again. Mike thought about not answering it. But he superstitiously felt that he didn't answer the phone, the call would be important. He was pleasantly surprised when the phone call turned out to be from William.

Mike's surprise distracted him just long enough to be obliterated by an enemy missile. He didn't mind. He was more interested in talking to his friend. He missed the friendly banter and the intimate conversation of dinners at the Li River, but he hadn't gotten around to calling anybody from Rosetta.

William was pleasant, but he volunteered little about his own life and invited Mike to continue the conversation over dinner at the Li River. Mike readily accepted.

As Mike drove down to Mountain View to have dinner, he wondered if not working at Rosetta and driving a Ferrari would change his feelings about the Li River. He wondered if eating Antonia's homemade meals every night would make the Li River's food taste different. He wondered if he and William would have anything to talk about now that they no longer worked together every day. Most of all, he wondered if anybody else from Rosetta would be there.

When Mike entered the Li River, he saw that the restaurant itself had changed. The familiar peeling paint had been covered over with fresh wallboard. The old plaster ceiling with its yellow shaded incandescent fixtures had now been replaced by a drop ceiling with fluorescent lights. The menus were now neatly printed without crossed out prices. Without these funky details, the Li River didn't seem like the same restaurant. But when Mike sat down with William it seemed like old times except that the rest of the old Rosetta gang wasn't there.

"I'm moving in with Jennifer," William said after they'd ordered their food.

“That's excellent,” Mike said, when he heard the news. “How does it feel to be living with someone?”

The question embarrassed William. William had moved in with Jennifer out of guilt and need as much as desire, but he had wound up enjoying it much more than he thought he would. William was used to sharing his bed with one-night stands, but he found getting up in the morning to sight and touch of the same woman was a new and pleasant experience. Yet, he had trouble expressing these feelings, particularly to another man.

“Jennifer's a great girl. I like living with her,” William said, “but I'm still a bachelor. There's a world of difference between cohabitation and marriage.”

Mike saw that William was looking for approval. Mike remembered their conversation on the beach at Santa Cruz. Then, William had seemed so unattainably experienced. Now, Mike felt like William was asking him for worldly wisdom. The role reversal filled Mike with a strong desire to protect his friend.

“There's nothing to be hesitant or defensive about,” Mike said. “If I didn't have Antonia, I'd be really jealous. You're a lucky man.”

William smiled a half-smile and nodded, “Yeah, Jen has been really good to me, especially with things at Rosetta being the way they are. The atmosphere has gotten worse since you left. The stock keeps falling. People are getting very angry. I think the tide's finally beginning to turn against Hilton.”

“I'm surprised Hilton hasn't gotten you fired yet,” Mike said.

“It's more useful to have me around,” William said, raising his mouth in a half smile. “It gives him someone to blame his mistakes on. Hilton keeps Omar in the dark so Omar still believes Hilton's version of what's going on. I'll be the sacrificial lamb when next quarter's results are published.”

“I hate that slimy son of a bitch,” Mike said.

“Don't worry about it. Living well is the best revenge,” William said. “Speaking of which,” William dropped his tone meaningfully. “I've been talking to some investors and they might be willing to finance us if we started a company of our own.”

“Us?” Mike asked.

“Yes, you and me,” William said, laughing indulgently. “Look, I've seen quite a few programmers in my time and I think you're one of the best. You develop the software and I'll run the business. What do you think?”

The food arrived and interrupted their conversation. Mike took a helping of kung-pao chicken. It tasted as good as ever. As he ate, Mike considered William's proposition.

The idea of work excited him. At first, he hadn't missed it, but lately he'd begun to feel vaguely restless. He wanted to say yes immediately, but an inner voice urged caution. He wondered if William was just asking him for money like his father or Antonia's relatives.

"I'll think about it," Mike said and went on eating his dinner.

"I know you're wondering what's in it for you," William said. "With all of the money that you've made, you must have carloads of con men coming around. It happened to me after Rosetta went public."

Mike smiled. William was real family, not a relative coming out of the woodwork.

William continued, "I got more Rosetta stock than you did and I sold some of it before it crashed, so I got out with a decent amount of money. I'm not out to rip you off. I want you to be my partner in building a company. The amount of stock each of us gets in the new company will be proportional to the amount of money each of us puts in."

William's deal seemed fair. Mike had come to Silicon Valley to be part of creating something. Rosetta had proven that he and William members of the same brotherhood.

"O.K., so let's say we form a company. What exactly would this company do?" Mike asked.

William smiled and his eyes grew wide.

"I want to develop a product that combines the three top selling types of P.C. software into one program," William said. "Once we've done that, the next step is to put everything under a window system, just like that demo you put together at Rosetta. If we can do that, we'll blow away everything else on the market."

"I guess that's true, but why go through all the hassle of starting a company? Why don't we just develop the software and see if we can sell it?" Mike asked.

"Mike, you're so brilliant at what you do, but not so brilliant about realizing its value," William said. "Real Rosetta was a success. Why? Because you designed it. Creating computer programs is what you were born to do, but if you don't protect your ideas, some bastard like Hilton will come along and steal them. He'll have the money and you'll have the cold comfort of knowing you had the idea first. You're living at a unique time in business history. Making fortunes in the computer industry won't always be easy as picking cherries."

Mike nodded. Omar had made a similar observation in Atlantic City and he'd been right. Mike definitely had not regretted choosing Silicon Valley over college. Certainly, William had proven to be more reliable than Omar, so Mike had no doubt that

William also must be right. Besides, Mike didn't need William to tell him that Silicon Valley was changing. He could see it in the shopping malls. People were spending more and working less. Even more, computers had gone from being a cult to being a commodity, and so people approached programming as a job rather than as a calling.

Mike thought about what Antonia had said about a new wave of adventurers replacing the computer entrepreneurs. He knew he should start preparing now for the time when these newcomers would threaten the security of Antonia and the children they would someday have. Starting a successful company seemed like an excellent start, but a vague feeling that William's offer might be the wrong one held him back.

William could see the conflict on Mike's face and broke the silence, "Think about how much money Omar has. He sold most of his stock at the top of the market and covered the rest of his stock with puts."

"What! Omar bought puts just like I did?" Mike exclaimed.

William nodded. "When he found out about your purchase, he bought put options too. I found out from a friend of mine who's a stockbroker where Omar just happens to have his account. If Omar did it, I'm sure that he included his good friend Hilton in the fun. Of course, since he bought them later, he didn't make as much per share as you did."

Mike felt the blood rise in his face and his fists clench in outrage. Omar had fired him for something that he had done himself.

"I'm in. Not only am I in, but I'm psyched," Mike said, lifting his glass in a toast to their new partnership.

The next morning Mike was still wildly excited. He'd expected his enthusiasm to subside, but it was even stronger than the night before. He'd wanted to talk to Antonia after he'd come home from the Li River but she had already gone to sleep.

"We're going to be rich," Mike said as they sat down to breakfast, "Really rich. All I have to do is write one computer program."

Antonia laughed, "What's going on? We're already rich. What do we need more money for?"

"We may not need it now, but we're going to need it later," he said.

"We'll worry about later when it gets here," she said. "If money gets tight, I still have a job."

He gently took her by the shoulders and looked into her face, “I appreciate that you're still working. It's one of the things I love about you, but it makes me feel guilty when you come home looking so worn out. I feel like I should be doing something. I would be happier if you stayed home and figured out what you really want to do. If this start-up works out half as well as Rosetta, we'll never have to work again because this time I'll have Omar's cut, not just a few thousand shares. If this company goes public, neither of us will ever have to work again. We'll be able to spend the rest our lives together doing whatever we want, and I know that there's nothing I'd rather do with the rest of my life than spend the rest of it with you.”

“You're so sweet,” she said, giving him a hug. “I love you, but are you sure you know what you're doing? You're great with computers, but business is different. Inside that computer there are rules, but in business things aren't that fair.”

His eyes grew wide with love. “I know things aren't fair,” he said, “but Silicon Valley is my turf. I've beaten the businessmen before. That's how we got this house.”

Antonia was silent, but he knew her well enough to know there was something else she wasn't saying.

“What else is bothering you?” he said.

“Mike, I've seen you work,” she said. “Your company will come to own you. Between your computer here and your computer at work, I'll never get to see you. I love you and I want to be with you. I don't want you killing yourself in some new company. Not that I have any real doubts about it being a raging success, but it'll take you away from me and I want you for myself.”

He was torn. He needed her, but he needed work too. He wanted to make a choice, but he knew neither work nor love was enough. He needed both. He felt that since he was building the company to provide for Antonia's future as well as own, he was entitled to her support, but she only seemed to be interested in putting up obstacles. He was hurt, but he loved her so he tried to consider what she was saying.

“I promise I won't kill myself,” Mike said, “but I need to do something with my life. You said it yourself when we were in Hawaii. The business won't come to own me. I'll be the boss. No one can order me to work late. I'll only have to work as hard I want to. If I take this job, I'll,” he hesitated before making the commitment, “I'll give up playing Adventure. I'll keep computers to a minimum at home. I want to make you happy. It means more to me than anything else.”

Her face broke into a broad smile and she threw her arms around his neck.

“Promise?” she said sweetly but sternly.

“Promise,” he said firmly.

William resigned from Rosetta the week after he and Mike had agreed to form a company. William and Mike were now to dedicate themselves to their new company. William had sold his house in San Francisco and moved into Jennifer's simple three-bedroom ranch house off Quito Road in Saratoga. Jennifer's house dated from the days of the fruit orchards so it lacked modern appliances. But the house had a sense of coziness and history that made Mike enjoy working there. Jennifer looked more relaxed and self-contented than he'd ever seen her. When she greeted Mike by casually kissing him on the cheek, the old lingering feeling returned. Mike did his best to ignore it. He made small talk, which quickly blossomed into easy conversation, but the tone of the conversation changed when William came into the room.

"Well since you boys don't want any women in your business, I guess I'll just go into the kitchen and make dinner," she said sarcastically.

After Jennifer left, Mike asked William, "What's that all about?"

"She wants to be a full partner," William said, "and I wouldn't mind bringing her in, but she doesn't have enough to contribute. You have to be firm in business. It's not always easy."

Mike nodded, but William's answer troubled him. If they had all been a team at Rosetta, why weren't they one now? But Mike pushed his concerns about Jennifer's participation to the back of his mind when he and William began to brainstorm about the future of personal computer software.

Their brainstorming session generated so many innovative ideas that Mike wanted to pursue them all. Mike was interested in new ideas not only because of their commercial potential, but also because he felt it was his duty to bring new technologies to market. But William kept coming back to his original idea of combining a database, a spreadsheet, and a word processor into one program that would allow the three parts work together like musicians in a band. Mike wanted to continue to explore other ideas, but after a series of lively arguments, he finally agreed to go along with William's original concept.

Mike was initially disappointed at the technical limitations of William's vision, but once he started thinking about the program itself, he became excited again. Now that he had his own company, he would have the chance to write code in a way that avoided all the mistakes that he'd been too ignorant or too pressured to avoid when he was at Rosetta.

"I'm ready to start programming," Mike said.

William laughed, "We're not ready yet."

"Why not? Didn't Omar and you just create ThinkWrite in his garage and start selling it?" Mike asked.

William laughed again, "It was more complicated than that. Before Omar could even hire me, he had to get the money to pay me. He knew the banks wouldn't lend him the money. Banks won't lend money on an idea, they'll only lend money to an established business, so Omar went to venture capitalists. Venture capitalists don't lend money. They invest in new businesses in the hope that the company will be wildly successful and go public. But before the venture capitalists will invest a dime, they have to be convinced that the company is going to be a success. The first step is to write a business plan. If Omar didn't have a good business plan, the venture capitalists never would have given him the money to start a company in an industry that didn't even exist yet."

Mike still didn't see what was so important about a business plan, but the mention of Omar's name rekindled Mike's competitive spirit. He said, "O.K. Show me what we've got to do."

In the next three weeks, Mike learned about market research, accounting, taxes, sales forecasts, and many other aspects of business that he'd barely known existed. But there was one task of starting a company that Mike didn't need a textbook to explain, giving the company a name. Since the product combined three programs in one, Mike suggested calling the company "3D Software," but William didn't like the name.

They finally settled on the name "Kube," because a cube was the simplest three-dimensional object. The name was also a play on words because the cubicles where most Silicon Valley programmers worked were nicknamed cubes. They replaced the "C" with a "K" because it made the name unique, and presumably easier to remember. Silicon Valley entrepreneurs were vain about the names of their companies. Founders of Silicon Valley start-ups loved to put the names of their companies on their license plates as much as little girls loved to write their names in fancy letters on the covers of their school notebooks. Mike thought Kube sounded tacky, but he didn't really care about the name, he wanted to get started.

As they worked on the business plan, the desire for wealth began to eclipse revenge, security, or technological innovation as Mike's major motivation. The income statement at the back of the business plan projected a sixty million dollar profit by 1986. Since a software company was typically worth twenty times its annual profits, Mike and William's start-up could be worth over a billion dollars in a little over five years. Since Mike figured he would own about a third of stock by the time the company went public, his share would be worth about four hundred million dollars. "And all I have to do is write one program," he murmured to himself. The phrase had become his mantra. He had no problem keeping his promise to Antonia about not playing Adventure.

As William finalized the business plan, Mike started to code a prototype of Kube's product, which they had named Kube Complete. The task was enormous. Each of the three parts of Kube Complete, the database, spreadsheet, and word processor were



so complex that they usually required an entire team of programmers to implement. Mike had only worked on a word processor at Rosetta. The other two applications were at least as difficult as to program as a word processor, and making the three parts work together was even tougher than creating any of the individual components. Mike was intimidated by the magnitude of the challenge, but he battled his doubt by picking up his keyboard and writing code.

At night, when Antonia came home, he would try to explain the product to her. She didn't understand everything he said, but she loved to listen to him explain things to her. Sometimes after making love, Mike would be unable to sleep and he would go downstairs and program. These were frequently his most productive sessions. He would come upstairs just after dawn and bring her breakfast in bed when she woke up for work.

"Why don't you quit?" Mike asked Antonia as he brought her a tray laden with pastries and coffee.

"We've talked about this," she said with a touch of loving annoyance. "I'm not quitting until you start collecting a salary. It's bad luck."

"If you quit, we could spend the day in bed together," he said, kissing her neck.

The phone rang, interrupting the mood. The call was from William who announced that Andy Newfarmer, a venture capitalist, wanted to see them tomorrow. Mike knew William's call was important, but he felt a stronger obligation to Antonia. Despite William's insistence that he needed to talk immediately, Mike said "I'll call you back later," but William's response made Mike feel guilty. When he hung up the phone and kissed Antonia, he did it without the same passion he'd felt only three minutes before.

Six weeks later, William and Mike sat in Andy Newfarmer's office waiting to finalize the financing of Kube Incorporated. At their first meeting with Andy, Mike had been impressed by Andy's office with its expensive modern furniture and original abstract oils, one of them a Picasso. Andy himself was an easygoing trim fortyish man with graying temples and perfectly capped teeth.

Their first meeting had gone well. Andy had seemed genuinely interested in their presentation. After William's terrible build up, Mike was surprised that Andy seemed so accessible and willing to listen to their ideas.

A week after their first meeting, an associate from Andy's office had called to begin "due diligence," a process for investigating the background of a company and its founders. Venture capitalists absolutely refuse to invest in a company if they are not satisfied with the results of due diligence.

Mike and William spent hours preparing the answers to the long list of questions they'd received from Andy's office. After they submitted their answers, they got

another list of follow-up questions. After answering these questions, one of Andy's technical consultants came to see a demo of the prototype. The technical person showed no emotion so Mike figured the demo was a dud.

While they were waiting for Andy's response, William tried to sell the business plan to other venture capitalists. Most of these venture capitalists had offices on Sand Hill Road in Menlo Park, less than a mile away from Andy's office. Many of the venture capitalists refused to even speak to Mike and William. But the venture capitalists that gave them a hearing asked them questions that were as similar to Andy's as their addresses.

In the two weeks after they gave their demo, Mike and William were still waiting for Andy to call. They left messages, but their phone calls were not returned. Mike wondered why they had to go through this process. They were both rich. Why couldn't they just write a program and sell it?

William assured Mike that this was the way things were done. Getting the backing of the venture capitalists was important because they made sure that the company had the money and the other resources that it needed so it could grow as fast as possible. Then, when the company was ready, they went to their friends on Wall Street and took the company public. Silicon Valley society had initially seemed so freewheeling to Mike, but the better he got to know it, the more rules it seemed to have. Although these rules were unwritten, they were seemed to be as rigid and inviolable as the laws of the Catholic Church.

Mike had thought about gambling his own money, but Rosetta's downfall had demonstrated that financial collapse could strike as suddenly as an earthquake. Still, Mike was seriously considering giving up on venture capital and funding Kube out of his own pocket when the phone started to ring. Andy and the other two other venture firms called and urgently wanted to schedule a meeting to discuss the details of investing in Kube.

Mike felt his palms starting to sweat as he walked into Andy's office. The thought of asking for a million dollars made Mike nervous. Andy greeted Mike and William and asked them to sit down. Andy looked across his desk at Mike and smiled at him like a wise and benevolent uncle.

“Like I said at our last meeting, integrating word processors and spreadsheets sounds like a brilliant idea, but then I hear ten brilliant ideas a week,” Andy said. “I've got five business plans from people wanting to start artificial intelligence companies. I can barely understand every third word that comes out of their mouths. Sometimes I don't know why people bring these ideas to me. I'm not brilliant. One out of ten, maybe one out of a hundred, of these ideas is going to make money. My job is to figure out which of those hundred ideas is that one idea.”

Andy paused, but Mike and William said nothing. They had come for a decision. They knew Andy's casual manner was just an act. They'd seen Omar do the same act too many times.

“O.K. Let's get down to it,” Andy continued, his tone now more serious. “I think you might have that one idea in a hundred, but even if you do, you guys don't know the first thing about running a company.”

Mike and William started to object, but Andy cut them off with a wave of his hand,

“You'll have to accept my help,” Andy said, “not only with funding, but also with rewriting the business plan. Finally, we help you put together a seasoned management team. My people checked with your former associate, a Mr. Ronald Hilton who says that you guys were wonderful at coming up with ideas, but lousy at coming up with products. You can't sell demos; you can only sell products. I don't think that we can afford to invest in a company that can't finish and support a product. We're willing to invest five hundred thousand for twenty-five percent of the company. The other two venture companies that you've been talking to will get seventeen and half percent each for three hundred and fifty thousand.” Andy opened his hands in a take-it-or-leave-it gesture.

Mike began to get angry. Even outside Rosetta, Hilton's view of reality was taken as gospel, but he kept silent hoping that William, who was better at these situations, would speak first.

“I understand your concerns,” William said smiling confidently at Andy. “I don't think your assessment of our abilities is correct. Look at the profitability of Rosetta before and after Mr. Hilton took over responsibility for the product. I think you'll see that Mike and I, not Ron Hilton, were among the key people who developed the products that established Rosetta as a leader in the word processing industry.”

“How can you substantiate that?” Andy demanded.

“I can show you performance reviews for both of us. Several of Mike's reviews were even signed by Mr. Hilton himself. I also can show you letters of commendations signed by Omar Gherazzi, the founder and president of Rosetta.”

William removed a large manila envelope from his briefcase and slid it across the table to Andy.

Andy read the letters and then looked at William and Mike, “These letters are impressive, but they don't change the terms of our offer. Like I said before. I'm not a brilliant guy. I have this pain-in-the-ass job of investing other people's money and I have to do what's right. Hilton's negative recommendation was only part of the reason for my concern. Here's a list of things that my technical people tell me can't be implemented.”

Mike had been intimidated by Andy's familiarity with the world of finance. But when Andy made technical assertions, he was on Mike's turf, and Mike knew Andy was all bluster.

"Your so-called expert couldn't program a calculator," Mike said in a low rumble. "Half the things he says we can't implement are already in the current version of the prototype. Now if you're serious, you give us the half-million for ten percent. Otherwise we'll do this ourselves and you'll have to explain to your partners why you missed investing in one the best start-ups ever founded in Silicon Valley."

Andy looked at Mike with initial surprise. Then Andy's eyes narrowed to a malevolent squint. Mike knew he'd probably gone to far, but he wasn't going to let himself be stared down. Mike could tell that Andy was evaluating both the strength of Mike's will as well as his arguments.

"Fifteen," Andy said in an icy voice, all semblance of easygoing friendliness now gone.

Mike was about to say something, but William shot Mike a look that told him that while a little anger was good, any more would be too much.

"Twelve," William said.

"Fourteen," Andy said.

William looked at Mike, who nodded and said, "Done."

Three weeks later, on October fifth, 1981, Kube incorporated was founded in Andy Newfarmer's conference room. Five million shares of stock were issued in the new company, which were divided into four blocks. The first two blocks of twenty-six percent each went to Mike and William. As the company's founders, half of their stock was free and unvested, but the venture capitalists got Mike and William to purchase the other half of their stock for a price of four hundred thousand dollars each. The third block of stock, thirty-four percent, was purchased by Andy and the other two venture capital firms for one point two million dollars. The remaining fourteen percent of the stock was set aside as stock options for Kube's future employees.

Kube now had over two million dollars in the bank to get started. Although Mike had contributed four hundred thousand of this money, he felt liberated because his stock was not vested. He didn't have to wait to own the stock. He only had waited long enough until the value of the stock went up enough so he could retire.

Since Mike and William owned fifty-two percent of the stock between them, they controlled the company as long as they voted that stock together. However, corporate America, like American society in general is not a direct democracy, but a representative democracy. The board of directors is like congress and the

stockholders are like the citizens. Once a year, the stockholders meet and elect the board of directors. At the stockholders meeting, the stockholders also can vote on major policy decisions. But between stockholders meetings, the board of directors is in charge of the company.

Kube's original board consisted of Mike, William, and Antonia, with William as Chairman. Antonia was only on the board to fulfill a state regulation that corporate boards have at least three members. She happily resigned when Kube got funding. Andy wanted each of the three venture capitalists to have a seat on the board, but Mike and William refused because then Andy and his friends would outnumber them three votes to two. After a long negotiation, one of the venture capitalists agreed not to be represented. Lew Galena, another venture capitalist joined Andy, Mike, and William to form Kube's new Board of Directors.

As in the government, day-to-day administration is the job of the company's executives. William took the job of President and Mike became the Vice President of Engineering.

William and Mike recruited Arnie McManus from Rosetta to become the Vice President of Sales.

"This company better make it. I'm forty-three and I'm getting too old for this stuff," Arnie said when he signed the offer letter.

Andy got Derek Basel to take the post of Chief Financial Officer. Derek was a short, thin, middle-aged Swiss man, who usually wore an earnest, slightly fatigued expression. Looking at Derek, Mike could see Roger at forty-five.

Andy also recruited Lloyd Coates as Vice President of Marketing. Lloyd was a sharp dressed young man with a M.B.A. from Wharton. Lloyd laughed a lot, but unlike Arnie who laughed with you, Mike always got the sense that Lloyd was laughing at you.

The final thing that Kube needed before it could be considered a real company was a home. Kube's management team toured office buildings throughout Silicon Valley. Mike felt like a real entrepreneur walking through the large empty buildings. He ached to fill the emptiness with the fruits of his ideas. They found a place that was about twice the size of Rosetta's original offices in an older office building on San Antonio Road in Mountain View. Devoid of furniture, the rooms looked dingy, but Mike realized that shabbiness was part of the reality of starting in the garage. Derek bargained down the rent and got a good buy on contemporary office furniture, which made the offices look more cheerful. They were finally ready to begin.

Mike stopped at the florist on the way home from signing the lease. He'd had enough of business. He missed Antonia. The moment he got home, Mike took the phone off the hook and took his wife in his arms. Antonia was glad for the flowers and the other

expressions of Mike's love, but the next morning, as she helped Mike pack up his home office, her eyes moistened with tears.

Mike tried to cheer her up. "Since Kube's got funding, I'll be getting a regular salary now, so you can quit your job," he said. "Stay home and find a career that makes you happy. I know you'll find something."

"I don't know what I'm going to do with myself all day," she said, but her fears ran deeper than simple boredom. She felt like she was on the verge of a transition that in some ways was more momentous than getting married. Whatever happened, she had the distinct premonition that neither of their lives would ever be the same.

He cradled her head in his arms. "Don't be scared. Doing something new is always scary and wonderful at the same time," he said talking to himself as well as Antonia.

"What are you scared of?" Antonia laughed at him, "You're so bright. I'm sure you'll do great."

Mike shrugged. He wasn't as confident about the inevitability of his success as everybody else. He clung to the history of William's success and to a lesser extent Andy's, but Mike didn't trust himself.

"Maybe everything will work out as well as everybody says it will," he said, "but I'm scared anyway."

He saw the look of childish terror on Antonia's face and realized that he had to be strong for both of them.

"Hey don't worry," he said. "If Kube doesn't work out, I'll figure out something else. Whatever happens, we've got this house and we've got each other, and I'll make sure that you always have everything you need."

She looked at him. He was her knight in shining armor, ready to ride forth and slay the dragon for her. She had never loved him more, but she didn't want him to go. Dragons were nasty and he might not come back. Tears formed in her eyes again. She reproached herself for being weak. She tried to stop the tears, but she couldn't, so she threw her arms around his neck and buried her head in his shoulder.