

21.

The visit stayed with Mike. He had always known he was going to die, but Brad's illness made him realize that death was something that could strike at any time, not just something that happened in old age. Thinking about death made Mike consider what was important in life. An inner voice whispered that the most important thing in life was love, but he decided that the voice was lying. Brad's illness demonstrated that love could end life as well as enrich it.

He might not know what he wanted to do with the rest of his life, but he knew what he had to do right now. He had to make sure RollTop survived. Brad had taught Mike that doing it right was not necessarily working till you dropped, but making every hour count. Paige was right. If he was going to fight his competitors' armies, he needed one of his own.

Paige had decided to sell Sunflower Computers. The store was still not making money and the Mac market was getting worse. She managed to find a buyer for Sunflower Computers. When the deal for the store looked solid, she told Mike she was seriously interested in joining RollTop, but she wanted fifteen percent of RollTop's stock as part of her compensation package. Additionally, she wanted this stock to be unvested, which meant that she would keep her stock even if she quit or got fired.

Paige had demonstrated her business sense, but there were probably vice presidents at large companies who would be happy to do her job for a fraction of the equity she wanted. Paige's major advantage was that Mike felt he could trust her more than he could trust a total stranger with a good resume, who might be another Jurgen. He offered her eight percent of the company vested over four years.

"If I own a piece of the business, I'm not going to do anything to damage it," Paige said. "I barely broke even on Sunflower. I'm an unmarried woman over thirty and I want financial security and if RollTop doesn't succeed I won't get it. I'm not some venture capitalist who invests in ten companies at once, hoping one or two of them will pay off. I think I can help double the value of the stock. If I do, you've certainly made a profit. If you don't think I can do that then you shouldn't hire me at all."

Her arguments made sense, but they were also self-serving. They settled on options for ten percent, which translated to a hundred and eleven thousand shares. Paige also agreed to vest three-quarters of her shares over four years. Mike set the price for the unvested quarter for three dollars per share, which consumed most of the money she'd gotten from selling her store. Mike felt that would guarantee her loyalty to the company.

Rather than give her the shares from his own stock, he issued new shares. Creating the new shares reduced Mike's ownership from ninety-five percent to eighty-five percent, which was more than enough to keep control. But selling stock was a reminder that raising venture capital would reduce his percentage of ownership

significantly further. The memory of Andy's manipulations at Kube was still fresh in Mike's mind and the prospect of losing control frightened him, but keeping control of the company was not Mike's only problem. RollTop's survival was becoming an issue as well.

Mac sales were continuing to fall, and the internal problems at Apple were now an open secret in the Valley. Although RollTop's sales were steadily declining, the company was still profitable. The company had accumulated three hundred and fifty thousand dollars in profits by the day Paige started work as RollTop's Chief Financial Officer and Vice President of Strategic Planning. Mike and Paige decided to gamble and hire three new employees.

Mike hired Henry Darmstadt as Vice President of Sales. Henry was a large, gruff man in his early forties who had extensive experience selling Apple products. Mike also hired Lloyd Coates as Vice President of Marketing. Lloyd was the only executive at Kube who hadn't stabbed Mike in the back, but Mike was somewhat reluctant to offer Lloyd a job because of Lloyd's snotty attitude. Mike's reservations about Lloyd disappeared after talking to him for five minutes. Lloyd had been through another unsuccessful start-up since leaving Kube and he was visibly hungry for success. Mike completed his executive staff by promoting Roger to Vice President of Engineering.

Hiring new people meant that RollTop could no longer fit in Mike's condo. He rented a small suite of offices in Menlo Park. The glut of office space meant that Mike was able to negotiate favorable terms. With new expenses and decreased sales, RollTop was running at a very slim profit. The need to raise money became more urgent with every passing day.

Mike and Paige reworked the business plan and sent copies out to the venture capitalists on Sand Hill Road. They were lucky to get a "No." Most of the venture capitalists simply refused to return Mike's phone calls. The few that did call back made it clear that they wanted nothing to do with anything related to the Mac, word processing, or anyone who'd been a member of Kube's management team. They tried to borrow money from the banks, but as Paige had predicted, the banks refused even to consider lending them money.

Being turned down by the banks and venture capitalists was a blow to Mike's confidence, but it was not the only one. In January, the explosion of the space shuttle Challenger and the death of its crew shocked the country. The accident shook Mike's faith in American technology and engineering. Even NASA's engineers couldn't always get it right.

Mike's doubts expanded to include his own technical ability. Quite a few products had emerged to compete with Galadriel. One of the products was from Xerox, the company that had originally developed desktop publishing. Mike's fear whispered to him, "I'm just fooling myself. This program is just a hack. Nothing I do will ever be good enough to compete with products made by real companies."

His fear made him angry and ashamed, but experience had taught him that the voice of fear was often the voice of experience. He had one and half million dollars of his Rosetta money left. He didn't want to spend it on his pride.

“No wonder they don't want to invest,” he said to Paige after receiving another rejection from a venture capital firm. “Start-ups usually fail sooner or later. Even Apple is in trouble now. Maybe we should just call the whole thing off.”

She stared at him, considering his words. The unusual intensity in her otherwise unremarkable brown eyes made him nervous.

“You can be such a jerk sometimes,” she said, breaking the silence. “You think past failure guarantees future failure? Did your success at Rosetta guarantee your success at Kube? From what you told me, you and your friend William sure thought it did.”

“But if we don't get the venture capital,” Mike said, his voice rising with agitation. “I'll have to use my own money, and that's all I've got left.”

“I've already invested everything I have in this company,” Paige said sternly. “Risking everything is part of what being an entrepreneur means.”

Mike gave Paige a tight-lipped smile and went back to work. He sat at his desk and stared out the window of his small office. Paige's words made sense, but they offered no solutions. He wondered if he really wanted to be an entrepreneur. He just wanted to be sane, successful, and happy, but those things seemed farther away than ever. He sighed, pulled his keyboard toward him and went back to work.

A month later Mike sat in the back of a limousine on the way to San Francisco. RollTop had continued to run at a small profit, thanks to some hard selling by Henry. But the limousine was not a reward for success. It was a present to his friends. He was taking Alex, Brad, Jennifer, and Roger to the Black and White Ball in San Francisco.

The Black and White Ball was the largest charity event in the San Francisco social calendar. The money went to the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, but it was really a one night Mardi Gras for the city's young and affluent. The ball itself was held in a cluster of neighboring halls in downtown San Francisco. Each hall had a different band playing a different type of music.

Mike had not originally intended to go the ball, but Brad had invited him. Brad was feeling better and he wanted to make the most of it because he knew his remission was probably temporary. Since Alex and Jennifer were going too, Mike had decided to make the evening special by renting a limousine.

When Mike told Paige that he was going to the ball, she asked him if he was planning to meet any clients or potential investors there. Mike had not even thought about it

as a business opportunity. Paige rolled her eyes and bought a ticket as a business expense. Mike objected and he refused to bill RollTop for the ticket or the limousine. His reasons for going to the ball were purely personal.

Mike felt silly wearing his rented tuxedo, but when he emerged from the limo, he realized that he had no need to worry about being overdressed. The nighttime population of the streets and open plazas of downtown San Francisco normally consisted of panhandlers and homeless people. But tonight, those same plazas swarmed with thousands of men and women dressed in elegant tuxedos and glamorous evening gowns.

Mike knew it was going to be a tough evening from the moment he entered the ballroom because the first person he saw was Antonia. She was wearing full make up and a striking black Issey Miyake dress. She was holding hands with Klaus, who looked elegant, if slightly foppish, in his white silk tuxedo. Mike also recognized Shevaun and her husband Richard, who were talking to three older Japanese men. When Mike had found out about Richard's economic troubles at Antonia's opening, he felt a guilty glee that his star was rising and Richard's was falling. Now that RollTop was going through turbulent times, seeing Richard again caused Mike's previous sense of inadequacy to return.

Mike caught Antonia's eye and raised his hand in greeting. The gesture was subtle enough that she could pretend to ignore it if she wanted to, but she didn't. She left Klaus and walked over to where Mike was standing with his friends.

Antonia hugged Roger, said hello to Brad, and perfunctorily greeted Jennifer. Mike introduced Antonia to the people she didn't know. He was surprised that Paige stiffened when he introduced her to Antonia. Mike read it as a sign of jealousy. For a moment, Mike thought that he might be the cause, but looking at the two women, he knew what the cause might be. Paige was wearing a high-collared, white, watered silk dress. She looked attractive in a quiet way, but Mike thought she was probably jealous of Antonia's striking beauty and her designer dress.

When an uncomfortable silence descended on the little group, Mike remembered how he had felt at Antonia's opening. He led Antonia away so they could talk freely.

"Those people bring back memories of another time," Antonia said. "Who are the new couple?"

"That's my chief financial officer and her boyfriend," Mike said. "I'm trying to turn RollTop into a real company. I hope it does better than Kube."

"I'm sure it will," she said.

Mike knew she was wishing him well as a way of not talking about the computer business.

"Thanks for your vote of confidence," he said. "How's your painting going?"

"Great!" she said. "You'll have to come by our loft and see the new ones."

"Our loft?" he asked, dreading the answer.

"Klaus and I are living together," she said quietly. "I was going to tell you. I was waiting for a good time."

The news hit Mike like a punch in the stomach. It felt like getting divorced all over again. It was the difference between knowing somebody was dead and seeing them in their coffin. He forcibly reminded himself that Antonia was not dead and he did not want to damage their emerging friendship by treating her as if she were still his wife.

"I hope you're happy," he said.

"Thank you," she said carefully.

He could tell by her manner that she was embarrassed. He wanted to help her and he looked for a way to change the subject.

"Richard must be doing better," he said. "I see that he's selling things to the Japanese."

"Actually those are Shevaun's clients," Antonia said. "Richard declared bankruptcy. Shevaun's become a real estate agent, specializing in mansions. She's actually doing pretty well, but worrying about money has really changed her."

"I know the feeling," Mike said.

Antonia smiled and they both felt the tension ease.

"Well, I'd better be getting back," Antonia said, returning his smile.

His eyes followed her through the crowd. As he watched her, he found that the familiar sense of remorse was balanced by a new feeling, a sense of quiet accomplishment that they'd maintained some kind of bond between them despite the collapse of their marriage.

Mike walked back to join his friends. Paige was dancing with her boyfriend Ed. Brad was dancing with Alex. Roger had gone prospecting and Jennifer was sitting alone. Mike danced a token dance with Jennifer and then sat down.

"It's hard to believe that it's been over six years since William's birthday party at Hamburger Mary's," Mike said.

“You know what's scarier than how quickly time's passed?” Jennifer said, her voice beginning to choke with emotion. “It's how serious everything has become. I remember when the most serious thing I worried about was whether I'd have a good time on Friday night. I just want everything to be simple and nice the way it was in the old days. No loneliness, no sickness, just people being happy together. I don't know why everything has to goddamn change.”

He wanted to put his arm around her, but he knew that talking, not touching, was the best way of comforting her. “It changes because we want too much,” Mike said philosophically. “We were happy then, but we wanted more. Money, love, and sex weren't quite enough. Things had to be perfect. So we went out hunting for exactly what we wanted and now we're not happy. Maybe we should just be happy with what we have now before we try to change it again and make it even worse.”

“Hey,” Roger said, returning from dancing. “Stop making each other miserable. If Brad can have a good time, so can you.”

Jennifer and Mike both smiled. Roger took Jennifer out to the dance floor. Mike wondered if there was a budding romance between them. He felt a pang of jealousy. Everyone seemed to be pairing off except him. He could even sense that a genuine bond of love was forming between Brad and Alex, even though Brad referred to Alex as “the food Nazi, because Alex was constantly ordering Brad to eat whether he was hungry or not.

Mike ruefully reflected that he was married to RollTop. He looked at the couples. Their bodies moved together well, but when he looked at their faces, he could tell that most of them were bound by habit not love. He knew that most of these apparently happy people would go home, take off their elegant clothes, and as likely as not, climb into bed wishing they were sleeping with somebody else.

Mike was jolted from his thoughts by the sound of a woman calling his name in a distinctly French accent. He turned around and saw an extremely elegantly dressed woman in her early twenties. She looked vaguely familiar, but Mike couldn't quite place her.

“Mike, don't you remember me?” she asked teasingly. “To think you invite someone to your home and they forget all about you.”

Then he placed her. “Nicole? Nicole Gherazzi, Omar's wife?”

“I am glad to see the famous Danzig brain still works,” she said.

“You better not let Omar see you talking to me. We're not on the best of terms,” Mike said, looking around.

“Ah, but that is precisely why I am glad to see you,” she said. “Omar told me the whole story. I think he secretly regrets what he did, but his pride stops him from

admitting it. It is the same with all of you men. A man's pride is often the most obnoxious part of his anatomy, but he does not know it. Come over and say hello.”

Before he could refuse, Nicole took his arm and guided him over to Omar.

“Hello, Omar,” Mike said.

“Mike!” Omar said in the voice of an old friend. “It's good to see you. It reminds me of old times.”

Mike wanted to say that being unjustly fired had ruined his memories of “old times,” but Mike remembered Nicole's words about pride and kept his bitterness in check.

“Thank you,” Mike said stiffly.

Omar seemed to read his thoughts, “Are you still sore about that business at Rosetta?”

Omar correctly interpreted Mike's silence as a yes.

“I got burned worse than you,” Omar said. “That idiot Hilton took my whole company. I'm not as young as you are. Starting over again isn't as easy for me as it is for you.”

“Then why did you let him do it?” Mike asked.

“I had no other choice. I had to bring somebody in to run engineering. It was getting too big for William. You were in business with William. You saw what he was like with too much responsibility.”

“How do you know about what happened between William and me?” Mike said, eyeing Omar narrowly.

“It's a small valley,” Omar shrugged. “Speaking of which, how's RollTop doing? I hear you're looking for venture money. I know you of course, but I don't think I know the other people on your team.”

Talking to Omar about business rekindled Mike's previous reverence for Omar's abilities. The feeling made Mike uncomfortable and he wanted some breathing room.

“One of RollTop's key people is here at the ball. Would you like to meet her?” Mike said.

“Certainly,” Omar said, smiling his familiar broad smile.

Mike excused himself to look for Paige. He found her and explained the situation.

“Will Omar give us the financing?” she asked.

“He's certainly got it,” Mike said, “but I don't know if I'd even want it from him.”

“Look at this way,” she said. “Whose money would you rather gamble, yours or Omar's?”

Mike laughed. “Do you have an answer for everything? Of course I'd rather gamble Omar's money, but I still don't feel comfortable asking him.”

“He probably knows that,” Paige said. “He remembers that you used to work for him and he's not about to let you forget it.” Paige's eyes narrowed and became cold. “Let me talk to him.” She spoke in a voice that sounded like it was coming from a friendly, but very deadly robot.

The coldness in Paige's eyes inspired Mike's confidence. He collected Roger and they went to meet Omar.

“Mike, you didn't tell me how pretty your associate was,” Omar said.

“Paige Braddock. I'm Mike's partner,” Paige said, not waiting for Mike's response.

“Nice to meet you Ms. Braddock Omar said smoothly, but with a faint trace of condescension.

Paige smiled sweetly, but Mike knew her well enough to know that Omar's condescension had offended the feminist in her. Paige's smile was that of a crocodile, but Mike could see that Omar was too wrapped up in himself to notice.

“Mike is always telling me about how you built Rosetta,” Paige said admiringly. “You must be very proud of what you accomplished.”

“Why of course. I mean yes,” Omar said, obviously off-guard and somewhat embarrassed by being trumped at his own game. “I'm sure you've must proud of what you've accomplished at RollTop.”

Mike was encouraged. He decided to join the game.

“We've got a great product and a great company,” Mike said. “All we need is money.”

Omar laughed indulgently, “It takes more than that Mike-“

“We're aware of that,” Paige said, cutting Omar off. “That's why he's placed me in charge of strategic planning. I've got a business background. We both know that Mike's technological vision is excellent.”

“Mike's a very bright guy,” Omar said. “I won't deny that, but bright guys can make mistakes about the future, as I think you learned at Kube, eh Mike?”



Mike was about to react, but he understood that Omar was manipulating him. He knew the thing that would piss Omar off the most was keeping his cool.

“We've all made errors in judgment, Omar,” Mike said evenly, “but we've got a profitable company that has orders for an existing product. Sometimes people who have achieved a certain position in the industry forget the importance of the basics, but I know you're not one of them.”

Omar momentarily grimaced, but then his familiar smile returned. “We're beginning to sound like economists instead of businessmen,” Omar said. “Why I don't I stop by RollTop next week and you can tell me about what's really going on?”

They exchanged cards and made small talk. Mike said goodbye to Nicole. Paige went to find Ed, and Mike went back to sit with Brad.

“Just watch out,” Brad said after hearing Mike's account of his meeting with Omar. “I've known Omar longer than you have, and he never forgets. Never.”

“I know,” Mike said.

Mike didn't need Brad's warning to be uneasy at the prospect of having Omar involved with RollTop's management. Mike knew that when it came to boardroom maneuvers, he was a carthorse running against a thoroughbred. But RollTop needed money, and Omar had it.

Seven months later, Mike chaired RollTop's last staff meeting of the year. The seven months since the Black and White Ball were difficult, but as Christmas approached, RollTop Software was well on its way to success and Mike allowed himself a smile of total satisfaction.

Omar's firm, Avignon Ventures, had purchased a thirty percent stake in RollTop for two million dollars. Since a public corporation typically has at least five million shares of stock, RollTop's shares split for five-for-one. As a result of the split, Mike now owned four and three quarters million shares of RollTop stock.

Omar's investment also changed the composition of RollTop's board of directors. Omar now held a seat on RollTop's board, which now consisted of four people, Mike, Omar, Paige, and Roger. Since Mike still owned sixty-three percent of RollTop's stock, he felt reasonably safe.

The relief provided by Omar's investment was offset by the anxiety caused by the internal upheaval at Apple, which had almost destroyed the Valley's most visible start-up and taken the Macintosh with it. Apple's stock had collapsed. Steve Jobs, the more prominent of Apple's two founders, had departed under unpleasant circumstances, but as Christmas approached, Apple began to show signs of recovery.

Apple's reconstruction was good for Galadriel's sales in several ways. Apple was bringing out a new line of more powerful Macintoshes that allowed Galadriel to run faster and therefore made it easier to use. Apple was also providing financing for people who bought Apple hardware products, which made Macs, and more importantly laser printers, more affordable.

Mike knew RollTop's survival was attributable to the people on his staff at least as much as to Avignon's money or Apple's recovery. He looked around the table in the executive conference room at Lloyd, Henry, Paige, and Roger. Mike definitely had strong personal feelings about these four people, but he did his best to keep his feelings to himself. He was determined not to create an atmosphere of ass kissing, insularity, political intrigue, and overconfidence that had been the undoing of Rosetta and many other successful Silicon Valley start-ups.

He also forced himself to be scrupulously fair in rewarding success and addressing failure. Mike had also learned to balance his own views with the views of his subordinates. Although Mike had trained himself to lead while permitting dissent, learning to listen to arguments from people who weren't engineers stretched the limits of Mike's self discipline.

No one tried Mike's patience more than Lloyd. Lloyd's ego was large even by Silicon Valley standards and when people asked him what the thought were stupid questions he would roll his eyes in a "you're too stupid to possibly understand" gesture. But his intelligence and his insightful understanding of the strategic principles of selling software compensated for Lloyd's arrogance. Lloyd had devised a marketing plan that allowed Galadriel to rapidly penetrate both the national and international markets. While Mike had initially been suspicious of the plan, as the company grew, Mike began to understand Lloyd's reasoning better.

Lloyd was not only good at conceiving strategies; he was also good at implementing them. Lloyd had gotten Apple to underwrite a large portion of RollTop's marketing campaign. Lloyd also made sure that Galadriel was favorably mentioned in the columns of most of the major computer magazines, whether RollTop advertised in those magazines or not. The effectiveness of Lloyd's marketing efforts made Henry's job easier, but it didn't make Henry like Lloyd.

From the day Mike hired Henry and Lloyd, there was friction between the two men. Henry wanted more advertising support and promotional money from Lloyd's department, while Lloyd demanded higher sales from Henry's department. But the arguments between the two men were really about the differences in their basic approach to life. Lloyd was a scholar and Henry was a street fighter. Mike was neither and he needed both of them.

As sales started to climb again and there was more money for marketing support, the two men began to get along better. Now, on the eve of the RollTop's Christmas party, the two men joked easily with each other. Henry had not only arranged the Christmas party, but had offered to pay for it entirely from the sales department's budget. Lloyd

was especially impressed that Henry had arranged to have the party at San Francisco's Majestic Hotel, one of the city's more expensive, but quietly tasteful, establishments.

Planning the Christmas party was one of the few of RollTop's activities that Paige was not involved in. Mike and Paige both worked twelve-hour days. But while Paige worked on several tasks at a time, Mike preferred to work on only one thing at a time. Roger referred to this aspect of Mike's behavior as "not being multi-tasking." By default many tasks fell to Paige.

The largest of these tasks was creating and managing a manufacturing department. When RollTop was selling only ten or twenty copies a day, the work of packing a manual and some floppy disks into a box was a trivial job. Now that RollTop was selling several hundred copies a day, the work of printing manuals, ordering boxes, not to mention actually packing and mailing the software, was becoming considerable.

At first, Mike felt uncomfortable delegating so many decisions to Paige. He made her explain her major decisions thoroughly before he approved anything. Even after she had established a track record of sound decisions.

Mike's ambivalence about Paige came to a head at RollTop's first annual stockholders' meeting. All of RollTop's twenty-one employees, except Mike, had stock options, but only Roger and Paige actually owned their stock and were entitled to attend the stockholders' meeting.

RollTop's first annual stockholders' meeting was only attended by the company's lawyer and the company's four actual stock holders, Mike, Roger, Paige, and Omar. Although he treated everything about RollTop seriously, especially stock, he found it hard to take such a small gathering seriously. Mike's lawyer put forward a motion to adopt the company's by-laws. The by-laws are roughly equivalent to a company's constitution, except that by-laws are written solely to protect the power of those in charge, without even the appearance of protecting the average citizen.

The lawyer assured Mike that the by-laws were standard boilerplate. Mike had read them anyway, but everything seemed in order. He seconded the motion. When the motion was put to a vote, Paige voted against it. Since Mike personally held the majority of RollTop's stock, the motion was guaranteed to pass regardless of what she did. Mike gave her a look of disgust and she said nothing for the rest of the meeting.

"What the hell was that all about?" Mike asked her after the meeting was over.

"I was trying to help you," Paige retorted. "How do you expect to maintain control of this company if you can't even see around corners?"

"See around corners? What do you mean?" Mike asked, his tone calmer now.

“Seeing around corners means figuring out that somebody's going to do something bad to you before they've actually started doing it,” Paige said. “Your lawyer was doing Omar's business. Those by-laws are supposedly standard, but there are several 'standard' versions of corporate by-laws. In this version, certain major decisions of the President have to be confirmed by a majority vote of the board members. So if Omar can control the board by adding more seats, he can control your actions. By accepting the by-laws proposed by your lawyer, whose firm has been doing business with Omar's partners for the last fifteen years, you just handed over a major piece of your power to Omar, and for that matter, to me.”

Mike felt stupid. Controlling the board was exactly how the venture capitalists had screwed him at Kube. He didn't know what to say.

“It's O.K.” Paige said, trying to cheer him up. “You can change it back at next year's stockholders' meeting.”

After the stockholders' meeting, Mike delegated to Paige far more freely, but he still insisted on approving all major decisions involving the course of RollTop's growth. Since RollTop was growing so fast, Mike spent all his time running the business, and almost no time programming.

Delegating Galadriel's development to Roger was the most emotionally difficult of all Mike's executive tasks. Roger was the least experienced person on the staff. Roger also had the bad luck to be in charge of the department that Mike knew most about. Mike supported Roger in the staff meetings, but inwardly Mike had less faith in Roger than any other executive on his staff.

Mike's lack of confidence in Roger increased as the schedule slipped for releasing the third version of Galadriel. The atmosphere in the staff meetings became tense as Henry warned about lost customers and missed sales targets. Lloyd affected his most cynical attitude. Paige looked at the revenue forecasts and bit her lip, in an expression of restrained concern. At first, Roger responded to his coworkers' lack of confidence with reassuring good humor, but as the schedule continued to slip, Roger became quieter and more defensive.

The resemblance between Mike's situation at Kube and Roger's situation at RollTop disturbed Mike. He had promised himself not to behave like William, but he found the practical task of living up to that promise more difficult than he'd envisioned. He knew that mere words, whether they were encouragements or threats, weren't going to change anything.

Mike decided that the only way to speed up Galadriel's development was to become directly involved with the management of Roger's engineering team. Roger's team did not welcome Mike. They objected to his orders and suggestions. Mike initially suspected the team's animosity might be a defensive tactic. But Mike remembered how he and the Li River gang had stood behind William when Omar had attacked

their leader. When Mike realized what motivated Roger's team, he regained confidence in Roger's ability to be a good engineering manager, but not in the team's technical ability.

Mike was tempted to grab the keyboard from Roger and his engineers, but he quietly stayed in the background, acting more as an adviser than an overseer. One by one Roger's team fixed the bugs, but Galadriel's progress did little to lift Roger's spirits. Roger was recovering from the ravages of love.

Roger had started dating Jennifer shortly after the Black and White Ball. Roger had moved out of Mike's condo after their third date so he could be alone with Jennifer. Mike was jealous, but he forced himself not to show it. Mike's jealousy about Jennifer was easy to deal with, but knowing that both his friends had someone to keep each other warm while he slept alone made him feel extremely poor.

Roger and Jennifer broke up four months later. Mike found the break up of his two best friends even harder to cope with than his former jealousy. Trying to support his two best friends in their complaints about each other tested his powers of mediation more than anything that had happened in the staff meeting.

"It's nice to have somebody who likes to play with Ian," Jennifer told Mike the day after she broke up with Roger, "but looking after Ian isn't all fun and games. I need somebody to be there for the daily grind. I wish RollTop the best of luck but I can't afford to be involved with another start-up engineering manager who's married to his work. I shouldn't have even gone out with him the first place, but I guess I can't resist you engineers."

Although Mike understood Jennifer's reasons for ending the relationship, he also regretted the effect the break up had on Roger. Jennifer had gotten Roger into a program of diet and exercise and Roger had managed to lose twenty pounds. When they broke up, Roger immediately put them back on. Mike noticed that Roger was dragging himself through his work without his usual reserve of good humor. Mike knew it was up to him to save both his company and his friend. Mike spent most of his days intensively coaching Roger through the final stages of product development.

Just as Roger's team got ready to ship version three of Galadriel, they hit a last minute snag. Software production requires a master copy of the source code to create the production version of the program. When several programmers work on a program, small differences appear between the individual programmers' copies. If even one of these differences is not properly resolved in the master copy, the program won't work.

Mike and Roger worked an eighteen-hour marathon session to put the master copy together. At four o'clock in the morning they were finally finished building the master copy. By the end of the process, Mike was glad not to be a programmer anymore. The stress of building a company had made him romanticize programming, and forget its

drudgery and frustration. Mike had a powerful urge for a drink. He got a Diet Coke instead.

Mike was just drained, but Roger was overjoyed because he felt the nightmare was over.

"I guess we're over the worst of it," Roger said. "If Henry's right about the sales figures we should be all set."

"I think Henry's right about the sales," Mike said, "but that doesn't mean we're all set. Making a start-up successful is one thing, making it last is another. I learned that at Rosetta. Whether success lasts or not depends on the product staying competitive and the people sticking together."

"Hey, you and I will stick together," Roger said earnestly.

"There's a saying in this Valley that nobody's friends beyond a certain amount of money," Mike said, still not smiling.

"Well here's to friendship over money," Roger said, raising his Diet Coke and smiling warmly.

They banged their aluminum cans together to seal the pact.

Now, at the final staff meeting of the year, Mike listened to Roger present his design for an electronic mail product, called PostBox. Mike had been aware of the impact of electronic mail since he'd first visited Roger at M.I.T. and he felt that electronic mail would become an important product line for the Mac. Mike had decided to entrust the development of PostBox to Roger from start to finish. Mike hoped that he had made the right decision because PostBox's success was the key to taking the company public.