



Peter Mackeonis

A Silicon Valley
Retro Novel

High Tech, Low Morals

The Silicon Valley Trilogy by Peter Mackeonis

High Tech, Low Morals (1992)

ANNA'S GAME (2019)

A CALIFORNIA COUP (2020)

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It was a time it was, oh what a time it was!

(Silicon Valley in 1992.)

FORWARD

Imagine, or try to remember, if you can, life before the internet and social media: a world without Google, Amazon, Facebook, TikTok, and X (formally known as Twitter). A time when Silicon Valley and the world of high-tech had yet to dominate global markets, business was still almost done on a handshake and the 101 freeway from San Francisco airport to Sunnyvale was bustling with developers, bankers....and hustlers.

I thought that you should know this, because you are about to travel back to 1992 and the 'fake it until you make it,' world of HIGH TECH, LOW MORALS.

Enjoy!

Peter Mackeonis
June 2024
Santa Cruz, California

CHAPTER ONE

October 15th, 1990

An early morning mist swirled around the reservoir hills alongside California Highway 17 like steam off so many giant cups of coffee. The late model Porsche 928 held the road like a huge diamond-black mechanical bug on a track as Skip powered the three-hundred-and-fifty aluminum horses into the fog on that first bend coming out of Los Gatos thinking that he would probably stay in fog all the way into the sleepy town of Capitola. Highway 17 cut the main mountain pass from San Jose's Silicon Valley to the Sixties ocean-side hamlets of Santa Cruz and Capitola. During the week the road was crazy busy from early morning through midnight, but it could be a joy to ride when it was empty and that early Sunday morning it was just that.

As Skip drove he thought of October '89 when the first-cousin of Big One tore the area out of its tranquil afternoon nap waiting for the World Series to start. The hillside had shook like a duvet depositing two-hundred-thousand tons of rock slide onto the switchback of a road that he was now effortlessly driving through. Somehow this morning it didn't seem that this peaceful road had the energy. He relaxed his foot off the gas pedal as he was now running early and there might well be some half-sleepy highway patrolman hiding in one of the turnouts to delay him from his first espresso of the morning in Capitola. Their meetings had been easier on the San Jose side of the mountain before the earthquake leveled the cafe in Los Gatos where they used to meet. Then he and Jill could drive to their secret meetings in ten minutes or less.

It was a chill morning, and as Skip drove through the mountain passes, he realized how much he missed Jill. It had been at least a week since they had met and even though they had fought again he still missed her. By now her red Japanese sports coupe should be parked at Mr. Toots. He hoped that she would not be in one of her moods where nothing seemed right with the world: and least of all with them. She seemed as if she needed to score points all the time when they talked. Which was dumb. She was intelligent, probably more so than he was, but she only saw black or white. They could not discuss without arguing. His family had always argued; hers never had and, it had left

her with a fear of conflict like others feared spiders. They would talk; he would comment, they would disagree and he was made to feel like he was pulling whiskers off the cat. Lately it seemed that he could think of nothing that did not make them argue. Everything that they used to have in common seemed to separate them. And, as he was obviously 'doing it to annoy', why would he not stop it? 'No!', he was told. 'Two people cannot disagree and both be correct.

That just can't happen.'

Jill was a real mix. Delicate and trusting, willful and vicious; and all in the same afternoon. The delicacy of a taper with the flash point of a musket. When they first met she loved his attitude towards life; he was a chancer and she loved it. He was refreshing. He made her laugh. As the months went by refreshing turned into unreliable, laughter into muted scorn. As her money started to dry up so did her patience with life. She drove too fast. She felt the need to snarl at the homeless. She was late wherever she went. She fought for hers inch by inch and regardless to the cost to others.

He had enjoyed the affair at first-what man doesn't? But it had now turned to being a bind. He knew it had gone sour when some weeks ago he pictured their waitress for the evening in bed with them. Unless something changed, and it was unlikely, she would be history before Christmas.

His one hope was their joint plan to get rich and that was just more than a little unlikely and the wrong side of legal, but worth a try. If it worked then the money would be a great distraction and they probably wouldn't argue so much. A million still went a long way in the places he liked, and if she didn't like it then there was always the door. He started to salivate at the thought of being rich and almost lost the car on one of the more vicious bends. Still he would have died happy. Now down the mountain, he exited the freeway just before Santa Cruz going south to Capitola and Monterey.

Another forty miles or so down this road and he would have joined one of the most scenic coastal drives in the world: towering cliffs, dramatic suspension bridges and the wild water pools of California at its most natural. A real blast of a road like the Garden Route from Cape Town to Durban in South Africa; but that was of no interest today. This morning their get-rich-quick scheme needed work, and that was a damn sight more important than scenery. Driving slowly along the Capitola Esplanade the joggers and skate boarders started to appear. First one, then three, then five, like time release photography of a town waking up.

It was a nightmare of a town during the season - even if it attracted the best looking women for miles around - and it was deathly off-season. The bars needed painting, the

restaurants were understaffed and the locals hated out of town day trippers. But, during the season, near-naked women played volleyball on crowded beaches and music filled the air. That was before Jill anyway; all that now seemed pre-Jill and in the past. Post-Jill was all different. He felt like an outsider when he looked at those firm young bodies; a voyeur.

The stairs to the old coffee house creaked and the sticky waft of *Aramis* cologne hit Jill as Skip reached the top of the stairs. He leaned over and kissed her cheek lightly as he sat and joined her at the small round wooden table by the window overlooking the bay.

'Hi!' said Skip. 'A great ride over the hill. Isn't this place beautiful first thing in the morning?' He smiled at a beautiful student painting a scene from the window as he sat down at Jill's blind side. It made him wince that things had become so bad between them and he almost felt guilty. Instead his reflex action was to wonder if the student's body was as good as her face and he had to stop himself from sitting facing her. Ten years selling in the Valley; ten years of shit-head purchasing-managers forgetting to keep appointments, ten years of insensitive, protective, smooth talking secretaries, and ten years of watching other people leasing executive jets and having streets named after them had taught him to hide his real feelings.

Jill smiled her greeting and answered his unasked

question. 'Yes, I copied them and put the originals back but it wasn't easy. And, either I am getting paranoid or this time Dale really suspects something.'

Skip didn't know quite what to answer or how to react. What the hell did she expect; for everything to fall into their laps? He sat waiting for the lava flow to stop, and when it didn't he caught the waitress's eye and ordered a double espresso. Obviously some minor God was on his side that morning - maybe Juan Valdez, patron saint of coffee shops.

'Oh great!' said Jill, 'I run the risk of my whole world going into the dumper and all you care about is your caffeine high.'

Skip's brain jolted. Even without the strong brown liquid that his doctor kept warning him about, he suddenly remembered that he still needed Jill for this last chance to get out of this California land of plenty-this rich man's paradise. He remembered his last doctor's appointment had been made necessary by the coffee-induced heart palpitations, and he changed his order to a double decaff before answering.

He leaned across the table and touched Jill's arm sympathetically as he started to talk: 'Hey, look....' he started but got no further. Jill's voice had softened as she interrupted: 'OK! I'm sorry I snapped. But this is not easy for me you know. I am beginning to hate all this secrecy,

and I don't think that I am very good at it. You try sneaking around your own house at five in the morning looking for papers. You try making early morning phone calls from your car because you don't want to be overhead by your husband and see how cheerful you get.'

Skip was a good salesman. He saw the gap and instinctively acted to help further soften the angry hardness that had already settled over her that morning. He got up and moved his chair to be closer. He touched her arm again, a little firmer than before. He still knew where her buttons were and gently started to push one. He smiled at the student again over Jill's shoulder, who this time, smiled back. He continued:

'When this is all over we will rent a villa at Mazatlan or a cabana at the Sandy Lane and for a whole week. We'll only take room-service. No hone calls, no interruptions. We'll relax and get to know each other again.' At this they both smiled. Things change or they stagnate - even Jill knew this. Zippers may go up and down, but once it's over it's over. You can pretend, you can scream, you can even plead, but Humpty Dumpty was never the same again and neither were people or their relationships.

Skip was now thirty nine and still saw himself as a hippie. He had grown up in the Sixties and the Seventies and had begun being a drifter when he was only sixteen or so. His early memories of organized society - while he was

still at school, were those of disasters. First JFK, then Martin Luther King. The riot-torn years of LBJ and Vietnam. The 'Dick Nixon-before Nixon Dicks you' era. The sad failures of Jimmy Carter that followed and then the even sadder death of John Lennon. Then he might have seen a beacon during the Eighties; *Reaganomics* in the US and Thatcher's Dream in the UK. So, he joined in, but he was shafted yet again. This time by Reagan's Nemesis - the man with no lips, whose ironic catch phrases were 'Read My Lips' and 'No new taxes'. Just as the *Reagonomic* seduction had fully taken hold and when, like so many other baby-boomers, he had earned enough money to really join in, the Eighties were declared over and by the bastards who had started and benefited from them. He had joined too late and just as he had acquired his 'lifestyle' it had been declared outrageous to have one. Only the bills were left. The circus had left town.

Skip had reverted back to his earlier care-free drifter days before he noticed the pattern; the same show that had created the great boom of the Eighties had brought him the bust of the Nineties; the same system that had brought him the Eighties boom had also provided Nixon and Watergate, Poindexter and *Irangate*, the homeless, and the multi-trillion dollar National Debt. The system administration that had brought him the invasion of Panama was the same administration that had gone crazy

when one of their embassies around the world had been so much as threatened. The same administration that itself invaded a foreign country and brought its president back to the US for trial. Obviously Noriega had not the same level of friends as the Shah of Iran, Bokassa, Idi Amin, or the shoe-adoring Imelda Marcos family.

But it was the Panama fiasco that really showed him that the whole fantasy 'social fabric' thing had become unwoven. And in September of 1989 he quit his job selling advertising space for The Oakland Herald and took a year off to see the islands. He tried Bermuda and had thought it too British and Puerto Rico too American. He started over again this time at Aruba, then down to Cuba, to Jamaica, then the Virgin Islands, and with a few of the smaller islands in between ending up on Barbados. There things finally changed for the better.

He met Jill.

He first saw her at the pool-side bar. It had been at a limbo evening at the Colony Club. She had worn a flowing red batik robe over a tan bikini and he had been attracted by her tanned and blond taugt-bodied beauty and devastated by her easy-going smile. The rum and the warm air were a powerful combination and he decided there and then that he wanted to sleep with her. He introduced himself as a fellow Californian- he had heard her talking about San Jose, and found that she and Dale were

honeymooning on the island. They had all got on well together. Before the end of the week, and knowing nothing about computers, he had been offered and accepted a sales job back, and in of all places, Sunnyvale. Was there no escaping California? It had seemed a great idea, and the impulse to sleep with the boss's wife left him - for a while anyway. Back in the U.S. the job proved to be well paid and interesting. Dale proved to be a good boss. He had been reluctant to return Jill's calls when they started. But the inevitable happened when he did, and the rest was history.

Skip stopped the daydreaming brought on by the talk of the past and remembered the papers that were the reason for their meeting that day. 'Did you look at them? Are they what we need?' Jill answered cautiously: 'I think so, but I'm not sure. I have looked them over but I don't understand what they all mean. They are some technical performance figures and what look like sales projections.'

It didn't matter that Jill did not follow them. He was delighted and it showed: 'Don't worry I know how to read them and so will the people that I show them to. All we need to do is to buy the DML stock option at their current low price and we'll make a fortune. Once this information is made public the stock will go through the roof..... If needs be I would even sell the Porsche to make this one work. Believe me, we'll make millions.'

And she wanted to.

It sounded so simple, but Jill learned long ago that nothing highly profitable is that simple and it worried Jill that Skip was so keen that maybe he could not quite see all the dangers in what they were doing. He had sounded so clever when he had first suggested the scheme; but later he admitted that he had read of all about it in a business magazine article where investors traded in options as a regular investment strategy. They had been seeing each other for about nine months at the time and neither was that serious about the idea.

Later he suggested it again and this time more seriously, when the press started concentrating on the insider dealing trials that had swept the financial centers. Once Skip convinced her that he was serious, Jill had no qualms about the idea: Dale had let her down by putting their house - her home - at risk when he had decided to buy back some of the company's stock without discussing it with her first. A trust broke that day between her and Dale and it was something that would never mend. And it had been over something stupid.

Money.

Even though she knew that she would have come around to Dale's way of thinking in the end, she needed to be consulted, to be courted, to feel that her say was of some value. Jill knew men and she knew that once they stopped considering her in the equation it was a short step

to the little woman becoming part of the furniture. It had happened to her before, more than once and too often for her comfort, but it would not happen again. This time she thought 'Why not?' In the past, when she had been on her own, she had always been particular how she paid her bills but now she had access to information that affected her husband's company-she could insider trade and make some real money. It's a victim-less crime, no one gets hurt, and she might make enough money to be independent at last. They patiently waited and it was only some three months later that Skip had heard the internal rumor, the right kind of confidential information, that would make it work.

But, even though she was in control, Skip worried her. 'You shouldn't have to sell the car,' thought Jill out loud. 'I can take care of managing money better than that. I'm still the wife of Dale Leonard and our bankers will fall over themselves to lend me sixty or even a hundred thousand dollars.' This outburst done, Jill sat quietly for a moment, depressed at the shambles that was gradually becoming her life. She knew that the outburst had been bravado and that she and Dale were technically broke. Their bankers, Valley Finance, had been polite when they requested that she stop running-up her credit cards - but they had still requested it. They lived in a \$2 million dollar home, damn it, even though it was mortgaged up to the cute chimney

stack in the den. Their lifestyle had been the envy of everyone that knew them and here she was scheming to cheat her husband's stock-holders out of a million dollars, and unless she hocked her jewelry she would have to use her boyfriend's savings to do it with. Today was not a good day. She had doubts. She felt that she was losing it and she was wondering how Skip held down his sales manager's job at DML. Funny, when Dale saw how well they had all got on together he hired Skip on the spot. This was the brazen way that he had been; the way she loved him to act. The way that confident high-tech wizards acted - even on their honeymoon. But now she wondered if Dale had hired Skip just to keep her occupied. No, that was crazy.' My God! she really was losing it today, and she saw that Skip had also drifted off to another world.

He was thinking of the student with them in Barbados. Jill recognized that smile. She had not seen it since their eyes had first met some thirteen months ago at that Barbados pool-side. This time though, she knew that the smile was not for her but for what she could bring to the party. And that was OK as it had now seemed a long thirteen months and she herself was fighting the urge to move on once again.

She touched Skip's arm: 'How long do you think before we should buy the option?' she asked. Although she had been up some five hours now that morning and was

hungry for breakfast, she was also hungry for her own personal private checking account, her own car keys and her own front door.....

'This week. Maybe next at the latest....,' he started to answer.

'We must be careful though,' Jill added as if impatient for Skip to finish his sentence: 'From what I hear the SEC is getting better all the time at recognizing 'well-timed' investments. We need to have someone spread this information, just in case something goes wrong and we have to stay in the area; we need to have made a connection with a banker a financial adviser or even a journalist at the Wall Street Journal or the *Mercury News*. It would also be sensible to disguise where the rumor starts. Every time there is a wild swing in stock prices - either up or down, the SEC computer produces a list of people who traded in a big way and anyone that cares to look will be led straight to us.' She stroked Skip's arm. 'And, my darling, as you suggested, I have done my bit; I have planted the seed. I contacted a broker out of the yellow pages and told them that I was interested in a fairly large investment in a stock that had once been a star but had not moved for a while and was now cheap. They said that they knew of nothing immediately but they agreed to shop around for me.'

'Well, if, as Dale told you, he is saving this information

until his October 25th meeting with the investors to raise his next level of financing, we still have just over ten days—plenty of time.

'Mmmm,' sighed Jill, 'this is your show.'

But it wasn't and they both knew it. Still he felt sure that they could pull it off. Apart from the insider traders, and the whole world now knew how they did it; the others—doctors and dentists from La Jolla and Ventura, who bought stock on sure thing like this, he would be rich. He could say good-bye to working for others for ever. Then things would be different; it would be by Skip's rules. 'If you don't like it then screw you.' Before Jill he had fun with almost no money. Imagine life with millions. But he was also getting hungry. He looked at his watch: 'It's still early. Only ten thirty. We have the day together, why don't we go down the coast to Carmel and have lunch.' Dale would be working as he seemed to do most Sundays, and Skip's stomach was thinking of Casanova's; and afterwards, who knows what might happen. They could go back to his apartment and enjoy each other for the rest of the day. Jill may be a pain, but she was still one of the most exciting women that he had ever met. There was something in the way that she held herself, in the way she dressed, in the way that she could set him alight from over the other side of the room. When they made love he might see someone else's face but there was no mistake who the body belonged

to. This time when he smiled it was for her and although she did not see it she also had not known about his earlier fantasies that morning; so the score was even. And anyway it was Jill herself who claimed to be the realist, so it was for her to understand.

At the mention of food, Jill's eyes lifted up from watching the sea gulls collecting scraps of taco shells from the early breakfasters on the balcony at Cafe Zelda's, next door, and she looked brighter. 'Casanova's?' she purred, 'let's go check-out their wine list.' And for the first time that morning she smiled. Skip felt that at last that morning they were thinking alike again. Maybe there was hope for them yet. Their waitress was nowhere to be seen so Skip took a ten dollar bill from his black eel-skin wallet and placed it under his coffee cup. He handed Jill her scarf and gloves from the empty chair next to where she had been sitting and graciously pulled back her chair for her. He glanced, for the last time, at the student as he and Jill linked arms as they gently negotiated the rickety wooden stairs down to the street.

Leaving Jill's car in its parking spot, they took California Highway 1 at the Capitola Soquel exit thundering down past Aptos traveling south. Another ten miles south near the Castroville-Prunedale exit the highway turned country and twisted and turned through the California farmland past roadside artichoke shops and

the Moss Landing power station where the road again became a four-lane highway. Skip eased the car up to 55 mph as 'The end of the innocence' filled the car from the radio and the sun was now finally breaking through the fog. His hand moved to the inside of her thigh and he gently massaged it in silence; it was not an overtly sexual act but more of a friendly gesture. The brown verges gave way to the naturally camouflaged hillsides of the huge Fort Ord army base followed by the lush outlying areas of upper middle-class Monterey and Pacific Grove.

Skip looked down to notice that Jill's hand was resting on his and it felt good; another fifteen minutes or so and they would be in the tranquil backwater of Carmel and in the warmth of the restaurant sampling a good châteaux-bottled claret.

A couple of years ago, naked fear had grabbed the cultured and wealthy inhabitants of Carmel as Clint Eastwood had not only run for Mayor but been elected. However, those fears and Clint Eastwood's term as the city's most important elected official somehow passed without McDonald's cartons being left ankle deep on the sidewalks and without Disney opening a fun park in the park on Sixth Street. Nevertheless, all was not right in Paradise. One of the world's most decorative and costly and exclusive areas had drought restrictions that limited

the water that residents bathed with. Bad news for the locals but not news that would keep tourists away. Usually Skip hated driving on the coastal side of the Santa Cruz Mountains as it was one long frustration. The blue-rinse brigade driving vintage Mercedes SL coupes and gas-guzzling Cadillac Seattles drove like they were the only cars on the road. Lack of lane-discipline had reversed the roles of the driving lanes all along the Central Coast, and when it was not the locals causing congestion, it was Joe and Martha tourist from Alabama or Washington State.

That still early Sunday morning Skip's mind was not relaxed; what they had dreamed-up only three months ago was now at its final stage. The only problem was that maybe somehow it had been too easy; he had enjoyed their sometimes painfully furtive, clandestine meetings and he almost wanted them to continue. Jill was also not that relaxed and had thought the ride to Carmel uncomfortably quiet as if neither she nor Skip felt totally easy with what they were trying to get away with. Her mind was racing. While it had been in the abstract, the dream rather than a reality, she could deal with it. But now they were actually going to go through with it, she was convinced that they were both quietly petrified. She was to leave the comfort of her beautiful home, mortgaged or not and was to commit the now serious crime of insider trading. And, for the first time Jill understood why so few husbands or wives actually

go through with it and leave.

Skip lifted back the cuff on his cream linen shirt and glanced at the two-tone Rolex on his wrist again—a gift from an earlier girlfriend—to see that the drive to Carmel had taken them fifty minutes. There had been little traffic and no highway patrol cars and it was only 11.30 and not quite lunch time. Carmel village was not quite awake yet. This sedate and expensive tourist center, which would be packed by shuffling Japanese tourists within an hour or so, was gently finishing off its quiet night's rest. They parked within walking distance of the restaurant outside the Old Forge and sat for a while in further silence; neither guessing the other's mood correctly.

'OK!' said Jill and to Skip's surprise, finally giving voice to her silent fears to exorcise the evil spirits of doubt that filled the car, 'We can do it. There's no point worrying about it now. We're committed. Let's lighten up.' He winced slightly, suddenly being brought down to earth so abruptly and remembering that this was a still very much a business transaction for her. He tapped a familiar rock drum beat on the steering wheel and blew air softly through his teeth.

'Do you think that we can do this without getting caught?'

'Of course we can,' he humored her, 'but I need to examine the papers and then try to discuss them with a

couple of finance guys first. We're not experts and if we get this wrong then we'll be worse off than we are now,' he said as a reflex action.

She misread his answer; he had also started to worry and that was bad. They were running the real risk of a RICO suit for not only insider-trading but also industrial espionage. Since Ivan Boesky and Mike Milken had played 'let's make a deal' and rolled over on everyone, before receiving their executive suite reservations at Club Fed, both crimes were now taken very seriously. Nowadays you didn't even to have made a profit to be guilty of insider-trading. And the small guys got nailed to the carpet every time. You needed to have someone to trade like the big guys did, or to have started with money, to get out of that kind of trouble.

Now that Jill had brought up the negative side for the second time that morning his mind switched to the mechanics of how this would be done. He would need to mask any reference to DML before he showed the papers to anyone. One careless mention of which company they were from and DML stock would scream up in price before they themselves could buy in. If all else failed then they could buy the option and then mail some of the papers into the press anonymously.

He answered with confidence: 'You're right. Now is the right time to do it. We go with it this week,' he continued,

now nervously tapping the steering wheel. 'Did I tell you about the fund-raiser at the Civic Center a couple of nights ago....'

'You went with someone,' interrupted Jill. He ignored her. She had been invited as always, 'And I sat next to an investment banker, a Frenchman, but he seemed to understand The Valley quite well. It seemed a good time to test the water so I told him that I was also an investor and mentioned that I had heard a rumor about a very interesting graphic chip breakthrough and there might be an opportunity to invest in the company some time soon'

As skip heard himself say these words they startled him; he even sounded like a gangster now, and he folded his arms across the wheel almost annoyed. He continued: 'At first he told me that his firm had more bad high-tech stock than they could paper their building with, and that if I was wise I would stay away from it. I left it at that and didn't bring the subject up again-a selling technique that often works; mention your sell once and then talk about anything but what you actually want to sell. And by the end of the evening he was asking whether I had anything on paper and what the buy-in price was. I said that I would get back to him. This guy had lost his investor's shirts time and time again but he was now game to do it all over again. And that tells me the venture capitalists are in the market again. He seemed ideal to help get the rumor going so I

agreed to tell him more in a month or so, and I will. No wonder these guys were losing their shirts, Skip thought as they had parted that night. Maybe he should get out of working for a living and sell investment bonds; it seemed like spearing fish in a barrel.

Jill leaned towards him: 'That's all fine my darling, but I thought that there we were in a hurry.' She pushed, not happy just to sit and wait for everything to fall into place slowly. 'All this waiting around makes me nervous and I don't want to hurt Dale any more than is necessary.' What she didn't say was that she did not want Dale watching her every move once he knew that something was happening. That made her highly nervous. Dale had never been a violent man but DML was his life.

'Listen Jill, don't 'my darling' me. As you said earlier, we have been waiting for the right information to come along and now it has and now the timing has to be right for this to work and keep us out of jail. We had to know of something special before the rest of the world is told and now we do. I know that the papers that you have brought have the details, even if I don't know exactly what they mean. As soon as we do then I will get back to the Frenchman and get the word out; but at the right time'

'For God's sake! You are the company's sales manager, how can you not know exactly what the report means,' Jill thought, biting her lip, and now almost panic stricken. She

had teamed up with a man who is about to engineer a killing on the stock market without knowing how many beans made five.

Skip hit the wheel angrily and the horn sounded and made them both jump and then they laughed. They lapsed back into silence waiting for their restaurant to open until the windows inside of the Porsche started to cloud over. Skip turned on the air conditioning and the heater and the inside of car got frostier again. The brunch crowd was starting to appear. Strangely for a village, the streets were getting busier with 'Sunday' people clutching large newspapers, hunting croissants and coffee and looking like they have been ejected from their homes by a four alarm fire.

'OK,' said Skip. 'That's it. I'm tired of waiting. How do you feel about driving farther down the coast instead?' He desperately wanting to change the tone of their conversation and suddenly thinking about the warm body next to his continued: 'The Highlands Inn's not far and the view is just awesome.'

Jill thought silently, fighting the fear that had risen in her stomach during the morning's conversation and quickly decided what was the point in being a prospective criminal - even if she was joking-without at least some fun.

'Only if we get a room with a fire place,' she smiled.

CHAPTER TWO

Young Americans

From Monterey in the south, near where the first commercially viable personal computer operating system was developed by Digital Research at Pacific Grove, through San Jose to the university towns of Berkeley and Stanford to Marin in the north, almost everybody belongs to the one society; that of technology, computers and software.

The general area, known as Silicon Valley - after the chemical silicon used in many of the area's world-famous processes-is where companies are still founded and financed almost every day to develop and manufacture the impossible.

These companies are founded not by the 'snake oil' men, who once traded in the Wild West, but by modern day dreamers peddling reality. These dreamers live their ideas and manage to surround themselves with followers many of which work mainly for promises - and are capable of

living on take- out pizza, coca cola and black coffee. When the projects work the followers can also become wealthy and either retire or they in turn form new start-ups. When they don't work they drift until they became acolytes at other start-ups.

Since the wild successes at companies like Apple, Microsoft and Intel in the early Eighties, Bay Area venture capitalists and their scouts keep in constant touch with the West Coast technical hot-houses of Berkeley, Stanford, San Jose State and any other schools that might merit as technically interesting. Every now and then these contacts have brought in a brilliant and hungry technician - a real winner.

Dale Leonard was only 23, but in the field of chip design he was already a master and he was also fairly likable; a rare combination. He had learned early in life that you attract more bees with honey than other methods; and he worked hard to pollinate the San Francisco consortia of venture capitalists that represented the many dentists and doctors who felt the need to invest their gains from treating other persons misfortunes; and who seemed happy with a return of two or three worthwhile investments out of any ten tried. And that ratio was all that was needed. One good idea could, and often did, multiply an investment fifty fold or higher.

In September 1988, after twelve long months of working evenings and weekends, of slaving over bit-part development computers that continually broke down, and eating cold pizza at the 2 am. development sessions with his partners, Dale produced his first prototype-the SWAT games chip. With his two friends he convinced their professor to introduce them to some venture capitalists. They all dropped out of Berkeley; and another new company was off. He was the Chairman of DML.

Dale Leonard was ready to start his short trek into the Valley's history books alongside the likes of Apple and Intel. He always wanted to be different and had gone one better and had really lucked out; he had been introduced to a firm of London-based investors. Not only did DML get its much needed development cash, but the investors lived 5,000 miles and an eight hour time- change away: a perfect combination.

Dale and his friends, now his partners, had trotted out their song and dance act and in October 1989, when he took his bow, he did so with a \$3.5 million dollar line of credit from the UK-based investment bank for thirty percent of their company. Duracek, Meisner and Leonard had been the textbook Silicon Valley start-up. Another star was born

With the launch of the DML's first SWAT games chip

the magazines went wild and sales orders piled high. They could just keep orders filled and that was after a review from the guru journalist of the day semi-rubbished the chip. They had been naive enough to let him see the chip in its pre-production stage.

As all good start-ups of the day, both stock and stock options were liberally distributed throughout the staff who were actively encouraged to take up these Valley perks at favorably discounted prices. At first it was very democratic; everyone had a vote in the company's future including the delivery boys. Then, as business settled into a routine, came the lag in enthusiasm that everyone except Dale had foreseen. This was followed by the less obvious changes at DML. Slowly they started to produce more cash-flow forecasts than technical designs. Then they started having more staff meetings than development meetings. He had been warned, but Boy Wonders will be Boy Wonders!

By March of 1989 more and more decisions were being taken at after-hours staff meetings and Dale and his partners found that they were having to justify their actions to their fellow owners. One by one his hand-picked managers flexed their muscles by waving their voters rights and everyone fell out of love with both his autocratic style of leadership and DML itself.

The founders were caught between a rock and a hard

place: their performance-driven investors and their friends and staff now controlled DML's destiny. Acrimonious discussions followed almost daily. By June of 1989, production, development and quality had all fallen apart. Worse still they were no new designs in the pipeline. Dale had become bogged down in office politics and the whole Valley knew it. The eagerly prized stock options that had been at one time the pride of the OTC and the talk of The Valley had rapidly become worthless. After a couple of months Dale started having doubts about his new design. When he first started DML he knew that his ideas would work. He did not know exactly how they would work, but he knew that they would. Then quite suddenly and within weeks of each other his two partners jumped ship and swam for shore.

However history would tell it, the truth would still be known to a few people: himself, his ex-partners and their families. The company had at first thrived- then almost foundered. Not completely, but now most of the money had gone and with it both of his partners. Mainly under their wives' influence, they had jumped ship and offered their almost worthless stock to Dale. Dale would not give up so easily. He started to slowly rebuild his dream. It was to be tough going but he enjoyed a fight.

Dale decided that he had to take control of DML or lose it for good and in July of 1989 he took out a second

mortgage on his house, the one thing that he had promised Jill that he would never do, and rebuilt his share-holding in DML back to fifty percent of the shares. He could not touch either the thirty percent owned by the London-based venture capitalists or the twenty per cent owned by a pension fund that was in for the long haul. Now he and Jill were broke. He told Jill about how he had bought back control of DML after all the papers had been signed, but instead of her seeing it as the only way for them to survive she saw it as a major deception. It further deepened the rift between them that had been growing slowly since the company had started going down hill. When they had first got together, Jill had enjoyed all the trappings of the industry: the late hours and then early energetic mornings, everyone's enthusiasm including the money men and the press. They were going to summer in Cap D'Antibes and winter in Davos. They were going to be seriously rich. She had not calculated for what followed.

Companies like DML did not run themselves-not that any companies do, but technology companies are worse than most. Seven days a week is just about two days a week too short. Saturdays are when you check other people's progress and Sundays are spent preparing for Mondays. The work never stopped.

They seldom met except in the bathroom or in the driveway, each with their car pointing the other way. Their

sex life, once strong enough to carry the relationship alone, became a memory and an embarrassment. When his partners one by one threw in the towel, he had thought them short-sighted and stupid: led by the nose by their wives but now even he was not sure and it was starting to show. Something had to give, and it did; Dale went back to his first love - his work.

It was at that time that Dale met and hired Marty Wyman- 28 years old and a real mass of energy-as his General Manager when the two men had met at a house party up in the SAAB and Volvo hippy paradise of Marin County. The party had been at the house of one of the more established technical guru's from Industrial Light and Magic - the George Lucas special effects company. Although Marty's profession was business, his first love had always been technology. His parents had groomed him to study something 'useful' as something to fall back on. The Wymans were third generation US citizens with grandfather Wyman having moved to Pittsburgh from Newcastle to escape the great Recession that swept England in the 1920's. Marty's parents - his father was the manager of a brewery - had big dreams for their only son. They wanted him to escape from the smoky steel town and make a better life for himself. Wisely Marty had listened to them and through a series of scholarships and grants had eventually completed his MBA at Wharton, finishing third

in his class.

Marty was a skilled problem-fighter and immediately recognized the areas that had started to slow Dale down. He took control of the day-to-day running of DML; he started to replace Dale at the staff meetings, and at the trade shows and conferences and he was enjoying it. He saw it as his future. And if there were any problems in the company, and that meant any problems, then he would be ruthless. He was not about to let a golden opportunity slip out of his reach just because the boss was slipping or the product was not available; he would push people and he would push them hard. Having come up the hard way he didn't mind the 15 hour days needed to keep his position as Dale's unequal partner at DML. He had the responsibility but not the stock, nor hillside house, the car, or the general lifestyle, but there was time and he was prepared to do whatever was necessary to get there.

It was 8.30 on the morning of Wednesday, October 3rd, 1990 and Dale and Marty were pawing over the latest set of management accounts and knew that what they had feared was about to happen. Both men had made their points fiercely and had swaggered around the room for over an hour but they were getting nowhere just stating what they both knew: in another sixty days DML would not be able to meet its payroll.

'It's no good Marty. It won't work. Unless we go for more funding now, we won't be here January first,' Dale said quietly as he stood up from his desk and went over to the window that ran the length of his second floor office overlooking the main entrance to his building.

'Look Dale. We both know how hard we have worked to keep DML from going under these last few months. Neither of us has a social life anymore and Jill must wonder who that stranger is who makes himself coffee at 3 AM in her kitchen and is gone again before she gets up. But you know as well as I do that if we don't start shipping new product before the end of next month then even new funding won't save us; the game's over.

Marty now joined Dale over by the window as he spoke and they both looked out over their staff arriving for another day. Dale put his hand briefly on Marty's shoulder. 'Jesus, Marty. We'll make it. Don't be so pessimistic.'

'Sales have done their bit with the old product that they have and but it's now down to you and Mike to complete the new designs. Production has been on half-speed for three weeks now and we can't keep everybody quiet forever. That's how rumors start and when the press hear that what we, or rather what you, promised is delayed yet again we'll get slaughtered yet again and this time it will really hurt us.'

Dale spun around and both men now faced each other.

'Listen Marty, I'm working around the clock but the designs-my designs for the chip-just won't work.' he said with a quiet force. 'I will keep redesigning them until they do, but I need the feedback from Mike's technical people and I'm just not getting it fast enough.' Marty went and sat down at his chairman's desk where he had spent the last hour or so trying to put his point of view across and picked up a handful of the production papers and waved them: 'Then give us the prototypes quicker and we'll test the bloody things even faster. I don't know how, but we will.'

Still at the window leaned with his back to the glass, Dale raised his right foot balancing his weight against the window. 'It's no good.' He sighed. 'As I see it, the only possibility of having something useful before Christmas is if the box that Mike is bringing back from the UK is as good as everyone says it is.' The young chairman of DML was controlling his frustration and anger; but only just.

Marty saw that there was no point in arguing the point further. If Dale did not want to see something then it did not exist. A useful trait technically but not in business; so he started to compromise. Six months ago he would not have. Six months ago he would have shouted Dale out in the lobby. But the six months arguing with Dale had been long and bloody; so he gave in. 'I agree, but there is no point at just throwing more people at the work. That will only slow it down. Mike should hear tomorrow when his

new Inmos Cube will be ready and then he can plan his trip to England to collect it. At that point we can discuss it with more accuracy. But until then I suggest that we please stop pushing the technical people as it won't help. We'll get each test finished when it's finished.'

Dale thought a while in silence. He recognized that in their way they were both fishing for ways out of the problem.

Then Marty picked up the conversation, trying to force his point home:

'Or let's call a press conference and announce another delay.' Knowing full well that this was the thing furthest from Dale's mind; to do such a thing would be fatal for DML. Both men knew that this was not even an option. Since mid- 1987 too many investors had been badly hurt by not pulling their investments out in time and Dale knew that that's what would happen to DML if he showed any sales weakness.

'Are you crazy?' he replied, exactly as Marty had expected.

'Show me an alternative then. We need to do something before the rumors start to fly. If we announce it ourselves then, to some extent, we can control what is said. If you don't want to announce a slow-down, then we must announce a breakthrough.'

Dale thought for a moment and grinned.

'OK, we'll announce a mountain of back-orders.'

'Damn it, no. It has to be a breakthrough, a technical breakthrough and a damn good one at that. You are not exactly known for mediocre announcements and one now would be the worse thing possible. Also it is easier to avoid giving exact technical details for security reasons and it might also stop our competitors' order books from filling by not giving projected shipping date; just saying the first quarter. The COMDEX show is in a couple of week's time. Leak the rumor now to keep the money men happy and the stock price from dropping even further and we can formally announce the specifications or retract the whole thing at our suite at Caesars. Its ideal; all the industry under one roof. That show is so big now that you could announce the 'second coming' and most people would still miss it. And, in the mean while, if we suspect problems and we have to show something we can trot out one of our in-house doctored demos to substantiate whatever we want'

Dale agreed, but deep down his mind had regressed to the days when his word had been law: when he had been on the cover of *Micro Times* and was hailed a new Wizard. People who mattered in the industry listened when he spoke, even when he was dressed in jeans and a tee-shirt people respected him. They were in awe of this new kid on the block, damn it! Even the Wall Street Journal returned

his calls. Life had been so clear cut then.

'OK Dale. You're the boss. You tell me what we have achieved and I will see that it is leaked,' agreed Marty. 'It's about time that we had some good press anyway. People are starting not to return my phone calls and it will feel good to snub a few of those bastards in return. But one other thing Dale, this must stay between the two of us; no one else must know the truth. If we need a demo fixed then one of us has to do it. I might understand what we are doing but you can bet no one else will. If what we are doing gets out it will be in London and Tokyo faster than you can say chip set. And we will both be finished.

'You are over reacting.....'

'Am I, Dale? Do you think so? This has to be unofficial until we actually have something concrete. Can you imagine if Skip was to hear about this. He would be pre-selling the future product so hard that orders for existing product would be stopped dead in their tracks; we could melt down our existing stock for paper-weights. Everyone would want to wait for the next version. As I have said before, I don't trust the man's judgment; I really don't know what you see in the man or why you hired him. He has all the finesse of a injured rhino.

Remember when he poured a beer over the journalist at our last softball game?'

'But he sells, and bloody well. Even you have to admit

that. I know that you and he don't hit it off and I'm sorry about that but with the last product he outsold everyone three to one. That's why I keep him and that's why he is staying. Anyway you have to admit everyone pre-announces product.'

'Yes, they risk it, but only when they actually have something in the pipeline. And, only then to block orders from going to competitors. 'And', he continued, 'yes I know that people trading on rumors make or lose millions daily but what we about to do is called fraud in the real world. Not only would our investors be unhappy to learn the truth but I would think that we could be looking at a couple of years in Club Fed.'

Marty had waited a long time to put Dale right on a few things. He was getting impatient. What the hell was this man doing heading up a multi-million dollar company. When this was over he, Marty, would have his house in the Los Gatos hills and maybe even Dale's office; Dale belonged in the lab after all.

Dale, however, could not decide whether he had just been threatened or not. The words in themselves just seemed to suggest caution but there was something in the way Marty had said them. Had he underestimated Marty? No, they were now partners in crime.

'OK Marty, so you're in then.' Just to make sure that they were together. 'Yes I suppose I am, but when this is all

over I want to see some proper appreciation, and I don't mean two weeks in San Diego at some corporate golf resort.

The game-plan settled, Marty ordered their second pot of coffee, this time decaff; stopped all further calls to Dale's office until further notice and they started to create their version of history.

'Who knows', joked Dale to lighten the mood as he moved back to his desk to sit down again, 'this industry is so fast by the time our news hits the press, it might just be true.'

CHAPTER THREE

Across the pond.....

During October 1990 severe rain storms lashed the South East of England as they had now done the previous two Octobers. Moving around the City of London and the West End, their narrow streets built for horse- drawn buggies not trucks and buses, had become a nightmare and the traffic now moved at an all-time average low of 12

miles an hour. Walking along the sidewalks, pedestrians found themselves soaked by passing cars and buses spraying gutter water-and it was not water from Gene Kelly's *An American in Paris*, but the filthy mix of rubber and oil that found on all city streets, ruining any clothing that it came in touch with. It was water from Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*.

That October though it wasn't only the weather that was stormy. Ten years of Thatcher's Dream had created social chaos; unemployment was at a record high and still rising each month; businesses were failing at record rates; inflation was back; home foreclosures were at their recorded highest and another slow Christmas was forecast for the retailers. London was in the middle of the greatest depression since the 1930's, when the oppressed Jarrow miners marched into London demanding better social conditions.

Thatcher's Dream had its roots in everyone working hard and being strong enough to carry their load in the community. Through Government controlled fiscal policies she encouraged businesses to prosper by offering them low interest money at the banks and wage-subsidies for the extra workers that they would employ. Individuals were courted by the banks and the building societies-English saving and loan banks-to buy rather than rent their own houses. In 1988 upwards of sixty percent of British

subjects owned their own homes, the highest percentage anywhere in the world.

The Docklands area of East London, made famous by Jack the Ripper and the home of the largest pre-container ship docks in the world, was subject to a reclamation project. Both sides of the River Thames, for almost twenty miles downstream towards the English Channel, became a building site. Prime 'Dockland's' property was right on the edge of the financial district by the Tower of London; the new wealthy could be fashionable and walk to their brokerage offices and banks. The less prestigious properties followed the Thames eastwards towards the coast or inland into the immigrant ghettos of London's old East End. Hitherto black spots, like Limehouse, known for its Chinese laundries and Whitechapel, the haunt of Jack the Ripper, became both fashionable and desirable.

London's realtors were ecstatic; a major new market had sprung up in their midst, and they all opened offices in or near the larger building sites. Those agents not happy to wait for the new buildings to go up preempted the market by buying existing houses from the now confused working-class locals: their properties had gone from being plain old two-bed workman's houses to desirable two-bedroom cottages with Thames view, and their resale value had trebled literally overnight.

Thousands of London's East-Enders many second,

third and fourth generation residents, were relocated from their Thames-side houses to the newer but inland tract homes as they were built. This made way for their own streets to be bulldozed in turn to make way for the new high price and highly prized tract houses of the middle and upper social classes.

A beautiful raised-level futuristic light railway would thread itself through the area to carry the willingly resettled workers through the twenty first century Mecca. Plans to make a Thames island-the Isle of Dogs-into a European Hong Kong, underwritten by the British Parliament, were drafted and 'sold' to Reichman brothers who headed a consortium of Canadian developers; the Thames side was busier than any time in the previous hundred years.

Similar to the Hudson River, 2,000 and 4,000 square foot loft-apartments were created out of old warehouses and factory shells: huge brick chimneys, heavy lifting winches and exposed beams were left in tact and added to both the properties appeal and, as a consequence, price. Such apartments with a good view of the Tower of London changed hands for millions of dollars. Those developers who could not afford to speculate with Tower-view properties went down stream of the Thames and the smaller cheaper tracts of land.

The area was torn asunder.

Hardly anyone slept peacefully for what seemed like years due to the constant demolition, destruction and digging. A City STOLPort - Short Take Off and Landing airport - was built in the Royal Dock complex some six miles down stream from the Tower of London to make the City easier to access for European businessmen. Noise abatement activists and local resident's fears of the STOLPort being a Trojan horse resulted in mass demonstrations but the Government remained firm. The fear was that some years later an extension of the runway and the clearance for larger aircraft would be passed by the Government of the day. It would happen in 1991.

As an irony and some economists say because the cost of money was so cheap, companies could only raise cash to fund acquisitions and capital development, and hence grow, if they offered stock and bonds with a higher rate of return than the investor would receive on a straight bank-deposit:

The Junk Bond was born;

And, no one seemed to know where to draw the line. Companies mortgaged future profits for cash today. At the same time the City was deregulated and for the first time companies other than banks could offer financial services such as fund raising. This resulted in a wave of corporate mergers and acquisitions the likes of which had never been seen before.

Overnight the M&A brokers, bond salesman and market makers became the new elite. Many of them were enticed to join start-up or newly merged brokerage houses with multi-million-pound salaries, starting bonuses and incentive packages. There were now more Porsche, Mercedes and top-end BMW's in the square mile of London than in any other complete capital city in the world. Business was good and would get even better.

Everyone thought that it would last for ever. It did not.

During the Spring of 1988, Ministers in the Thatcher Government, and notably Nigel Lawson-the Chancellor of the Exchequer, or Finance Minister, decided that the fiscal policies were not working. This was not news to the rest of the country. It had become obvious for some time that the financial policies were not working; inflation and unemployment were both in double figures as they had not been since the Sixties. The money that moved around the companies had not increased employment, as expected, but unemployment. Most of the new money had gone into acquisitions. Conquering companies were not labeled 'asset-strippers' as they had been in the seventies; but the pattern was the same: buy a company with a high turnover but with low profits, locate the weak profit centers, fire all the people involved, and sell off its assets. The new owner ends up with a healthier company, and a more salable

asset to trade-on.

The Government's remedy was savage. In an attempt to curb spending, bank interest rates were taken from nine percent to almost seventeen. Meaning that even good customers were borrowing at around twenty percent.

Everyone, but everyone, screamed foul.

The local Councils who collected and administered the 'rates', or home-owners taxes responsible for keeping the streets lit, for garbage collection and the myriad of social services that many once took for granted, suffered badly during this period of spiraling costs and were losing money. Many were technically bankrupt and a few could not meet their payrolls. The answer was simple, and became pet project of the Prime Minister herself: Change the basis for tax collection.

The existing system was disbanded and a new system of 'Poll Tax' was instituted. Whereas before, property tax was calculated loosely on the rentable value of a property, it would now be collected on the number of inhabitants living there. This was immediately derided as an iniquitous system by most people rich and poor, but mainly by the poor, as it now meant that ten people living in a single house in a depressed area would pay more than one person living in a \$5 million dollar mansion in Kensington. For the first time in many years social chaos erupted.

Marchers stormed London and demonstrated. They were met and rebuffed by police at Trafalgar Square. The subsequent violence that filled the streets also filled television sets around the world. Mounted police baton-charged the angry crowds and the marchers retaliated by toppling the horses with glass marbles and iron ball-bearings. The mob scenes were like Danny the Red leading the Paris Commune riots in the sixties. The violence was real and it was extreme. The Extreme Right blamed the Far Left. The Left blamed the policies of the Right. Eventually, although not some two years, the tax would be repealed and the unimaginable would happen. In 1991 the Iron Lady-Thatcher herself-would fall.

England, and especially London, collapsed like a set of financial dominoes. The financial district alone laid off some 40,000 workers, mainly brokers and market-makers who had fueled the flames of the takeover-based inflation. Social services were cut and a new wave of homeless dashed against the country's fiscal policies: banks and building societies called their loans on home-owners who could no longer afford their share of The Dream.

New housing developments, especially those that formed part of the Docklands re-housing experiment, went unfunded or were stopped part way through and London was covered in the biggest building site since the Germans had tried to raze the city during the Blitz.

Home furnishing supplies and do-it-yourself companies closed, or merged trying to survive. Car salesrooms were deserted. And the once proud shopping centers of Regent Street and Oxford Street were covered with For Rent signs.

The folk heroes that the commercial boom of the Eighties had created were in full retreat. The traders and nouveau industrialists whose empires ranged from clothes to tractors were feeling the high interest rates.

Press barons from Australia and Canada who had torn through England collecting local and national newspapers and magazines were all in trouble. None of them could service their corporate debts at the new interest rates and they were all shedding their glittering prizes as the poor had hocked their watches decades earlier. The recession that had started in 1988 was now almost two years on and in full cry.

And it showed no signs of retreating; it was spreading.

Fortunately for many of London's banking and investment community, not all their portfolio was UK-based with some of their brightest stars being in California, U.S.A.

It was Wednesday, October 24th, 1990 and that winter's morning London seemed damper and bitterly cold

than normal. The kind of winter day that London is famed for. As Douglas Wilde lowered his six-foot-three frame into seat 6A on PA125 he was thankful to be on that, as usual, over-warm aircraft.

Pan Am flight 125, from London's Heathrow to San Francisco, is one of the world's longer commuter flights. It ferries the money-men, bosses and top technicians some 5,000 miles, between Silicon Valley and Europe. Traveling west, the eleven- and-a-half hour flight leaves London about 10:00 and affords the traveler a pleasant day's reading to adjust to the laid-back West Coast of California. Going north the flight leaves San Francisco around 6 PM and can be just another night's sleep for those lucky enough to be able to adjust to the cabin hubbub.

It is quite a mixed flight: first class section carries the more obviously rich, the film stars, industry legends and financiers; business or club class carries the middle class worker-managers, low-level designers and sales people; and coach class passengers are often tourists who revel in the cheap fares to their dream destinations, even at the extra cost of spending eleven hours with their knees tucked under their chins and eating plastic food.

The club section of PA125 forms an alternate 'Mile High Club' for the hardware and software sales and marketing personnel from European and U.S. high technology companies. Many of these club members travel the 11,000

mile round trip every other month, some even more often. Experienced travelers sit in the upstairs 'bubble' in the 747, fitfully, sleeping in both directions. Not an easy flight, but as long haul flights go, not bad.

Douglas Wilde was casually dressed in fawn cavalry-twill trousers, a check shirt with a Royal Green Jackets tie (he had been a Captain while on tour in Belfast), an off-white cardigan, and oxford brogue shoes. He was dressed more for a week-end house-party than an eleven-hour flight, but he was comfortable. Although aged 44, he did not relate to denim jeans and had never owned a pair.

His large frame sat comfortably in his seat on the upper deck. His PA had booked well: 6A and 6B were the next best seats to the captain, the seats with the most leg room on the plane. Douglas was often told by his partners that first class was more comfortable for long distance travel, and Douglas knew it to be true, but he was a money man and considered the \$5,000 premium for some caviar, a beef diner and three more inches of seat unreasonable.

Next to Douglas sat a small bundle wrapped in denim and a lumberjack shirt deeply engrossed in a copy of Scientific American.

The bundle was Mike Wasnap.

Mike did not believe in the traveler's social graces of dressing for the occasion. He was a true Valley engineer.

He looked like a Hobbit in Levis: full- bearded; five foot nothing; rotund and with a shock of unruly red hair.

Mike's appearance belied his expert's intelligence. He was returning from a shopping trip to Europe investigating the power of parallel processing computer chips, known as Transputers, designed by the UK company INMOS. His brief had been to speed-up various in-house projects by using these Transputer-based computers to simulate much of his detailed computer-chip design-testing work. He was not a great traveler and although he had a successful trip he was greatly looking forward to getting back to his South Bay, Haywood apartment.

As is usual on long distance flights in club or first class, passengers are offered champagne on boarding and the stewardess was already working the cabin giving out drinks. Mike did not normally drink, but this was free and it had been a hectic three days in England. Now it was over and time to relax.

'Yes, Champagne please' he answered when the stewardess offered him a Mimosa-an orange juice champagne mix, a plain orange juice or the non- vintage Veuve Cliquot Champagne.

'Yes I shall also' responded Douglas Wilde quite formally and enthusiastically as he was really looking forward to the flight and some time in San Francisco. Douglas was an old school banker: he had attended Eton

and gone on to do Economics at Oxford; he had rowed for his college and now lived in splendid isolation in the wealthy area of Holland Park close to the center of London. A keen traveler, he disliked traveling on business because there was never enough time to see anything of interest before having to return home again; but he was always hopeful. The rest of his partners were even more typically British and hated traveling period: they were convinced that if you drew a line around London from the financial district in the east to the edge at Kensington - at the Shepherds Bush roundabout in the west, with not much more than a mile to the north and even less to the south-there would really be no need to leave that civilized rectangle for anything.

It therefore had come as an pleasant surprise to be voted, as the head of his investment consortium, to visit the DML facility just south of San Francisco in Sunnyvale. It had been Douglas himself who had snatched the DML investment prize from the Japanese and from Sato Industries no less. It had been quite a coup. The negotiations had been touch-and-go for weeks but he had signed up Dale Leonard and DML right at the company's Bar-B-Q. 'How's that for flexibility?' Douglas had thought at the time, but that had been just over a year ago and now they needed a visit. The information flow from DML was not what they needed and had been expecting: first they

had received an update weekly and in almost too much detail; and then it had slowed and after nine months it had all but stopped.

'Vacation or business?' asked Mike cheerfully as he relaxed into his second glass of champagne before takeoff.

'A little of both,' came the answer. 'It is a long trip for just a couple of day's business and it so happens that my wife's family has a vineyard up in Napa. I thought that I might spend a few days with them.'

As they sat chatting the crew went through their take-off routines, flicking switches and whispering into telephones, they then gave the safety display that few but the first time fliers or the very nervous actually watched. The flight ready, it lumbered slowly to runway Number 3 and waited for clearance from the tower to take-off. They were in luck that morning and a few minutes later the engines roared and the beast hurtled down its short journey along the runway and skyward.

As the air caught under the wings the cabin vibration seemed like the overhead storage bins would fling themselves open and fill the galleys with duty-free liquor and suit carriers but they held. As the engine noise cut back over Staines, PA125 settled into a gentle upward slant towards its full 45,000 feet altitude. It was at that height that the huge turbo-fan jets would gently carry them at 600 knots westward. Faster if a tail wind came up, but

unlikely, as the trade winds blew from the west this time of year.

The stewardess, who had demonstrated the safety procedures unnerved Douglas Wilde and Mike Wasnap by informing them that they were sitting at emergency exits. They might be called on to help in an emergency. She unbuckled herself from the crew jump-seat facing the two men and moved a couple of paces to plane's galley area. She was a pleasant women in her late forties wearing too much make-up and talked easily about the weather while she preparing them an early lunch.

The atmosphere was relaxed and the light conversation flowed freely.

Suddenly the aircraft dipped dramatically throwing coffee and drinks to the stainless carpet. Mike was not a regular flier and he had turned very pale. The stewardess assured him that this was regular and recommended that both of them kept their seat belts on.

She also recommended more champagne.

'A good idea,' both men agreed and relaxed again.

'Returning home?' asked Douglas, basing his question on the other man's American accent.

'Yes,' replied Mike 'I'm a technician with a hardware company and I've been in the England looking at some new computers. How about you? What line are you in?'

'Oh, Finance. I am a London-based investment banker for my sins with Wood, Carson and Wilde. I am coming to San Francisco to review possible additions to our technology portfolio. Who are you with? Perhaps I know them.'

'DML in Sunnyvale. Our main business is PC chip design and some minor systems software.

Douglas was somewhat surprised.

'Yes. I know of them. We might even have some of your stock. We carry quite a diverse technology portfolio.' His answer was not quite complete. He had left out that he represented the current and only investors in DML and that the main reason for his journey was to do some checking on their progress.

He continued: 'That must be fascinating. Didn't I read about DML working on some major graphics project at the moment? I think it was in an article in the FT last week.'

Mike was neither a marketing man or sufficiently security conscious to realize that talking to strangers on long distance flights-and especially to or from San Francisco-was not a very good idea so he continued: 'Yes, it's one hell of a project but it's also a race against time. There is a line of companies trying to develop the same type of chip and whoever gets the design out first will make a killing. It could revolutionize both the computer and

video markets. But, that's the marketing men talking. You know what they are like; I wouldn't give you a dollar for a barrel of them.'

Douglas thought that this would be a good time to ask a few innocent questions as there is nothing like a few glasses of the 'Widow' to loosen the tongue. 'The article suggested that there might be problems, something about missing deadlines. That must make for excitement'.

'Yes, but generally the wrong type of excitement and that was the reason for my trip to the UK. Now that we have one of these new development, we should catch up all our time lost- and then some.'

Mike then remembered what he had been told about talking to strangers on that flight and caught himself before he said too much more - not knowing that what he had said was more than enough: 'This champagne's strong. A real mind-blower. The details are still very much under wraps. I'll get shot if I talk anymore, but I understand that we hope to make an announcement this month.'

Douglas Wilde was amused to have had his seat chosen so well and made a mental note that his trip was indeed necessary. DML had problems. He changed the subject to lighter topics.

He now had somewhere to start in his inquiries and for the next eleven hours anyway, Mike Wasnap had nowhere

to run to and he had never known the champagne to run out o a flight.

At the front of the aircraft Ben Tanaka slapped down the lid on his Sato S386 lap-top computer having finished looking at the San Francisco travel guide stored on his machine's hard drive. He slipped open his foot rest, tipped back his seat and relaxed in the tranquility of the first class cabin.

This was Ben's first trip to San Francisco for almost a year and he loved the culturally easy-going laid-back atmosphere of the city. He had flown out October 18 last, the day after the Loma Prieta earthquake destroyed much of the Marina district of the city and had not been back since to pay his respects.

Ben Tanaka was the vice president of Business Development for Sato Industries, one of the larger of the five megalithic companies that controlled Japan. Sato were major players in consumer electronics, personal computers, supertankers, private and commercial banking, motor vehicles and much more that even the vice presidents know about.

Ben, now 35, had been primed by a preparatory school in England, educated in the fine arts in the hallowed halls of Cambridge and finished off by an MBA at Harvard. His

interests varied from the ancient and highly stylized Kabuki theater in his home country to big game fishing in the Hawaiian islands. His love was business but his passion was winning.

Sato Industries, like most Japanese companies had started to dominate almost any market that it took seriously in the late eighties by globally dumping their products wherever countries would let them. Since historically this method had worked well with automobiles and consumer electronics they were now on track in the computer market too. But then came U.S. sanctions.

In what was a remarkably clumsy attempt by the U.S. to give home grown chip manufacturers a chance, the U.S. government banned the import of non- US memory chips. However, whoever dreamed up the plan forgot to ban the import of the completed computers. The U.S.-produced machines-complete with U.S. components, proved much too expensive for the home market now used to cheaper goods of oriental origin and the gap was immediately filled by the cheaper completed personal computers from Asia. Ironically this gave the Japanese companies the window into the U.S. that they had been looking for. However, the Japanese were not alone and found that the market was now also being flooded by even cheaper Korean personal computers.

Annoyed even at the attempt of trade barriers-even

though the Japanese themselves have the strongest in the world-and in concert with other Japanese companies Sato regrouped and swore to dominate the U.S. and other world markets by going after the heart of the PC business. They developed their own marketing strengths and as they have already almost done with the automobile market, proceeded to take the U.S. out of the computer building market altogether.

Starting with producing low cost LCD screens for portables and then moving to producing complete PCs, Sato was the most voracious of these companies; and Ben had been instructed to investigate the fantastic claims of DML, especially the new generation graphic chip, and by whatever method it would take, learn its secrets. If their chip was as fast as was predicted then it would indeed be a prize worth capturing.

Japanese companies had not been seriously involved with the early Eighties testing grounds for the technological ideals of late Seventies. It was only the American dreamers who predicted the concept of ordinary houses being controlled by computers; the heating and security systems, entertainment centers and washing machines, even the garage door run from a control panel in the hallway and maybe, maybe even controllable by telephone from outside the house.

In 1982 a California start-up company called Amiga

started the ball rolling by designing fast graphic-handling chips: the type used to display computer games multi-color images on screen, redrawing shapes and colors almost as fast as a TV set and a million miles away from the earlier video paddle-based games like *Pong*. The Amiga graphics were applauded around the technological world as the shape of things to come.

Real sound could be added to the images by a process known as 'sampling', the digitally recording of actual sounds such as aircraft taking off. These sampled sounds could then be played back during a flight-simulation game. No longer would jet aircraft in games have to sound like a Cessna.

Now, this might not have been considered important to many people outside of the computer industry, but, it was a glorious sign of the brave new world to come, for those within. The speed of operation that these chips were capable of, combined with the sampling techniques, were seen as a short step to human-quality voice syntheses and from there to the industry Holy Grail of voice recognition and voice-driven machines.

That short step, however, needed the availability of as yet unknown fantastically fast chips to calculate and recalculate the many billions of calculations necessary to match patterns of the digitally recorded speech samples; these calculations were needed to compare and re-

compare at blistering speeds, taking into account such variable factors as dialects; the differing ways of saying the same instruction, until the machine recognized the voice. Until the machine could understand the man, we would all have to understand the machine.

Back then in the dark ages, the industry marketing pundits were predicting that the way forward for personal computers was for them to become smaller and faster, a lot faster, and for them to replace office machines and some of the drudge tasks like invoicing. As the space program of the Seventies had produced Teflon for kitchen utensils no one had foreseen that the games company's 'longhairs' would be instrumental in developing the office machines of tomorrow.

When the pioneering work of the Amiga Company had been made public, offers of funding flooded in. Everybody wanted a piece of them. Rumor has it that the major funding came from Jack Tramiel, a war-time concentration camp survivor, who's maxim of 'business is war' preceded him wherever he went. Tramiel was a shrewd businessman who enjoyed technology: he had seen the future and wanted some of it if not all of it and his investment was to guarantee this. He waited for production to begin and profits to flow.

However, it was, and still is, a small industry, and a rival in the shape of the troubled games-based giant

Commodore soon heard of the developments of this small California-based company and set out to write its own history page.

How or what happened next is still a mystery, except to those were directly involved, and their battery of lawyers, but the Amiga Company changed hands. The end was sudden and the three-line announcement on page fourteen of the local daily readings for the Gospel of the San Jose Mercury News stated simply that 'Commodore International has acquired a majority share holding in The Amiga Company'.

The industry was quietly stunned at this technical knockout in the first round and eagerly awaited the rematch.

They did not have to wait long; the Atari games company issued a press release of its own. A machine faster and technically superior to the Commodore Amiga was to be shown at the huge Munich-based CEbit electronics fair later that month; shipments of completed goods were to follow the following month. The Atari ST had been born. Round two had gone to Atari but the fight was not over yet. For years afterwards the two companies would fight for market share, each upstaging the other in rounds of price and performance gain-which, while all claimed to be at the expense of the other, was really at the expense of the final customer of the machines, the end-

user.

Customers sat patiently and waited for the promised software as both Commodore and Atari drifted in and out of production and financial problems.

Meanwhile, whilst all this was going on, five years had drifted by, and many other companies, including the now highly motivated Japanese and Koreans, had entered the PC business. But instead of following what Atari and Commodore were doing they had followed the lead of business machine and main-frame computer manufacturer IBM, in backing a computer system based on alternative, if more pedestrian, technology. IBM had stolen the market while the other people, those first into the market, had been squabbling. These pioneers had lost their lead by default and IBM, the more mundane technologist, had created the standard: the pioneers had become also-rans.

Amiga and Atari, as well as off-and-on independently thriving Apple, who had kept well out of the conflict, had based their technology on a chip from Motorola the telecommunications giant. The IBM system was based on technology from Intel, itself a Seventies start-up company. The promises of the early Eighties were now looking to become a reality but brought by neither of the early starters.

During this time many start-ups came and went. Quick fortunes were made only to be put back on the technical

roulette wheel again and lost. Investor's feelings fluctuated between love and hate for the industry, favoring hardware investments one day and software the next.

Occasionally things got nasty. Nothing could ever be proven, but rumors flew, when once-famed geniuses and entrepreneurs disappeared from sight as fast and as suddenly as their inventions and their investor's fortunes. They had taken investment from the wrong kind of people: people who played only to win.

Then came the quiet years when the investments in U.S. high-tech industries were out of favor. Once again the bright students reverted to becoming lawyers, and MBAs were again prized even above the social graces. The real money had moved away from electronics and was funding the other new developments of biotechnology and medicine and the bright students were content just to manage the affairs of others.

The Japanese companies, while developing their computer divisions companies, had watched all this with some amusement. U.S. companies, even the start-ups, were not happy with yearly growth of twenty or even thirty percent; they were strictly hot-house and grew rapidly or died. Japanese businesses as it culture, had evolved slowly over the centuries and those in charge were in no rush; they knew that such expansive growth was only dangerous. Better to be slow and sure than fast and dangerous.

Since the rebuilding of the Japanese economy following the war, Japanese companies had studied the outside world's industries and had evaluated their potential. They started to join in a small way building slowly; with bank interest rates at under five percent, a seven percent growth was regarded as successful and with this philosophic logic they slowly become major players in any market that they had looked at. It made no difference whether it was cars, shipbuilding or electronics, fashion or insurance.

Ben Tanaka had an ambivalent attitude to accepting the whole Eastern philosophy and while he embraced the undeniable success ratio of his fellow countrymen he also saw a value in twenty percent interest rates-that is as long as he was doing the lending.

Ben looked around the cabin for a stewardess and fleetingly thought he should have insisted on the JAL flight. Even though it left earlier in the morning you never had to make eye contact with a stewardess to attract her attention. The JAL stewardess had been trained more thoroughly in the art of service and they just seemed to know when it was time to approach.

'More Champagne?' Mr Tanaka the first class purser asked 'or may I get you something else? We will be serving lunch in about ten minutes.'

She was an attractive woman. In her late thirties, he guessed, and he had to admit that Western women still

held his interest in certain areas more than his subservient countrywomen. He smiled. The stewardess thought that he was being polite, but the smile was self-amusement at his own contradictory thoughts that had so rapidly followed each other. Perhaps more than one woman in his life would be acceptable, he thought and smiled politely again.

'Could you please fetch my brief case?' he asked. 'Your colleague took it away just before take-off and it is about time I started to earn this privileged seat,' his voice smiling

The stewardess appreciated this remark and smiled as she handed him his case. She was tired of the kowtowing to the ever present stream of pushy and demanding passengers that now flew first class. The introduction of mileage clubs some years ago had long made her life and that of her co-stewardesses a flying nightmare by promoting almost everyone and anyone to those previously coveted comfortable seats.

Pulling from his case a complete history on DML from Day One, he turned to the personal histories on all of DML's senior personnel and noticed that there were few of the founders left-in fact only one, Dale Leonard. Times had obviously got nasty.

Some years ago he had watched as the personal life of one of his close friends had been unfortunately torn apart as a necessary consequence of a takeover deal and he had learned to read up on people-and that, indeed, as the man

said, business was war!

CHAPTER FOUR

Do You Know The Way To.....

Other than San Francisco, which is some fifty miles away, San Jose, founded in the mid 18th century, is the nearest collection of brick buildings that The Valley has to its own city. But it is a city without a heart. It has many of the right features but lacks a downtown area. What there is of one-a newly renovated museum, some grand historic Spanish-style houses, an opera and arts center and even the cute and practical trolley buses-seems to lack the right feel. There is little residential property and starting at dusk it belongs to the night and the homeless of Santa Clara County. The high tech companies that had made the general area famed worldwide seemed to have avoided creating an actual City by keeping themselves-development and staff, to the suburbs.

The surrounding areas collectively known as The Valley, or to be precise Silicon Valley, are regarded as the finest

technical-ideas breeding ground in the world. And not only by those who frequented the parties and benefited from its proximity financially, but also by the rest of the world that ultimately consumes the projects, achievements and meteoric developments, and they paid it its fair share of homage accordingly.

The design and development companies are scattered over a wide area from Santa Cruz or Monterey in the south to Berkeley and Marin in the north. The west was reserved for the Ocean and the inland eastern areas seemed empty as all the serious companies needed to be in quick access of a freeway or within walking distance of the water.

But over the years The Valley had started to price itself out of its own market: the sky-high rents and often unbelievable salary demands of the high- grade workers were taking their toll, and other towns across the country started to be talked of with almost the same reverence. Boston, Mass., featured high as well as Irving and Phoenix in Texas. Even more disturbing though was the non-U.S. activities of Munich, Bangalore and even Tel Aviv. Not to mention what the Japanese might be producing in their MITI-supported test labs.

The business and cultural voice of San Jose is The San Jose Mercury News, the local newspaper with influence completely disproportional to its sales volume. It is read by people from Tokyo to Munich-that is the five pages that go

to make up the Business and Technology section. For although these pages generally only carry the product announcements or stock purchases and sales by corporations and their officers- under the ironic title 'Insider Trading'-now and then a pearl of information that affects technologists and investors worldwide shows up.

Many of the national and influential magazines like Byte, PC Magazine, or Computer Shopper, controlled by the East Coast publishing giants, have offices in either San Francisco or San Jose and rely on them for the up-to-date technical news stories. And, their journalists have the pick of the technical crop to choose from. Because of this, these journalists play an important part in the industry and although they could not exactly make or break a product, as say the Hearst journalists could impact on a film star or a politician in the Forties or Fifties, they could definitely speed up its ascent or decline.

Human nature, being what it is, good, clean, self interest was now beginning to take a grip. The 'scratch my back with an advertisement and I'll- write-about-your-product type', that suggested a direct and proportional link between advertising budgets and editorial column inches. Although verbally discouraged by editors, it was now beginning to drive the press. This in-built disadvantage for all but the well-funded or successful meant that those not so flush 'paid court' in an attempt to get lucky. Smaller

software houses sent copies of their latest software offering to the journalists and then spent the next three months chasing the reviewer in the hope of some coverage for their product. Start-up hardware companies did the same. They begged to give away expensive sample units of the new machines for coverage. But, unfortunately for the underfunded, this was an explosive new marketplace and tens of products were launched weekly, and the number was and still is growing. It paid to keep in with the gentlemen of the press.

Marty Wyman did and he knew most of the important reporters well and he had been relatively lucky. He had not suffered as some had and found that what should have been off the record turned up in print giving them serious indigestion and ruining possibly more their appetites when they came across damaging or careless quotes at their breakfast tables.

Marty Wyman was still only 28 and looked extremely fit for someone who seldom walked anywhere let alone exercised. Weighing 172 pounds and standing exactly six feet in height he had learned to avoid references to school sports as he had spent most of his school life in the library. Others in the Valley came from more privileged backgrounds and did not always understand but success had not come easily to Marty. He had been made to work

at everything that he had achieved to date. His was not the world of Ivy League connections and he felt nothing in common with these people. His world was that of smoky bars in a Midwest coal town.

Apart from hard work, Marty liked to think that his only vice was tobacco and was he in the wrong town for that?

Anti-smoker city ordinances had made the smoker a rare, almost extinct, beast in California where, although TV advertisements encourage the driving of gas-guzzling high horse-power engines that disgorge carbons onto the freeways night and day at an alarmingly high rate, light up a cigarette in public and you have committed one of the most serious social faux-pas known to modern man. Marty balanced his vice of social incongruity by also being a paid-up member of the Sierra Club.

That Thursday October 25th morning Marty had a meeting with Brent Wisenberger, a free-lance journalist who, although he acted as a 'stringer' for some of the more respectable national newspapers and technical magazines, was often found playing with fine-gauge electronic cables and transmitters outside some the area's technically 'secure' and better known streets.

Brent Wisenberger had been a courted journalist and of the old school. A two-fisted drinker, he fancied himself as a serious writer and had actually been one at one time. He had been the main columnist at one of the larger

magazines and in his time had been considered a technical guru. Unfortunately this position of wise man went to his head and eventually he stopped returning even the important phone calls and people just cut him out of the loop and forgot about him.

Marty hoped that Brent would still be a smoker but the pressure to give up the weed locally was strong and it was fifty-fifty. As a precaution Marty strolled to the park opposite the San Jose Fairmont Hotel to enjoy a cigarette.

It was 9 AM and already a beautiful day. The bright and warm semi-winter kind of day that had made him move to California in the first place. During the summer months he was very grateful to commute from his apartment in Santa Cruz, or 'over the hill' as it was described by those who sweated the summer months away in the County of Santa Clara.

He had been listening to the term 'over the hill' for some years now but it still sounded alien. Summers in Santa Cruz were fine hot California weather, but it was kept cool at night by the sea breezes and the occasional mist swirling around like Hollywood-produced London fog. During winter the daytime temperature would rise to the mid to late 60s, sometimes higher, but then down to a semi-comfortable 40s at night. No extremes. He liked that. He was not a man who likes extremes in any area. Not too hot and not too cold suited his even temperament.

He had meant to buy a house when he first moved to the area in 1988. He should have done it but his work kept him too busy. This was a constant regret to him as it attacked his fiscal self; a house that would have cost him less than \$250,000 back then would now fetch maybe closer to \$400,000. He earned well but even if he put down a 20 percent deposit '\$80,000,' he muttered and whistled to himself, 'that would mean monthly payments in excess of \$3,500 at the current mortgage rates,' and that was too rich for his blood. But his day would come. DML would provide not only his house but more, much more.

He consoled himself with the practical fact that at least the apartment did not need much heating during the winter or, unless it got very hot, even air- conditioning during the summer months. Moderation in all things keeps him happy.

Marty's lungs filled with smoke and, as with all smokers, now and then he wondered why he smoked. It would not be the death of him. But life would also be the death of him and it tasted good. He smiled simply at the paradox and ground out the Marlboro under his heel.

Self-consciously he picked up the cigarette butt and placed it into a trash can on his way out of the park. He had sat there for over fifteen minutes and he had enjoyed the solitude. A perfect green oasis of a waiting room. He was not practiced in the art of deception as he imagined

others to be, and the peace had settled his stomach. He was now ready.

Back in the Fairmont coffee shop, Brent Wisenberger was enjoying his third cup of coffee. He had arrived early and he was sitting in the smoking section.

Brent was hung over that morning, and badly felt in need of a drink but had decided to fight the urge and so far that morning had succeeded. At the special request of a magazine, and he did not refuse special requests anymore, he had been at an early press conference announcing yet another industry alliance. But he had seen it all before, and many times over, the last few years: one company or another afraid that they were losing market share, attempted and wrongly in his mind, to get into another sector of the industry with a dominant partner and, as a consequence, got badly burnt.

Although this was not a good morning for Brent, Marty had said that he had something of interest and he had proved a useful source of information in the past and sometimes, though not to date from Marty, he heard some of the more interesting bits of Valley gossip, maybe not printable, mainly because of the libel laws, also because his contribution to local culture was supposed to be of a technology and not social nature. But he was not above turning certain information to his advantage, so he would suffer in comparative silence.

When Marty Wyman approached Brent in the coffee shop that morning, it was as an old but slightly-wiser friend. Both men had become close when Brent had been brought in to work on an 'image' article for DML. He was to review their first product, the SWAT chip that eventually made the company's reputation.

As often was the case in high-tech circles, the relationship had been based on the understanding that it was necessary for DML to have at least one journalist close to what was happening. This was to enable reviews of the chips to be published simultaneously with the breakthrough itself, a procedure often followed when a company thinks that its development work is in a breakthrough race with another. He had been privileged to be a spectator in the internal DML development meetings where the various prototypes were put through their technological paces.

But, as happens with most mutually rewarding business relationships, some partners turn out more equal than others. In this case it was Brent. He had watched as the first DML chips were produced and tested and he had enthused along with everyone else at DML at their progress. As the day of the announcement was getting closer everyone at DML was hyper-excited, but unfortunately for DML Brent was aware of similar and equally secret work being carried out elsewhere. With

knowledge of the other-and some said technically superior- product, combined with the genuine feeling that the DML implementation had not been especially elegant, he published a so-so review for the DML chips in their first real-world outing.

Dale went berserk.

Worse still, when questioned by Dale as to why and how could he be so two faced, Brent was unrepentant. Dale went crazy to his face and threatened to tell anyone who would listen that he was reporting Brent to the newspapers ethics committee, if one existed.

Of course, Dale had not. But when he calmed down he swore that he would get even with this Judas journalist and when Marty came up with the idea of using Brent for his own ends he jumped at the idea.

'Marty, how's it going?' It's been a while. It's good to see that you're allowed to speak to me again,' Brent greeted.

'Well, that was some storm that you created. I'm surprised that I want to. The things we all do for money,' he continued jokingly.

'Well, I'm glad you did. I miss our discussions. There are not many people who look at what their company is doing objectively as you do'

Neither of them was especially hungry when the waitress came around so they instinctively ordered just

coffee. The two men talked about what they had both been doing since they spoke last some six months ago. Brent had heard that most of the major venture capitalists had become very cautious about funding new projects, or even providing top-up money for existing ventures. But every now and then the money men had to take a try to find a real winner, one that will get the journalists interviewing the investors to show how clever they were. Everyone still likes a winner and whenever a serious player like T. Boon Pickens gets interviewed on FNN or CBS investments everywhere get a boost. But at the moment, during this quiet development spell with no news of breakthroughs everything was very quiet.

'How about DML, much happening with the new graphic chips?' Brent asked.

'Huh. No! Now that you ask. How the hell did you here about that?'

'Mike Wasnap was recognized in a bar somewhere near Bristol in the UK a couple of days ago. The other person with him was one of the Cube development team from Inmos, and when I heard this,' continued Brent 'I wondered to myself what Mike would want with the Cube technology - and a couple of phone calls later I guessed that you guys were using it to speed-up development times,' he paused. 'Now you call and invite me to breakfast after forty days of fasting. It does not take a genius to see

that you have another development announcement and you want me to help. The only puzzle is why me? Six months ago your boss would have been happy to fill my pockets with chips and drop me off the Bay Bridge, into the deep part of the Bay at that.' He finished, smiling at his own guess-work.

Marty had to think fast. He had been presented with what he wanted without having to build the long detailed web of intrigue that he had been putting together almost all night.

'Your contacts are too good for me, old friend'

Both men sat in silence while the waitress suddenly appeared and refilled their coffee cups giving Marty more time to think.

'How can I sit here and make the running when you seem to be ahead of the game already?' he continued, thankful for the break to think.

Marty was no mental slouch. But this had taken him aback. What a connection. This man must have spies all over the world. How many other people knew or suspected that they knew. If nothing he must scotch the rumor until the time is right. His time.

'So you admit it. Well I'm not sure what you were hoping to use to exert pressure on me but it won't work,' Brent gloated, 'and now you have to let me in to what is

going on, and under my terms or as a professional newsman I will be forced to second guess your breakthrough and see what mess follows. Your boss tried hard to damage me and some editors who bend to pressure no longer take my stories,' he said as unmenacingly as he could and knowing that the thought of it alone would pressure Marty into playing it his way.

Brent had been angry at the mess that had followed his reviews about the DML's product back in April and he considered it extreme and uncalled for. Dale had indeed caused trouble as he had promised. He had known enough editors across the country, and not just the end-user magazines that are not taken seriously because they can be bought and sold for an advertising budget, but the smaller circulation news sheets that go to the informed industry patrons and pundits alike.

He still claimed that he had been doing his job – and some people actually recognized that fact, but they were generally other journalists who had vested interests in having their stories published without being dammed.

'Well now that you know about what we are doing I might as well tell you the rest,' Marty said as reluctantly as he could. 'We have a made a major breakthrough in the speed that graphics are handled. The video picture possibilities are the real exciting ones. In the right hands it will make real-time video conferences as easy and as

accessible as the regular telephone.'

Marty knew the real danger behind the game that he was now playing as what he just told Brent was mainly true. Wishful thinking maybe but, in essence, still true. This was indeed what DML had been shooting for. This gamble was strictly necessary. If they did not make the development start to pay off soon then they would not get their next level of funding and they would be eaten alive by their overheads.

Once the announcement had been made they could bluff it out for a few weeks, even months. This would buy enough time for the consumer electronics buyers to place a tentative order with DML. Or, at the very least put off buying from potential competitors. Even though the last launch had been a fiasco in pure marketing terms it had survived in the real arena; the marketplace.

Brent now keen for more information on this exclusive news story interrupted Marty's thought pattern. 'When can I see a demonstration of this new wonder chip?' he asked.

'I wasn't expecting to show you this week, but let me see what we can do, COMDEX would be a better time, if you can wait. Your last little surprise taught us to be more thorough and less complacent. The problem with some Wizards is that they know that they can do the impossible so they don't think that they always have to prove it. As we now know this is more than a little dangerous with

journalists. This time we want to show you the best available.'

These were dangerous words to have said to a journalist and especially a well connected one and he was relieved that from the outset his meeting with Brent would be off the record, what had been actually said anyway.

All journalists, even Brent, would have to keep his word at this, the most and probably only, journalistic oath that counted for anything.

Both men agreed to change the subject at this point and their topics varied from local elections to cars for about half an hour before they had to part.

During this social down-time Marty remembered that he had genuinely grown to like Brent during their working together and almost regretted allowing him to jump to the wrong conclusion but at least they were his own conclusions and one day Marty might see that he somehow made it up to Brent.

That is if it worked this time.

If not, then Marty was probably not looking forward to a long stay in The Valley anyway.

The seed planted, Marty made his way back over to the park again. He sat down and lit up another cigarette. What trip had he started on, and was it going to take him where he wanted to go?

CHAPTER FIVE

Trick or Treat?

Surprisingly awake after his flight Douglas sat stretched across the back seat of the limousine that had picked him up at San Francisco airport. He searched his pockets for a piece of paper and when he could not find one he took a business card out of the his wallet and wrote a short note reminding himself to thank his secretary for the limousine.

There really was no better way to exit an airport, even into dense evening traffic, than in a limousine. Nowhere near as extravagant a gesture as flying first class, and at the end of his eleven-hour flight, really appreciated. It had been a long flight and he found that, even flying business class in a wide bodied jet, a slight feeling of claustrophobia had begun to set in after a while. Probably not as much as the people flying economy at the rear of the plane-as they would have gladly testified-but nevertheless some.

Pumping Mike Wasnap for about an hour, he now had more than enough information to start on. He had donned

ear plugs, claiming that the pressure in the cabin gave him neuralgia, and had drifted off in an champagne-induced sleep.

Their short conversation however had convinced him that his visit to California was timely and that there were developmental and hence financial issues that needed looking in to at DML. That this trip might be more interesting than just routine.

He had instructed the stewardess that he was not to be woken-up unless there was an emergency, in which case he was interested, and had slept until an hour or so before landing. Just enough time to receive a not-too-bad cup of tea with a biscuit and a sachet-wrapped wipe to remove what sleep the tea let linger.

The huge black Lincoln, complete with an odd shaped TV aerial mounted on the trunk, swished along the freeway joining the thirty miles of evening traffic congestion that would eventually become San Jose.

Traffic in Northern California or the Central Coast, as the TV weather men called it had gotten worse over the last few years. Much of it due to the area having the fastest population growth in the country, but also due to the constant road works. Every so often stretches of three-lane highway congestion were made worse, by part of the road being closed as the lanes were re-drawn narrower and then improved as it was reopened as four lane- only to be made

worse again as the whole pattern was repeated a few miles further down the road. This once beautiful area was getting as congested as Los Angeles, and as smoggy.

He was weary even though he had recently woken up and wished to get to his room and unpack. He was a fastidious man and feared for what his hotel was like. He knew that it was a new hotel as it had not been there during his last visit. Would it be the garish 'New Mex' pink plastic stone in style like he had seen on the magazines on the plane, or would it be plain and Spartan reflecting the technology of the area?

His car drew up to the main entrance of the Fairmont Hotel and he was pleasantly surprised. Opposite the hotel was a well laid out park, tranquil in the evening air. The Hotel entrance reminded him of the Royal Monceau in Paris, one of his favorite locations, and he immediately knew that he was going to be comfortable here.

A porter slowly sidled up to his driver and lifted his bags onto a trolley. The bags were taken through the side door that led to the porter's lift-access to the hotels rooms and suites; he saw his bags again when he was ensconced in his suite. As he was checking in he glanced around the foyer and through the coffee shop where, unknowing to Douglas Wilde, less than some twelve hours earlier parts of his future were beginning to unfold.

Within minutes he was courteously and efficiently

registered into the hotel and was gliding up towards the twelfth-floor suites in the slightly over-elegant elevator. If the rooms are anywhere as spacious as this lift, he thought to himself, then the room should be fine.

He declined the kind offer from the porter to hang up his suits and slipped the ten dollar note into the practiced outstretched hand.

He sat on the bed to get his bearing.

He picked up the phone and asked for Room Service. He had missed lunch, or was it diner. He really was not sure but his stomach knew that it was early morning London time and his appetite was beginning to catch up with him.

'I'll have the New York Steak, medium rare, a small green salad, the strawberry cheesecake and a half bottle of the Mouton Cadet '89. Oh, and if you have any morning papers left I would like a copy of the Mercury News please.' He had not bothered to read the menu but ordered what he knew would probably be available.

'Certainly, sir, will that be all?' 'Yes. Thank you.'

A pause. Waiting for Douglas to reconsider. Silence.

'Your diner will be up in thirty minutes or less. Have a good evening.' Said the cheerful person at the other end of the phone.

Putting down the phone he unpacked what few items he had brought; it was to be a short trip and he prized himself on traveling light. In the bathroom was a generous supply of cosmetic crèmes, shampoos and even a sewing kit; the items that differentiate a hotel from a good hotel.

Unpacked, he reached for the TV's remote unit and flicked around the channels. Somewhere would be CNN the Atlanta-based cable news channel that Ted Turner-unable to purchase CBS a few years ago-had managed into the accepted news source for Global people on the move. No matter in which country you found yourself in the world today all the Major Hotels carried CNN.

The major U.S. networks would later scoff when CNN's ratings had gone through the roof during the Gulf War in 1991 and had expected an equally fast decline in viewing figures after the hostilities had stopped. But the decline never came. 'News' had become business in a way never conceived possible of by the Networks. CNN interviews with topical subjects were played back as the news itself. Now, the news was news.

Seeing nothing new of interest Douglas turned down the volume and waited for Room Service to deliver his meal.

As he sat in a half dream, the phone suddenly jerked him awake. He pressed the 'mute' button on the TV remote and picked up the receiver.

'Douglas Wilde,' his tired mind answered as if he was at his office desk. 'Douglas, it's Dale. Dale Leonard. I just thought that I would call to see that you arrived safely and welcome you to our fair city.' Dale said cheerfully into the phone.

'Yes, thank you. The flight was fine and I slept most of the way.' He did not mention his chance meeting with Mike as that would become apparent in a day or so.

'Great,' replied Dale, 'Hope the limo driver had no trouble finding you. The airport can be a real nightmare when two or three packed 747's all land at once.'

'No. He was holding up a card with my name on it. And thank you for the car. A welcome surprise. I was going to hire one and was not really looking forward to joining the evening commute straight off an eleven hour flight,' he replied and was genuinely surprised that such an extravagant gesture had been necessary from a client; somewhat of an overkill.

But this was California, he thought, as he felt in his pocket for the note for his secretary.

'Well, you must be pretty tired so I'll leave you to rest-up now and look forward to seeing in the morning. Around eleven would suit me. But if you want to come over earlier-you will probably be awake at the crack of dawn because of the time change-I'll be in around 7:30 so please feel free to

just come on over.

Both men wished each other 'good night' and hung up. Douglas looked forward to their meeting but he was unsure that Dale really did.

As Douglas replaced the phone receiver he was relieved to be settled for the day at long last and crossed the room to the well stocked mini-bar and poured himself a glass of Monterey Vineyards *Chinon Blanc* and a Perrier.

There was no ice in the room for his mineral water and he did not feel like playing hide and seek with one of the many ice machines that were bound to be somewhere at the end of the long maze of corridors stretching out from his room to the elevators. Given his state of tiredness he would probably not make it back through the maze before dawn. No ice would be OK tonight and he again pressed the mute button on the TV remote to return the sound.

Douglas had started to drop-off again as he sat waiting for his food and he was jerked awake for a second time some thirty minutes later as there was a sharp tap at the door.

'Room service.' called a disembodied female voice the other side of the ormolu-paneled door. He looked through the fish eye spy-hole and saw part of a uniformed torso and the corner of an aluminum colored trolley.

He slid back the chain that restricted the door from opening wide and opened the door. In the short time it had taken him to rise from the bed his taste buds had activated and he was almost salivating at the anticipation of ending his fast with a good steak and a half-decent claret. One thing the these Americans can cook is steak, he reflected. Huge sixteen ounce slabs cooked one of two ways that you choose:

- incinerated.

- or raw...

And he could usually eat either.

'Where shall I put it?' asked the waitress.

'Oh anywhere. I will sort it out in a minute. I shall wash-up first,' he replied and moved towards the bath room.

'Will there be anything else?' she inquired handing him the check to sign.

Now, much more awake, he looked directly at the waitress for the first time since she had entered the room. She was something to look at too. She was about five foot six, with blond hair tied back not quite in a bun; dark stockings complimented her dark outfit and contrasted against a small white apron.

Strangely his feelings rose and thoughts not befitting a

respectable London Banker flitted through his mind.

The waitress smiled.

It was crazy but he felt that she was coming on to him. Not that he really knew what that would feel like, he thought, but he felt that something was happening.

It had been a long day and Douglas felt her touch on his wrist. 'Are you all right?' she asked. 'Are you sure that there is nothing else that I can do for you?'

'No. No thank you.' And he held out his hand with a \$5 dollar bill curled under his fingers as if not to offend.

Douglas noticed a musky scent cloud as she brushed past him gently and glided into his bathroom. She closed the door behind her.

He was now totally confused. A world traveler, yes. But this was not his world. Maybe this sort of thing happens a lot, he thought. He tried to rationalize the situation. He had been traveling for over sixteen hours, had been driven to the hotel in a car which you could have played rugby in the back of, was now ordering a full meal at a time that his stomach just knew was the middle of the night U.K time in a hotel five thousand miles away from home.

Maybe she has been taken ill, he thought naively and waited for the door to open again and for her to apologize for the inconvenience.

Earlier that evening, as Douglas had been tidying his magazines and papers preparing to exit the aircraft, Ben Tanaka brought his seat to an upright position and folded his footrest back under his seat as all the first class passengers had been requested to do by the purser.

He sat and waited as his jacket was brought to him from the cabin closet and then the cabin door was swung open to give access to the gate extension protruding from the airport's arrivals lounge.

As he stood and straightened himself for one of the few times that day he glanced at his slim Patek Philippe watch. It said 6:00 and for a moment he could not decide whether it was morning or evening. He looked out of the window and it was no help. The sky was dark red and it could have been either dawn or dusk.

Something clicked in his head and he realized that of course it was evening - he had forgotten that he had changed his watch to Pacific Standard Time at the beginning of the journey. His brain quickly compensated for the time gain and he now felt that it was early evening. He left the aircraft past the protective arm of the purser which allowed first class passengers to de-plane before all others and made the short walk to the customs area.

San Francisco is one of the world's better airports to arrive in travel weary; the baggage trolley station is close to

the mouth of the plane. There are rest rooms on the way to the customs. And there are numerous public phones en route to the baggage carousels to phone loved ones with the news of your safe arrival.

As he had been traveling first class Ben Tanaka's bags were among the first to come bumping and banging over the carousel slide and around the belt. He collected them and headed to the Non-U.S. Resident immigrant booth.

He had just started his slow journey towards the door when two medium sized dogs of indiscriminate breed sniffed around his bags. Security had changed since he had visited last and he was surprised to encounter anti-drug and anti-terrorist animals at San Francisco airport and was relieved to see them quickly get bored and be moved on by their handler.

The immigration formalities were polite and efficient. For some years now, since the establishment of the so many San Francisco Bay-area subsidiaries of Japanese and Korean companies, Oriental managers and controllers of these outposts often swarmed though San Francisco and San Jose airports. As a consequence San Francisco had become such a business oriented airport that the line of non-immigrant visitors often moves faster than any other immigration line including those U.S. citizens arriving back from overseas vacations.

His passport was in order and, having brought no

imported goods for friends or relatives, Ben Tanaka glided swiftly through the outer customs area just stopping long enough to hand in the green nothing-to-declare customs card given to him by the immigration officer.

A frequent visitor, he knew that the car-hire desks were located upstairs towards the parking garage and he made his way to the Hertz desk to collect his rental car.

He liked to be a hands-on traveler and preferred, even after a long journey, to rent a car and be in charge of his own itinerary and even found the short bus ride to the rental car pick-up spot an unwelcome detour.

Like many travelers to California, his first and sometimes hard-to-shake references to the area and its culture had been taken from Hollywood films and TV programs. This, combined with being an enthusiastic traveler, meant that he easily assimilated into the area's local culture. That day the Indian summer that the area had been experiencing suggested that he rent a convertible. He chose a Cadillac Allente and within twenty minutes had exited the airport grounds joining Highway 380 and the evening rush-hour traffic northwards towards San Francisco.

Ben's journey had started in mainland Europe almost two days ago and he had been away from Tokyo for almost

a month now. He was now bone-weary. He had toyed with the idea of spending a few days on the Hawaiian Island of Kauai before visiting DML but had decided against the four thousand mile detour that this would have meant.

This decision had been a hard one as he was overdue a vacation and badly needed a rest. The lush green grounds of the Kauai Hyatt on the small and relatively unspoiled island would have been totally justified-in his eyes. But, he had made the logical decision, booked himself into the Mark Hopkins on Nob Hill and had flown direct to San Francisco. That evening it was a travel weary Ben Tanaka who checked-in to the elegant hill-top home from home residence of visiting Presidents and diplomats.

The clerk smiled at him as he approached the check-in counter.

'And how long shall we have the pleasure of your company this time?'

The smiling and deferential desk clerk handing him the registration card was used to seeing all nationalities over the years but now almost fifty percent of the guests were oriental. There had been an upsurge in oriental visitors to this ornate and comfortable hotel since early 1989 when the chain to which it belonged was acquired by a Japanese group of investors during one of the many asset auctions towards the end of the eighties.

'Just a few days-maybe a week,' he answered not knowing what the following days would bring but hoping to spend at least a day acclimatizing and roaming one of his favorite cities before he settled down to work.

Alone in his room and unpacked, he turned the television on and tuned it to a local station and sat semi-relaxed on the over-stuffed Louis XIV sofa in the suite's sitting room. He was tired and pondered whether to just order room service, or shower, throw on a pair of slacks and go to a nearby restaurant.

He let fate decide by calling the nearby Stafford Court - if their restaurant could find a table for him at eight thirty he would dine there tonight. He had discovered the Stafford Court through friends on a previous journey to the city. This restaurant was one of the best in Northern California and he had stayed at the hotel on that recommendation alone. However, once checked-in he found that they did not reserve tables for their own guests, and that there had been a wait-list.

He had decided not to stay there again. This evening, in a slightly one- sided contest, he would give them a chance to redeem themselves.

Surprisingly he was in luck. Partially because, even though it had been a year now since the quake of 89, the tourists were staying away in droves.

He quickly showered away some of the traveling and slipped into a midnight blue double-breasted Zegna suit, a soft cotton off-white shirt and penny loafers leaving the hotel's lobby into the chill of the evening air.

Mark Twain had once described the area's weather in the often misquoted, the worst winter that he had ever spent was one summer in San Francisco and although it was October, Ben Tanaka was reminded of this and smiled the smile of the jet-lagged with his brain yet to arrive that night. He had one foot in the north and one in the west.

He could not fault the meal. It was excellently cooked, presented and served but he had made a mistake going so tired. He promised himself that his next trip he would try it again - even if he had to reserve a table before leaving Tokyo and with this decision taken he headed back to his hotel for some well deserved rest.

CHAPTER SIX

The Art of Noise

That night of October Wednesday 24th Ben Tanaka

slept beautifully and woke fully refreshed. It was 5:45 when his room-service arrived and he breakfasted on muesli, figs, a pot of coffee and thirty minutes with the West Coast Edition of the Wall Street Journal.

His suite had been perfect; quiet, with a firm bed that did not have a trace of a dip in the middle-a pet hotel-hate of his-a well-stocked mini-bar with mineral waters, rice crackers and a view of Alcatraz Island and the Bay that a tourist would have killed for.

Although on of the lower floors there was a fully equipped Gymnasium, complete with all the modern Nautilus equipment, he had neither the time or the inclination to go parading around the hotel to locate it and instead carried out twenty minutes of sit-ups and other calisthenics on the bathroom floor finishing with twenty minutes meditation, feeling completely refreshed.

Now relaxed he spent a few minutes going over the DML file for one last time before calling Dale Leonard to make an appointment. He skipped through the memos that he has written back to Tokyo during the abortive earlier negotiations and saw nothing of any importance. Just as he finished and was preparing to phone DML the phone rang; it was the 8 AM. wake-up call that he had requested the night before as a precaution in case he had overslept. The automaton voice informed him that it was 8 AM. and politely requested that he have a nice day.

He pressed 9 on the phone and dialed the DML switchboard number that he found in his Filofax. The phone rang twice and then the second synthesized voice of the day asked him to either dial his party's extension or speak their name into the phone at the tone.

He did not know Dale's extension and spoke the name 'Dale Leonard' in the receiver. The auto-response telephone could not pick up the oriental intonation in Ben Tanaka's voice and asked again. He repeated it again and the machine was none the wiser.

In a technical irony, which had become common in the Bay Area and was spreading around the country, many companies were beginning to isolate themselves technically from those trying to contact them.

Some years ago, in an attempt to save salaries and associated costs, high-tech companies had installed automatic digital phone systems. Not just touch-tone to dial numbers internally but also touch-tone instructions to route incoming callers to their targeted person within the company. This was made simple and economic to install. All that was needed was a personal computer and a two-hundred dollar switch-board 'card' for the PC. Hook it up to the phone line and hey-presto! You have a digitally-controlled voice-operated switchboard.

Technology at a price everybody could afford.

Early successes led people to add voice recognition. A Holy Grail since the pioneering days of Turing seemed to have arrived, and seemingly for a pittance. However, it was not perfect. Out-of-state accents confused the systems and trying to use some of the more advanced phone systems had become a nightmare. And the phones did not understand the many European dialects as well as the more obviously different phonetics of Asia or the Near Eastern countries.

One day someone will develop chips that will make these teething problems laughably primitive, Ben Tanaka consoled himself.

After a pause of a couple of minutes the automated switchboard signaled a human operator to intervene and answer his line.

'Dale Leonard please,' repeated Ben Tanaka politely, but somewhat annoyed at the phone system, and was put through. He also asked for, and made a note of, Dale's extension to avoid future such delays.

'Leonard speaking.'

'Dale. Ben Tanaka. How's it going?'Great thanks. This line is too good to be from Tokyo or London. What are you doing in town? Are you coming over for that lunch you owe me.'

'A tempting offer, but I'm not sure that I have the time. I

have some other business in the area for a day or so on my way back to Tokyo and I thought that I would just touch base with you as you natives say. But if I find time then I would love to meet up. How's Jill? Has she finished the house rebuilding yet? From what I heard you had quite a bit of damage from the quake. I never did find time to come over back in February as planned. When our funding plans for DML fell through, the file was archived. I have always got so much else on my mind I keep putting off phoning you and time just seems to drift by.

'The house is fine thanks. Most of the damage turned out to be cosmetic, thank God. I know exactly what you mean about the time though. Jill was looking to go back to Barbados in March, but it was August and high summer before she could get my attention. You know the fun we have here. When things are going slowly we work hard and when they are going well we work harder still. This industry is an obsession. Sometimes I wish that I was a dirt farmer in El Paso or somewhere. Just nice and quiet, and with farm subsidies. Jill would love to see you while you are in town, why don't you come over at the week- end, or maybe we can come up and see you. What's your schedule like? Are you staying at the Mark again?

'Yes, I am.'

He paused.

He would have preferred to have had that much-needed day off to see San Francisco that he had been promising himself, but instead he said: 'Look, I'm just around the corner with a company on Borregas Avenue for an early breakfast. That won't take long though and my next appointment is not till after 3:00. Why don't I come over around 9:30 or so. Perhaps we can do an early brunch.' Ben used the local expression that he had become comfortable with.

'I would love to but I have an 11:00 followed by a lunch. But if you don't mind coming in for just an hour or so I would love to see you.

'Ok! Coffee and muffins at nine thirty then,' replied Ben.

Done! See you then. But Jill will be annoyed at not seeing you'. The conversation finished on that friendly note as both men hung up.

As Dale hung up he swung around in his chair and lifted his legs putting his feet on his Italian Ebony desk. What was Sato's man doing in town? Surely it was not just a coincidence. Rumors of his spiraling costs could not have traveled as far as Tokyo but, if they had, did Sato taste blood in the water?

Were they back in the market?

Well, if that's true, then just maybe his audience had

doubled to two. Maybe he could play Ben Tanaka off against Douglas Wilde.

That should keep him on his toes.

Dale had always enjoyed a challenge. But the two men in one day and less than two hours apart was pushing it even for him. It would be like a Feydeau farce. As Douglas Wilde was coming through the reception area he would have Ben Tanaka leaving through the back door.

Thank God he had already set the stage for Douglas-now he could give a matinée as well.

But he must be careful. Neither man was a fool.

Dale and Jill had gotten to know Ben Tanaka when he had spent time with them negotiating Sato's abortive attempt at an investment stake in DML the previous year. Jill had liked his easy way with women-without being too pushy- and they all got on well together. And although he had arrived with kilos of reports and recommendations justifying how much should be invested for what percentage share, Ben had been also schooled in western ways of doing business. American start-ups were no longer available for pennies as they had been in the late Seventies and Eighties.

Back then, technology companies were generally made up of only four or five bright friends working together

almost as a hobby who would sell their technical birthright for just enough money to complete the development and then run out of money as they were going to market the product. As a result, the venture capitalists or banks that had loaned the first sum for a reasonable twenty or thirty percent of the stock then came back and demanded a controlling interest-another thirty or forty percent-to complete the funding. This further help would often be exercised as a right under the previous loan contract. The company so keen to get the initial funding that they either did not notice this clause or were not worried, trusting that the first level of funding would be enough.

This almost always resulted in the company's key personnel back in salaried position again or even worse on strict service-contracts with fierce non- competitive clauses. As a result experienced investment companies lost tens of millions of dollars chasing illusive breakthroughs or innovations using disheartened developers and management teams. Dale had read up on this method while still at college and had not, to date, fallen in this particular bear- trap.

Ben was also aware that these business methods did not work anymore; the game had moved on and the solution was now to throw money at development and research situations, but not in the way of bringing more people onto the same project. Now it was generally acknowledged that

the more technicians there were on certain jobs the slower they moved. Now one had to make sure that there was a happy balance of key workers getting their just rewards and at the same time the investors made a decent return on their investment.

However, Sato Industries thought differently and the contract that they wanted Dale to sign was very formal and almost punitive in its powers and demands. Dale and his partners had said 'Thanks, but no thanks', and had signed with Douglas Wilde who had been waiting patiently in the wings with a worse financial offer but better general conditions.

If Sato was back, then maybe they had something new to offer him. And this time he was the decision process. No partners to cajole into accepting what he knew to be good and no compromises just to get the cash. Dale believed that bargain-basement sales attracted the wrong kind of investors and that if his price was high enough he would find the right backers eventually. Maybe Siemens or even Sony!

It was 8:15 so that gave him less than an hour and a half to make his performance perfect-time enough for a Wizard of his caliber.

Ben Tanaka put down the phone and realized that in saying that he was already in Sunnyvale he had left himself less than an hour and a half to get dressed and make the

forty five mile journey; he hoped that they weren't digging up U.S. Highway 101 again or no-way would he make it in time.

He went to his closet and took out his mid-weight charcoal-gray, woolmark wool, Cerruti 1881 business suit and white Simpson cotton shirt. He had not been too tired to remember to take the plastic cleaner's bag off the suit and the wrinkles had dropped out of the jacket and pants. He then took out a pair of ox-blood Missoni lace-up shoes and matching brass-buckled belt. He completed his ensemble with a striped Lanvin tie. He was dressed for Wall Street or Bond Street rather more than Sunnyvale but he felt relaxed dressed this way and that was what counted.

He called down for his car to be brought round to the front and asked the porter to check the CBS traffic-monitoring program for where the gaps, if any, in the traffic bottlenecks might be. Luckily Thursday was generally a good day for travel and it wasn't rush hour.

Ben was down in reception within fifteen minutes of calling the front desk and his car was waiting out front. He tipped the car-jockey five dollars and edged gently into the ever-constant San Francisco traffic jam and down the hill to Geary and then along Gough to 101. Initially the traffic was dense but once out of the city confines it should ease tremendously, and it did.

It was the sort of morning that they use in travel

programs to show the city at its best: crisp and with not a cloud in the sky. A few years ago the scenery would have matched but not now. Visually noisy billboards, gray technical parks, self-storage locker buildings and smoked-glass high-tech buildings cohabited to line the freeway both sides all the way from the city through the South Bay and to the suburbs of Belmont and Fremont, where the same conflagration of enterprises carried the baton south to San Jose and through to Los Gatos. At Los Gatos the Santa Cruz Mountains took control and the buildings and bill-boards had to stop.

That beautiful morning the traffic was light-and just as well for Ben as he now had to cover some thirty five miles in thirty minutes. Staying just the wrong side of the legal speed limit should get him there on time and with much of the other traffic passing him at eighty miles an hour he should have no problems from the highway patrol.

The 55 mph speed limit imposed in the U.S. during the mid 70's as an answer to high gas prices was considered by many as an anomaly and as another nail in the coffin of democracy. A country that had deregulated the airlines, the banks and the savings and loans. A country that had no gun laws worth talking about. And a country where anyone could still become President restricted ground travel to 55 mph.

Few respected the limit and, once out of town on the

many freeways and interstates that crisscross the huge plains of the west, speeds of up to 100 mph were common. Crazy drivers with cars capable of at least twice the legal speed limit would join freeways at seventy-five miles an hour, drive maniacally at any speed that they could reach within the traffic conditions, and exit a couple of miles later having blown-through both themselves and their engines carburetors. Drivers passed slower vehicles in all lanes clutching their steering wheels with criminal fervor, as if out-running the system, while keeping one wild eye in the rear-view mirror for the Highway Patrol helicopter or spotter plane. If the automobile lobby had been anywhere as strong as the National Rifleman's Association then the speed limit would be as much a thing of the past as safe subway travel in New York City.

The traffic staying light, Ben reached Sunnyvale with ten minutes to spare, just enough time to gather his thoughts and relax as he drove the last couple of miles.

Sunnyvale, now with a population of around 100,000, is one of the many local areas that had benefited from the high-tech companies grown in the Valley, and is one huge sprawl of tract-companies, All just slightly differing in design but all with parking lots ringing their large gray low slung buildings and all the same in concept. These companies made the area famous but devoid of character and only the signs told you which street you were on.

Occasionally you could turn a corner to be confronted by the Amdahl village of monster buildings or a huge Lockheed or Hughes aircraft hangers, but for the most part this area was acre upon acre of gray low-slung high-tech bunkers.

Someone had decided to construct a working area whose architecture would allow people to rest while they driving around: cement Valium.

They had created Sunnyvale.

That last cup of coffee at the hotel, the fourth of the morning, had sent Ben quietly over the top and he needed the couple of minutes of quiet. He parked in the DML car park with a good five minutes to spare, backing his car into a visitor's parking space to take care of the last couple of minutes and entering the DML building at 9:30 exactly

'Ben. Good of you to find the time,' Dale Greeted him. 'What brings you to our humble establishment?' he continued proudly.

'Friendship, and the joys of your local architecture,' Ben Joked, forgetting himself slightly.

'Yes, locally we're known as the Venice of the North, but its home to us,' countered Dale slightly humorously.

Ben had almost forgotten that in the eyes of both investors and owners, companies had arrived when they moved-either leasing or owning, to a building in the gray barren wastelands of a suburb like Sunnyvale or Fremont, and he quickly grinned sheepishly.

'And Venice doesn't produce the miracles like you guys do either,' added Ben, a little over defensive having hit on a nerve.

Ben remembered that Jill had hated the area that she and Dale had moved to since day one. She had said so in no uncertain terms. Her idea of success was living in a Coors's beer advertisement: clean mountain air, and maybe a stream at the bottom of the yard. No fences, no neighbors and maybe a helicopter pad for quick and easy access to the city. And that was not forgetting the apartment or townhouse in New York or London or even Paris. She had seen herself shopping in Cartier, lunching at Langan's Brasserie or the Tour D'Argent, followed by afternoons of drinking tea at the window of their Park Lane apartment overlooking Hyde Park or the Bois de Bolougne.

Instead, she had been settled in a four thousand square foot mock-Tudor mansion with a space-age twist, next to mock- Swiss chalets and one of the many wide-eyed California new-wave architects' extravagances. Plaster board next to glass and plastic rock. Steve Wozniac, one of

the original founders of Apple, was one of her neighbors and she was considered lucky to be part of such a community.

Dale's mind however was not on Jill but on the business at hand and the board-room where he was to deliver yet another coup de grace. He must remember that Ben represented Sato even if was a social meeting.

'And talking of miracles, come with me. I've something to show you.' And Dale led Ben Tanaka through the corridors of technological power to his board-room.

The room was a simple six hundred square foot rectangle with a massive window running the full length facing onto the parking lot below to provide natural light. This day though, to add to the feeling of mysticism and to keep out of the way of prying neighbors with zoom lenses and radio microphones, the blinds were drawn shut.

In the center of the room was a superb walnut table surrounded by almost thirty chairs; a magnificent tree must have given up its life so people could have coffee mornings and other important matters. Half way down the length of the table off to the left was an easel, many colored pens and a pointer. At the far end of the room was a projection screen with a PC by its side. To the right was a podium where Dale had experienced some of his brightest moments. The PC was generally manned by a technician to project slides to the screen for demonstration purposes but

today any demonstrations would be given by the Master himself and, if it went well, he would not need to give the full electronic spiel.

Dale walked to the easel and, with a well practiced flourish, he pulled back the thin wax paper film covering the easel and uncovered a schematic drawing that explained the benefits of their next product. He waited for the applause.

None came.

The poker game had started.

The drawing was simplistic in its style and had been prepared as a visual aid for one of the quasi-technical gatherings at COMDEX due in a couple of weeks. There were arrows pointing to the benefits of the faster calculations that the chips would perform. Colors indicating the different speeds that industry-standard bench marks would be performed at were off to one side and the speeds were, to the cognoscenti, indeed impressive.

'Are you there yet? When will it be at production quality?' were the questions that Ben asked with some hesitation. Even as he asked he knew that this type of direct question was ungracious. It was untypical of him to be so direct and he now realized how tired he had really become.

Technical companies, and especially during new

product talks, have developed a sort of 'emperors new clothes' syndrome to a point where it is expected that almost anything is possible. Whereas, in reality everybody knows that technical products really mature in the market and only after the users have been unwittingly testing them for a while. And, and as with automobiles, only the really brave or the truly desperate buy the first production run of a newly designed model. Most people wait for the bugs to be ironed out before they invest their hard earned dollars. Therefore, polite inquiries to performance is one thing, but to ask outright whether a product is working or not is considered by many to be rude.

'Not yet,' responded Dale honestly before he could think fast enough to make something up. 'The last two percent is proving troublesome,' inferring that the breakthrough was imminent. He would now need to work a little harder, he thought, to inspire confidence in both his targets-in case he needed to switch horses-and before the week was out to ensure the next level of funding.

'We have just set up the new hardware to complete the design work. Would you like a preview of what we are shooting at? What will become a reality?'

A call was made to engineering and, after a few minutes more of Dale explaining the finer points of the design, Mike Wasnap joined them carrying a black dense-looking cube-shaped box around twelve inches square.

Mike had been working for thirty hours without a break and looked untidy by even his own standards. Wild eyed and a thousand miles away in his head.

'I have disconnected this while we are updating the network with a new release of the software for this box. It will go faster on its own until I can write the new software drivers. It's a bit of a bitch. But we'll get there sometime later this morning' he volunteered. Mike was often a garrulous personality for an engineer.

He had enjoyed tenure at Boston University teaching computer science when he was introduced to Dale just six months ago during one of his rare visits to the East Coast. Within minutes of meeting the two men had debated the philosophy of 'Where computers were headed next?' and the overall validity of the currently de facto Von Neumann-based standards.

Dale had got on immediately with Mike. While they both believed that it was time for everyone to move on from these earlier designs neither knew which direction the new designs should take and neither was too proud to admit to it. And, when Dale let slip that DML was currently going thorough design problems for its next product, Mike suggested that they try a new approach by using a machine based around the new INMOS parallel processors. He had suggested that Dale's answer might lie in the way that these machines worked in looking at a problem: the

breaking the problem down to smaller problems, and then putting together the series of smaller answers to combine the larger answer. This might well provide the extra speed that DML needed.

Dale, surprised that he himself had overlooked such a simple answer, had been blown away by his suggestion and offered Mike twice his university salary to come work with him. Initially Mike had laughed at the idea of him, an academic, working in the dirty business of commerce. But, by the end of the evening they were discussing areas of Santa Clara where he might live. Three months later Mike was head of R&D at DML.

Mike connected the Cube to the desk-top PC and ran a small start-up sequence to bring the Cube on-line with his private host machine in the lab which was already connected to the rest of the building's hardware by network cables. He explained that what he was about to show was not actually being done by the Cube yet; it was just a demo, but he thought that Ben might like to see the new toy anyway.

This done, he ran the small 'Samurai' demonstration program which showed the intricate internal circuits of a processor chip. Mike further explained that the principles for real chip design would be the same; just variants of the program. It was now possible to test chip design on a desk-top machine without going to all the trouble of producing a

'mask' that contained all the micro-circuit etching that made the chip what it was: a miniature subway system of binary mathematics; 0's and 1's.

Ben was impressed.

He had never seen this kind of simulation software close up. When the topic had been brought up at technical meetings, or mentioned in the magazines and papers he had tried to imagine what it would be like. But to see a demonstration of an actual program running on a desk top PC was been incredible.

'What sort of savings can be achieved, switching to this sort of technology?' he idly inquired.

'Depending on how complex the design, we can shave anywhere up to about eighty percent off the design time and that's not to mention the cost savings. They are not my area but they must be tremendous too.' replied Mike.

'Why don't more companies use this method?' Ben started and the question was anticipated by Dale.

'Sure, the hardware on its own is impressive. But, it's the software that drives the Cube that really counts. If it was just the hardware alone then everyone would be using them. They would pay for themselves in an afternoon. The software however needs to revise often every time you run it - as different as each end result that's needed. This is mainly because we are trying to build chips with tasks that

are not yet totally predictable; so how to get there is also unknown. We're fortunate because Mike is one of the world's experts in this field.'

Mike blushed.

This simple explanation had all made sense to Ben and he was truly impressed.

The three men discussed and debated the relatively esoteric merits of machines producing machines for a while and then the conversation became quiet.

'Thanks Mike, I think that we've impressed our guest enough for one day. Take this back to your lab and I will drop down later for a look at the real thing. Mike left the room not knowing that he had been both kind enough and natural enough, to bait the hook properly.

'So Ben, what's the real reason for the pleasure of your company today?' Dale asked and smiled

'As if you did not know? I suppose that this little demonstration has not been gathering dust waiting for me. Next you will be telling me that you did not know that I was coming, that your grape-vine has withered and died.'

Now both men were smiling gently.

'OK, I guess I did,' Dale lied. And the fact that he had not actually heard no longer worried him. He no longer had to guess what Ben was over for.

'It seemed time to review our position on DML and, if you are interested, maybe this time some real funding. And as I almost landed you guys last time I inherited the task. Our contacts tell us that industry rumors on DML have been getting sketchier and sketchier. Knowing you, this either means that you have fallen badly behind schedule or that you are just about to make a breakthrough. Whichever way you probably need cash about now.'

Ben had not guessed which scenario was true yet and Dale would not help him reach the right conclusion-not yet anyway.

Dale picked up his thread. 'As friends we would not have made an announcement without telling you and seeing whether you wanted to reconsider your last position even if our funding did not happen exactly as both you and I had wanted it. You know that if the terms had been less punitive we would have been happy with Sato's input.'

Ben nodded in agreement.' No one was more surprised than I was when Tokyo refused to budge on those last few points. Even I thought that they were just playing Tokyo hard-ball to see how far you would bend without breaking. I guess we all misjudged the situation. But, as I told you at the time, I was genuinely glad that it worked out for DML in the end. Douglas's people are fair and honorable, a rare combination these days.

'Yes, I know that and I respect your openness. Not many

people would endorse the other guy, especially if he was the winner. As an industry we seem to have moved away from the 'honor system'. Now it seems like high- tech low morals. Anyway, I was just about to invite Sato to join us at COMDEX where we are going to preview our work. You know as well as I that if we pre- announce before we are ready the competition will claim that they have all sorts of new products in the pipeline that don't exist except as damage control. Also, based on what you have just seen we have just put together production budgets for the next level of funding required so maybe your timing is very good. If you are really interested in a piece of us.....it would be very helpful to know what would be well received at Tokyo this time.' Dale finished and wondered whether he had not just imposed too much on their friendship and was thinking of turning the last part into a joke when he was cut in mid breath.

'No problem. As you know DML was my personal recommendation and I almost got it through. Whenever the main-board brought up the possibility of dropping the proposal to fund you, and it happened more than once, I presented the reasons to go ahead. But when you refused to agree about the technology-exchange that was the last straw. In Japan we need to be full partners of U.S. high-tech companies and that means the technology secrets as well. The PC business is still dominated by Intel and

Microsoft worldwide because of the one controlling the central processor unit and the other the system software. To date other countries, and that's Europe as well as Asia, have been limited to the sidelines: to sound-card and disk drive design. OK we can make fortunes selling the world better-made American technology, but to be a real part of the future we need to get into the actual chip design business or we are condemned to be forever producing clones of U.S. designs. Had Douglas not been there in the wings then I am sure that we would be meeting today as partners. But, as it was, a month after walking away from DML Sato took the opportunity to invest in a British chip company that could not get funding from even its own government. Our own Government-backed technology institute, MITI, would have funded it overnight but the British are even more myopic than your own U.S. technology guardians and we bought the UK company for nothing more than a stock swap and a guarantee of employment for the five hundred technicians and other workers. It was too good to walk away from. The workers would have been paid over twice as much in either the U.S. or Japan-and that's if they could have been recruited. It has proved to be an excellent investment.

But that was last year. Now as you know all the major Japanese technology companies have strategic ties with U.S. chip designers now. Many are under the guise of

second-sourcing product for overseas markets or because of U.S. production limitations back here in the U.S., but the liaisons exist.

Sato was one of the last Japanese companies to get involved and we almost missed the boat on that one,' he continued just stopping short of criticizing his own company. He went on, 'Even the Taiwanese almost beat us and I am still keen for us to have a share in what you are doing here in DML. Personally I am convinced that you are one of the few companies that have their eye on the future and can pull off the next stage.

'I'm flattered,' admitted Dale. 'and if you can stay on in the area for a couple of days, we can play around with a few figures and come up with a solution to keep everybody happy.'

Dale was pleased that he and Marty had spent the time producing supporting data for their little breakthrough and that morning's task of 'tweaking' his presentation a little bit for Ben had indeed been straight forward.

But, if SATO was to be a willing bride, maybe events were overtaking them all.

Maybe there was now no need to leak the figures. Maybe this would now muddy the rapidly clearing water. He must call Marty before anything else was said.

'Ben, please excuse me for a moment. I have forgotten a

call. I will be back in a moment.' And he went next door to his day-to-day office and called Marty.

Marty was enjoying the peace of the park again sitting on the same bench when his cellular phone rang.

'Marty. It's Dale' he said quietly into the receiver. The walls even in his, the Chairman's, office were paper thin. No wonder people parked in trucks outside buildings could intercept phone messages, he thought. They could probably just lean out of the their windows and hear just as well without the amplifiers and decoders.

'Where are you now? Have you met with Brent yet?

'Yes, I'm sitting in the park over from the hotel enjoying a quick cigarette before coming back. I think that it went well but he was really on the ball, he knows about the Cube, but luckily he jumped to the wrong conclusion. He's fooled himself into thinking exactly what we want and will be writing a piece on our breakthrough as soon as he can. And you were right he turned into quite a nasty bastard.' Marty was almost proud of his morning's deception.

'Great!' lied Dale. 'Come back to the office when you have finished your nicotine fix. We need to talk.' He hung up and went back to the boardroom and Ben Tanaka.

It was almost 10:45 and Douglas would there be in fifteen minutes.

Dale composed himself before he rejoined Ben. 'The rest

of my morning is full from now on. But I can re-arrange my appointments if you like' Dale volunteered almost hesitatingly, but hoping not to sound like he was trying to get rid of his visitor.

'No problem. Today's Thursday. Why don't I come back early next week. Give me a call at the Mark. I have a few other people to see and if I can stay on I would quite like to look around the city this time. I promised myself that every time I come here but this time I think that I actually might.'

'Sounds good to me, Ben. I will call you tomorrow some time and we will re- schedule then. And thank you for coming in. I appreciate the time. Both men shook hands at the door to DML and Dale watched Ben walk to his rental car and drive off. A Convertible Cadillac no less. He admired Ben's sense of Western *joie de vivre*.

He genuinely would not mind Ben Tanaka as a partner.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Paradise Lost

The Los Gatos hill-top home was a picture of California

Ideal Home living. It had been another example of one of the ways that Dale had separated himself from the other programmers and inventors in the area-those happy living in apartments, some it seemed, even in their cars.

They had bought the house almost a year to the month, shortly after DML had taken on its funding and just before the earthquake. It had been their one true luxury. And although bought at the top of the market, neither the earthquake nor the recent soft housing market had seemed to lessen either its location desirability or five bedroom, seven-and-a-half bathroom, obvious commercial value. The grand entrance, paved with Italian marble and galleried by the next two floors, gave a beautiful view through the house to the three- story wall of laminated-glass at the rear of the house enjoying a natureland vista into the hills.

Jill, with the aid of a Macintosh, had proudly redesigned the kitchen herself and it was indeed a chef's kitchen. Jill had not been taught to cook formally; she just enjoyed it and had a natural knack for the art. And, even though on its own her cooking was excellent, an eye for detail was what made her preparations so superb: the kitchen was her studio.

The central cooking galley contained a gas-griddle and eight gas burners vented by a powerful fan exhaust. The slate colored corian counters complemented the duck-egg

blue cabinets with leaded glass doors which in turn matched the Italian paisley-tiled floor. The two-level fan-assisted oven was installed in the wall next to a refrigerator that you could have played a hockey game in. The installers had told her that for insulation purposes you just don't place a fridge next to a stove and she had made them design and install a shield that would insulate them from each other. A butcher block with a set of Sabatier knives and cleavers sculptured into one corner sat waiting for a sacrificial victim to good taste. A magnificent set of glinting copper pans- frying pans, omelet, sauce and soup pans with general purpose artillery, hung from butchers hooks suspended from a cast iron grill mounted in the ceiling.

A ten-inch TV hung from under a counter top and allowed Jill to keep up with the day's news, national, world, or soaps. Speakers were positioned high in the four corners of the room: Jill had installed outdoor speakers in case some of the fat from cooking escaped the powerful extractor fan and clogged their grilled fronts or deposited sticky layers over their smooth sound- generating hills. The speakers in the kitchen, as were the speakers in every other room in the house, including the bathrooms, were driven by the main hi- fi center in the lounge area of the house.

The hi-fi center combined the TV, CD player, video,

tuner-amp, graphic equalizer and pre-amplifier in one smoked-glass-fronted case and was one of Dale's toys. And, as in all of the other rooms in the house, the acoustics in the kitchen was perfect.

For Jill the hi-fi was a little over complex. Fine, she knew which buttons turned the hi-fi on and of and which buttons were for which pre-set radio stations; she even knew what some of the buttons on the remote controlled unit did-switch the TV, the CD or the video on or off-but after that she was lost. Thank God the electric blinds were not on the same remote. It was all sometimes too much magic for her.

The kitchen connected to the entrance hall through an archway, the lounge through French windows, and, naturally, the dining room, through more formal double doors. Among many other business guests, both Ben Tanaka and Douglas Wilde had sated their appetites on her sumptuous home produced extravaganzas as they had taken part in Dale's little evening tetes a tetes.

Somehow Skip had never been asked to diner though. He had never broken bread with them.

The lounge area of the house was over seven hundred square feet in size and comfortably accepted the grand piano that sat regally next to the sheer glass wall at the rear of the room. Jill had never learned to play and had bought the instrument at a close-out sale. She loved the

Bechstein name embossed in gold leaf featured above the instruments keyboard and thought that it gave the room and her life some class.

A large silver pot-bellied wood-burning stove that they had used almost every evening the autumn they moved in and almost into summer squatted in one corner of the room. Now they seldom lit it, relying on the forced air heating when the temperature dropped below the comfortable 68 degrees that the thermostat had been programmed for.

Cream leather sofas, Mexican rugs and pottery, Japanese prints and many large ferns and hanging plants filled all available surfaces and walls showing that they has no young children or pets in the house. These were the items that mainly occupied the maid that kept house for them three times a week and were always dust free and glinting clean. When they had first moved into the house less than a year ago the dust had only been noticeable every third day or so. But now the pollution in the area had worsened to where the sooty grime altered the colors of the TV picture unless it was removed almost every day.

The five bedrooms, all en-suite, were plush without being grand. Each had been color-matched by Jill to induce restful nights and peaceful thoughts. Porcelain ewer sets were on nightstands in all the rooms, even though running water was never more than a few paces

away in the connecting bathroom.

Whenever guests came to stay she put candies out in a matching bowl for those mid-night calorie feasts; many of those staying with them would have flown in from a different time-zone and somehow the carbohydrates in the candies helped induce a chemical-free return to regular sleep. The bathrooms competed with San Francisco's top hotels with sachets of shampoos, skin lotions and shower caps for those guests who had packed in a hurry. Marble floors, tiled shower cabinets and gold plated fittings abounded. Jill would have run the perfect luxury guest house.

The house was built into a steep forty degree slope and the yard both front and back was overgrown with bushes and fruit trees and, apart from a bi- monthly visit from an itinerant gardener, was regarded as maintenance free. During the summer months they were completely cut off from the gazes of their neighbors and during the winter months they could just make out the outlines of the nearby houses when some of the trees and bushes shed their foliage. All in all they were on a hillside paradise.

In Dale's ground-floor den, or home-office, a huge stone fireplace graced the back wall and ran through the ceilings of two floors to the roof above. His den was a mass of technical magazines and conference papers, most of them unread. There was very little evidence of his hardware

design prowess as now he had staff for many of the tasks that he would have gladly carried out himself only a year ago. He conceived new designs and thoughts mainly on-screen now, and Mike played with most of the actual physical items back at his DML laboratory.

Dale's twenty-inch Princeton Graphics monitor with his no-name clone of an Intel 486 development machine was connected via modem to the company's network through a dedicated phone line that had saved him more than one midnight trip to the office. Occasionally on weekends, or late at night, he would wander through the company's private and personal files, technical logs and general business files stored on any one of the individual office PCs connected to the network. These files were used to record the daily happenings, both business and non-business, of the personnel who worked with him; but he never wondered whether he should be doing this or whether this might be an invasion of their privacy. He regarded DML as a living organism and he was the head and hands. He was on the prowl for anything that might be attacking it. It was in this room that, tired of reviewing work on the PC, he had printed off a set of the bogus forecasts and performance data for DML's planned product.

It was quite early that Thursday October 25th morning when the phone rang in the master-bedroom.

'What are you doing calling this early? You know that Dale never leaves before 7:00.' Jill whispered angrily into the partly covered mouthpiece.

'He's in the shower. Call me back in thirty minutes.' And she slammed down the phone just as Dale came out of the bathroom wearing a towel as a turban.

'Who was that on the phone sweetheart?'

'Oh, a wrong number. Someone after a local company. I suspect another bloody European who can't get the time-change right,' she added to make it sound more credible.

She shuddered as if a ghost had passed over her grave.

Her first husband had said that the calls were 'wrong numbers' and it had always sounded false to her, almost insulting, as if he had not cared enough to be more inventive with his lies. Jill would have to try not to make the same obvious mistake. The first Dale would know of anything would be a card from Rio or somewhere else exotic and if possible written under a beach umbrella.

Dale dressed slowly in a pair of jeans and white shirt completing his choice with a bright red bow-tie. Finished dressing he briefly admired himself in the full length mirror in his walk-in closet; they had one each as had they sinks in the master bathroom. He had seemed so cute when they first met, a real renegade. He did what he wanted to and had both the ideas and the money to make it

fun. Pity that the money had been expenses, his own company, but nevertheless expenses.

They had met in Las Vegas. Dale had been invited to talk by a technology company staging a recruitment drive at that year's Computer COMDEX show and Jill had been working in one of the show-clubs as a dancer.

She had been in a night club just off the Strip waiting for some overweight business-furniture salesman, a friend of a friend, when she saw Dale across at the bar. Unlike most of the young technicians who came into town for the shows he was not drinking soda water but bourbon and branch.

She had sided up to the bar and joined him in conversation. She had a brother who was a computer major and had bored her with enough details to get by on a half-technical conversation. She had pretended that she was a PA to an executive who had tried to seduce her earlier that evening and she had just quit her job on the spot. Dale had been impressed by her high morals and promptly seduced her himself-or it seemed that way to him. The irony of that night had not struck him at the time and probably had still not. Three weeks later Jill moved up to his apartment in Fremont; some weeks after that Dale bought the house where they now lived and five months later they were on belated honeymoon in the Caribbean.

Jill had always had problems with relationships and during the honeymoon, they had both met Skip and one

thing had led to another.

Forty five minutes later the phone in the bedroom rang again.

'Is it safe,' Skip asked timidly as the phone was picked up and before he had heard Jill's voice.

'Jesus! How dumb can you get,' Jill raged down the phone, not being able to stop herself.

'Do you want us to get caught? First you call when he is still here, then...' she took control of herself. 'Please be more careful. Don't you know that this is dangerous?'

'I'm sorry I'm not good at this sort of thing. Can we talk now? We need to agree to a few things.'

'Have you got the cash?' asked Jill

'Yes. Good-bye, Porsche.' was all Skip replied. 'Have you spread the rumor yet? Jill asked.

'No, I'm meeting with someone later today. A tame but semi-influential journalist who owes me a favor.' came the reply.

Skip had now called this guy five times over the last couple of days and he was obviously not returning calls; probably out on a bender, Skip thought.

Jill continued: 'I have asked for the \$60,000 bank loan for two weeks based on my depositing your \$30,000 and they agreed. We can buy the DML stock today and then wait for the stock to rise when the rumor hits the papers.'

In reality it had not that simple. When she had asked her bank about an extension to her overdraft they had asked her to get Dale to give them a call- the bloody cheek! So much for women's liberation. She had to threaten them to move all their accounts including the mortgage before they agreed to the loan without speaking to Dale. It had been touch and go and embarrassing. She would not miss this begging act.

The mention of the money reminded Skip of his sacrifice. He knew that his Porsche was a couple of years old, but it was a Porsche, and it had been his Porsche. And it had been pristine, almost new, when he bought it six months ago after one of his better investment tips came off and he had kept it so well. People stared at the car whenever he was out in it. He just knew that one day it would be a collector's item, but not his.

Maybe he would feel better when he bought another. Maybe even a new model with the whale-tail back spoiler that automatically dipped the faster the car went.

Jill interrupted his thoughts: 'Meet me at the sports bar by Wolf Computer at eleven. That should be just as the place is beginning to fill for early lunch. I'll be sitting at the

bar. Come over ask me if the seat next to me is free at the same time put the cash wrapped in a newspaper on the bar next to me. I will say sorry I'm waiting for someone and then take a table instead. I will finish my drink and go.

'Are you serious?' he asked laughing. This is not Chicago in the Roaring Twenties. We're not buying the mayor.'

'No! We're not. What we're doing carries a harsher sentence,' Jill replied not joking. She took her millions seriously and the nagging doubts about Skip hit her all over again. What the hell's wrong with this guy? She thought.

'OK, you're right. I'm sorry. See you at eleven,' He hung up.

He had been corrected again and it was really beginning to be a habit, one he hated. There would have to be a change in attitude after this was all over he decided. Then as an afterthought, I guess sweet young things don't rob their husbands.

Jill was still only 26 and had the potential to be a real bitch when she put her mind to it, which was whenever things did not go her way. Her first husband had been a pit boss, a real wheeler dealer, who would, and did, deal in anything and had picked the right place in Las Vegas to set up shop. She had met him when she had answered a cattle call for a Los Angeles-based musical review. She had not

made the cut to the second round of auditions and had met Frank drinking at the bar of the sleazy motel where all the dancers were staying.

She was then only 22 and had left Springfield, MO, because she could not stand the small town mentality any more. Frank had all the appeal of a San Jose car dealer but Jill had not seen anyone like him before. He was a real lounge act.

He was about 45 at the time they met and when younger could have picked up women from across the bar without even speaking to them. But those days were gone and although below the layers of hamburger and pizza much of his good looks remained, mentally he was still in the 70's. His car tapes were all Bee-Gee's and the sound track from Grease and he wore shark-skin suits with tight pants and open neck shirts. He dripped with gold chains like an Arab tourist.... he wished! One minute they were eating at Caesar's Palace and playing the Blackjack tables and the next lunch was at Burger King or all-you- can-eat for \$4.95 in the back room at Sands.

As a conduit for his nefarious activities Frank opened Goldstrike, Inc., a Nevada corporation. The idea was that if any of his trading went wrong their assets could be put into safe keeping. As a double indemnity Goldstrike was owned by a Gibraltar company which was controlled by bearer shares. Whoever physically held the bearer stock

controlled the company and the company's bank account. The whole thing had been an expensive joke. His assets never left the casinos, and on the rare occasion that they had it was always as chips which, in turn, returned home across the tables the next night and stayed there.

The couple had broken up before the company had ever traded and, on the basis that you never know what will come in handy, she had kept all the paperwork. She had even kept up the \$1,250 annual filing fees never being sure when it might come in useful. It was the only useful thing that he had ever done and Jill now, from a safe distance, wished him well for it.

Later, as planned, at exactly 11:00 that morning, Jill collected the cash from Skip and parlayed it into the \$60,000 needed at the bank. She then went down to the broker that she had found in the yellow-pages. She had already briefed him over the phone some days earlier that as an agent of Goldstrike, Inc., she wanted to buy an option on 200,000 shares in DML. She showed the broker the 'power of attorney' that the company's Gibraltar-based lawyers had faxed her in the name of Jill Westin, her maiden name, and gave the instructions that any profits should go directly to the Gibraltar bank account.

The broker had thought that she was crazy.

'Are you sure that you want DML stock?' asked the

brokerage manager over the shoulder of the broker. He had heard their conversation.

'You know that they haven't moved for some time now and if anything the industry feel is that if they move at all then they will be going 'south'. DML hasn't had much of a year to date and the last reviews that were published really panned their chips. There are serious rumors about them not being in business this time next year. If this investment is your savings and you are just trying 'penny' stocks to try to turn a quick profit, then I can recommend a lot of other companies that will give you a better return. If you are not sure where to go then we recommend that you invest in known names only. IBM, Intel, even Borland, or any one of the majors will move up and down a few dollars a week-which should allow you to get in and out and profit-take pretty fast.'

'No thanks. I appreciate your comments but we want to buy into a stock that is way below its issue price and probably also below asset price and see what happens. I don't know that much about the markets but our advisors have been picking up on a trend; they're noticing that everyone is talking about the next generation of machines being driven by more powerful chips and these DML guys are in that area-front runners even.'

Jill felt comfortable talking to these obvious amateurs and started winging it by adding parts of a conversation

she had heard Dale have many times when he wanted to bitch about Uncle Sam's technical policies to their dinner guests. After a hard day at the office he would bore the ass off anyone that was polite enough to listen.

She continued: 'My people remember what happened with the chip shortage market a couple of years ago and we are playing out a hunch. But I appreciate your comments. Really I do.'

After twenty minutes on the phone the broker made contact with a pension fund that was only too pleased to try and make some money out of a stock. They had bought an open-ended option on almost a year ago in the company and the price had been dropping like a stone ever since. The broker felt that they would almost have sold the option for nothing. But then how could he make his percentage on a transaction where no money changed hands. Eventually he beat them up to 30 cents a share.

When the broker and the pension fund manager's broker verbally shook hands over the phone the pension fund had made \$48,000 just for granting the option. The two brokerage firms split \$12,000 in commission between them and Jill Westin's Goldstrike, Inc., was the owner of a 90-day option to buy 200,000 shares of DML at \$3.00 a share.

'Now that's the American way,' the broker thought as he said good-bye to Jill.

Jill agreed to have a \$60,000 cashiers check sent over and charged the \$6,000 for the broker's commission to her American Express Gold card. She left the broker's office feeling like a rain cloud was passing overhead. She felt like a million dollars. She drove over to the Valley Faire mall on Stevens Creek Boulevard, which was on her route home, and bought a little something special at Victoria's Secret lingerie store - Skip's favorite- to celebrate. She then continued her journey home and called Skip's company car-phone with the good news.

Skip reacted very cool on hearing the news. 'Right. Yes. Thank you. Are you at home?' He said. 'Yes.'

'OK I'll call you right back.'

Jill hung up assuming that there was someone in the car with him.

Skip pulled into the first gas station he saw and within minutes he called back.

'Jesus! Now who's getting sloppy' he said obviously annoyed down the phone. 'Don't you know that car phones are monitored by just about everyone around here? From the Fed to corporate spies. They're listened in on all the time. And...!', he continued. 'not only are they easy to listen in on but the listening is legal, damn it. It's not a crime. Cellular phones, like cordless phones, are technically considered radio transmitters by the courts and not

covered by the phone- or wire-tap laws yet. If anybody overheard our conversation we may have just added a partner, maybe more than one.'

'I didn't know. How was I supposed to know. I'm not thinking like a crook.' 'Thanks a lot'

'That's not what I meant. I didn't mean that. Really I didn't.' But maybe she did.

'Did you buy the option?' Skip asked.

'Yes it cost us all of the \$60.000 and a further ten percent in commission and although I can't be sure I think that the little bastard of a broker beat the price up and not down just to get a higher commission. He'll get his. Wait until the Feds crawl all over him. Wait 'till they check out every transaction that he and his whole office have been a party to for the last million years and see how clever he feels then.

'The little shit,' Skip agreed, thinking that he better not cross Jill. My God this woman was hard.

'OK, look I guess we're both a little tense. Can we meet later today, maybe tonight? It would be good to spend some time together.'

'Dale is probably working late, how about I call you again at seven?' 'Great, see you later.' And the conversation ended calmer than it had started.

Jill now had step two in place. Another two to go and she would be free. She sorted out the simple plan in her mind again. First the money, then the option now wait for the price to go, then sell and then leave town. Sounds easy. Well almost.

She still did not know where she and Skip should go to first. She really felt something for Skip but she did not know whether she could trust even him after this. Long ago she had made the realization that if someone can do it at all, they can do it to you. She would see how she felt about Skip when she had control of the profits from their little deal. She really had no problem with him getting half, she genuinely didn't; it was only fair

She considered going back to Barbados. She had liked the relaxed life style, the beaches, the warm winter evenings and mornings and the Dom Perignon was available in half the island's better restaurants. It had been a dream of hers to own a small beach-front cottage there. Now, there's a thought. Well, maybe.....

As if by instinct for about a month or so she had collected a number of travel magazines from the Sunday papers and looked for island cottage rentals. There were none for the Caribbean; the only exotic vacations adverts were for the Hawaiian Islands. It had only been a half thought and no more but then she realized that maybe the Caribbean was probably more frequently visited by people

from the eastern seaboard states and that she would need a copy of the New York Times. She would need to go to the local Book Cafe-a uniquely Northern California combination of a cafe bar and book store that stocked papers from all over the world and often stayed open till ten at night. As she had suspected she found the advertisements for the Bahamas, the Virgin Islands and all the way down to the Greater and Lesser Antilles, the chain which included the island of Barbados.

She knew from her previous visits to the island that she was after a place on the west coast and not the north, the Atlantic and rougher side with only certain beaches, like that at Sam Lord's Castle, safe for swimming. The west coast was also the socially correct part of the island to visit and was littered with five star hotels and restaurants.

Jill remembered how she had loved her first visit: The hot sun and the feeling of relaxation that you could not fight. The poverty was there but it was not intrusive and it contrasted reasonably well with the hotels with suites costing over two thousand U.S. dollars a night. The way that the designer clothes, at designer prices, mixed easily with the local Batik clothes and island straw hats and the Cunard ocean-going liners that had long since opened up the Caribbean tourist trade routes.

Ocean-going hotels, mainly from Miami, moored sedately in the deep water harbors just outside of

Bridgetown and discharged their many passengers into the local markets. The island had been a real find as a duty free port. Shops stocked glass by Waterford, perfumes by Lagerfeld and watches by Cartier- and the real articles, not only copies, which were also available from the scruffy peddlers who smelt strongly of ganja and lived in the narrow off-center- of-town alleyways. The world was such a small place and everyone had to trade on a global basis to survive. Tourists vacationing from Dublin could buy Waterford Crystal in the Caribbean cheaper than they could at home. It would be fun to furnish their new home and maybe buy some new jewelry to replace some of what the bank had made her put up as collateral when Dale had mortgaged the house. The bastard!

Among the small adverts in the paper Jill found what she had been looking for. 'From November 7 - Idyllic Barbados cottage. U.S.\$1,000 week. Cute two- bed beach-cottage in the St. James area. Gardener and maid included.' It sounded ideal. She called the New York owners and booked it for the month arranging to pay in full on arrival. A month should be long enough for them to find a proper house to buy.

She now knew that what she had done that day meant that there was no turning back. She felt cold as if a ghost had passed through her. She took a shot of Vodka that was always kept in the freezer.

She immediately felt more relaxed. She knew that she had always been best under pressure and now that it was mounting she would be fine. All she had to do now was to wind Skip up and let him go in the right direction to make sure that the rumor was spread. She was in control and she loved every minute of it.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Hardball?

As Dale had been stepping out of the shower, Douglas woke like someone had banged a drum next to his head. He felt as if he had slept for days and he remembered the strangest of dreams. Arousing in a way that he had never dreamed before. It must have been the large meal before retiring, he thought to himself and dismissed it. He was keen to get on with his visit and deal with DML. It looked as if he was going to have to cut DML from his portfolio. Now that he had the edge that portion of his trip should not take long. He would then go on up to his sister's vineyard for a social visit. He placed a call to DML and asked for Dale Leonard's office.

He had met Dale only once before and that was at the DML company picnic. Unlike English companies, and even most other U.S. companies for all he knew, California high-tech companies thrived on togetherness. Team spirit activities ruled, until you got into the boardroom that was, and all staff members were encouraged to play.

These activities often took the shape of softball games—a version of baseball played with a larger, softer ball and with the pitcher throwing underhand. No one quite knew how these extracurricular activities came to be; but they had, and people who did not join in were regarded as non-team players in the larger sense.

The day that Douglas had first met with this phenomenon was the day of the DML's first anniversary of something or another. He had just been invited as a guest of honor even though Dale had previously informed him that the funding needed so badly was still being negotiated with SATO and was coming on well. It had been a complete surprise to him when Dale took him to one side and asked if Wood, Carson and Wilde was still serious about DML—that Sato were being too inflexible and that if he could agree 'in principle' to fund them that day, and under the terms that they had discussed, he would go with Douglas instead. Douglas was astounded at the switch. He called his UK partners from Dale's apartment where the ball game was being played and the thing was settled there and

then.

DML and Douglas, as its financier, were well on its way into the pages of the area's financial history books. Or so he had thought. As the company produced its slightly revised design, the first product became a smash hit. And even though the stock was only salable on the 'over the counter' market the value was consistently quoted more than it had been launched at. It did not bother anyone at the time that on the OTC shares are only sold if there is a buyer and vice versa, and at the buyer's price. It was not often that brokers bothered make a market in OTC stocks. But Wood, Carson and Wilde's investment was tied into the company's plant, machinery and freehold premises. These items were more than enough security based on the usual one-to-one collateral basis of the banker loaning a dollar for every one put up by the client needing the money.

It had now been some twelve months since their initial investment and, although there had been the usual monthly management accounts and sales projections, there had been not much reported in the area of new development. Douglas knew well enough that a company like DML, or any high-tech company for that matter, had to keep moving forward or be overtaken.

There had to be a new round of developments going on at DML and if not then they should consider pulling out of

and looking for another beneficiary of what was left of their client's funds. The stock price at the moment being was worth less than 25 percent of its purchase price but if they sold out now they should at least walk away with something. On the other hand should DML be working on something exciting then that was excellent news. But whatever the situation was, he and his partners should at least know where the game was.

Douglas had caught up on the TV news, ordered breakfast and had showered. He dried himself off and looked in the mirror. He looked fine on the outside but still felt slightly weary. He had noticed that flying east to west made him feel elated for a few days and although it played with his general sleep pattern-often causing him to wake hungry at 2 a.m.-it was nowhere as mentally disruptive as flying west to east. Perhaps it was that he generally could not sleep on the aircraft and as all flights from the U.S. West Coast to Europe are overnight this left him little choice in the matter-and that loss of one night's sleep compounded the time change. Back in the UK from a trip to the U.S. it could take him up to two weeks before his sleep pattern righted itself.

But this morning he had not only slept well through the night but that added to his hours on the flight and felt a not-too-bad combination of alert and slightly jaded. A sort of rearing to go but not knowing quite in which direction.

Breakfast would help he thought, and indeed it had. Nothing like eggs and bacon and a pot of tea to revive jet lagged spirits. He dressed in a pin stripe suit from Blades, his Saville Row tailors, with a plain white cotton shirt and black oxford shoes. All he needed was an umbrella and he could have been going to work in the City.

In the room, welcoming him to the hotel, was the usual local area directory with details of specific points of interest. He planned to leave the hotel early and have a quick stroll around San Jose before getting a taxi to DML at Sunnyvale. He would only hire a car for the stay if it seemed he was staying in the area for longer than a couple of days. Most of the local attractions were out of town either going up to San Francisco or down the coast towards Monterey and Carmel but one item that caught his eye was the Rodin exhibition at a newly opened gallery of fine arts, and according to the guide was within walking distance of his hotel.

Douglas walked into the autumn sunshine and strolled around the area. He was impressed by the changes since his last visit to the area. He thought that the trams that ran through the center of town were a good idea and he wished that London still had a working transport system. The buses and underground tube trains had become almost unusable, the first because of the crowded roads and the second because of daytime overcrowding and lack of safety

during the night.

The open cafes of San Jose on North First Street combined with the trams to give an almost European feel to the city, rather like the Madrid he remembered visiting with his parents as a child. If it was true that the center of San Jose was almost empty, he wondered why more high-tech companies did not want to move into some of the elegant old refurbished buildings. Perhaps it was easier in the newer buildings to tear walls down and dig up floors for this month's new cables, he partly answered himself.

The Rodin exhibition was indeed worth a visit. He had not seen so many of the great artist's works since he and his wife had visited the museum at the artist's old Paris house a year or so earlier. It was now ten thirty and he started back to the hotel where he found a cab waiting outside.

The ride to DML took just over twenty minutes and Douglas arrived at DML in Sunnyvale at exactly eleven. He rang the doorbell and after a few minutes Dale himself appeared at the door and welcomed him to the building.

'Good to see you again Douglas. It's been a while since you visited last. I wondered how long before we would see you again. You have brought your check book I hope,' he

joked dangerously.

Dale had never quite mastered the fine art of banker's humor. He just plowed straight in grinning and making inane remarks. His intelligence had got him so far and he had let charm do the rest. He relied on his own rationale. Until times get really tight most investment bankers can be kept guessing quite safely. Especially those who consider themselves to have technical knowledge and to be players in the game.

'Of course, Dale. Never travel anywhere without it!'

'Joking apart, Douglas, your timing is really quite good. I would like to show you something that might interest you. How much do you know about graphics?'

'Oh, about the same as the next man. Without good graphics, whatever you produce is not half as impressive as it would be with them,' he said with a financier's simplicity. 'The real areas of progress seem to be along the lines of video though-replication, transmitting and being able to compress and decompress fast enough on the fly to transmit like TV or film,' he continued, surprising Dale with his pragmatic grasp of the situation.

'Exactly! and what we think we have almost done is to produce a chip that will blow everyone away. It will establish DML as the pre-eminent graphics chip maker today-and realistically for a year or so. We will be able to

patent his little item into tens of millions maybe billions of dollars.'

'Can I see something working? This is an area that we are really interested in. It seems to be the hot area at the moment and I'm sure that we have more investors for the right property.'

'We are all right for development funds right now, thanks,' Countered Dale in an attempt to take back control of the conversation. 'But I thought that you might like to have a first-hand look at what your money has bought so far. We plan to be announcing it in a week or so at COMDEX. First we can see some work in progress, then I can show you some performance figures, both real and projected.'

The two men went into the board-room where just a thirty minutes earlier Ben Tanaka had witnessed what he knew to be just a demonstration. This time however, the audience thought that this was a real example of software driven by DML chips inbedded in a desk-top PC. This version of the demo had been changed to be a little more shaky in the areas that would be the most difficult to achieve. This would confirm Dale's comment that the chip set was not quite there yet, but pretty damn close.

Mike Wasnap had not been needed in the board-room for Douglas's demonstration as the demo was being played-back through a larger host computer, in fact the

company's central file server, which lived on the main network for all to use. Mike had no idea that Dale had taken a copy of his demo and quickly hobbled it between the time that Ben Tanaka had left and Douglas had arrived and even though he had noticed it on the system running a little slow he just made a mental note to look at it later. Had he seen Douglas that morning in the board-room he might have wondered why he had not introduced himself properly on the aircraft the day earlier and started to have serious doubts as to who was playing at what game.

As Douglas watched the program running he was wondering how DML had made such a quick breakthrough. Only yesterday on the aircraft Mike Wasnap had unwittingly told him that the newly acquired Transputer Cube was on the plane with him at the time. Pretty fast development by anyone's standards, he thought.

'Impressive, Dale. All I can say is that we knew that you must have been up to something. You were too quiet for too long. This is excellent news. I can't wait to tell my partners,' he said all the time thinking that there was something wrong here.

Dale interrupted his thoughts

'Anyway now that you have seen our new wonder, let me give you the five dollar tour and we can discuss what this means for us all later. By the way Marty sends his regards but could not get away from the year-end accounts. He

thought that you would understand,' and he opened the board-room door for Douglas to leave through.

In reality, Marty had no interest in facing Douglas with the manufactured data. Now that he had stretched the truth, he was happier selling it to journalists more than their investors. Dale was better with the money men as he actually believed in what he was selling. He and Dale had discussed this aspect of their relationship before-his reticence to show undivided loyalty. And though it had not been a real problem to date, it was something that worried both of them.

The 'guided tour' consisted of mainly laboratories in which white-coated assistants looked concerned through microscopes and rooms where casually dressed men and women sat and manipulated data on PCs and workstations. Douglas was introduced to technicians and to section leaders who explained what the staff were either doing or attempting to do. He met and shook hands with a number of people. In other words, what he saw was a typical day at DML with no fuss and nothing apparently untoward, but he still felt something was wrong.

He could not put his finger on it. Or could he; every person he saw was an overhead. His recollection of the last management accounts-true they were three months old-but they had suggested a staff of twenty. He had seen almost double that and had not seen the whole plant. The

start-up company had grown and must be absorbing income at an alarming rate.

Still, he thought, there must be a reasonable explanation. Dale was a bright man, he would not have allowed all this to get out of control. It's not just a company; it's his company and his house and his car.

The demonstration out of the way and the tour done they sat down to go through the figures that Dale and Marty had created. They were a work of art; Douglas checked and rechecked the figures working to his own agenda and they were good. If they were fake then they had gone to a lot of trouble-not perfect with just enough flaws to make them seem real. They had most of the day together and it was now 5 PM and both men were getting hungry. Douglas had not needed lunch after his breakfast but his batteries were now running down; his head knew that it was already 1 AM London-time and Dale had skipped breakfast to work on the demonstration for his audience of two.

'If you have the energy, why don't we go down to the coast to eat. It's just you and me though I'm afraid; Marty will not be back till much later this evening and Jill had a prior so she sends her apologies. If you're up to it, I know a great place in Monterey we can go to'

'Sounds fine. I'm going to be tired anyway and the best way to get over jet lag I've found is to ignore it. So let's go.'

They took Dale's 7 series BMW down Highway 17 south for the ninety minute trip to diner.

Monterey, the fishing village made famous by John Steinbeck in Cannery Row, was still a semi-picturesque village until about 1985. Then the building started, and not just more of the same quaint Victorian bed and breakfast houses, many of which already populated the area, but large high-rise hotels like the Doubletree and the Sheraton. At that same time the Aquarium also opened its stunning tanks to the public. Now, as one of the major attractions of the Central Coast, tens of thousands of visitors travel around the area filling up the natural beauty of the open spaces.

The restaurant that Dale had chosen that night was the Sardine Factory, a local landmark not just because of its quality food and wines but also because of its prices. The Monterey area of the Central Coast boasts almost as many golf courses as Rome has churches. The Bing Crosby-ATT fun tournament charity golf game of the year was played at Pebble Beach, a nearby coastal area of extreme beauty, attracting visitors from around the world. An area found so attractive by Japanese players that they just had to buy it, and raise the lifetime membership fees to almost a million dollars. He tried anyway, but was eventually caught out by the recession and was unable to go through with the deal.

The two men were seated at a fine oak table in the paneled dining room studying the evening's specials. Everything that night sounded beautiful and at the same time, for a Londoner's palate, a little exotic. There is something about California; that needs to introduce a little of something different in everything they do, and it extends to cooking: chicken with pecans and a sprig of rosemary, raspberry and chocolate lime truffle or beef with olives and a green chartreuse hollandaise sauce-and it always seems to work somehow perfectly.

Dale ordered the salmon, fresh from the bay, and a salad without the dressing. Douglas, on a new-found understanding that carbohydrates were good for jet-lag, ordered the deep-fried fish platter, potatoes on the side and the Caesar salad with sourdough croutons. Dale ordered a bottle of the Mondavi '89 Sauvignon Cabernet and both men sat waiting politely for the other to start the conversation.

Neither man wanted to talk business that night. The business would take care of itself. It would glide through as on wheels once the social contacts had been re-established. Dale was convinced that there was little doubt that once Douglas had been sold the idea he would exercise his option to increase his current level of funding and Dale would have the means to carry on. Or so was thought by at least one of the people at the table that evening.

As the two old friends were gently sparring over a bottle of good wine, Marty had been spent the evening fighting with his conscience. And his conscience had won.

He had no doubt that DML was the company that should make his fortune. He knew that for a fact. It was textbook—all the signs were there. The genius inventor, the product line, and the market poised for a breakthrough because the old products had run their course. The only thing that he had to watch out for was being caught in the mill between the company and its bankers. He had seen it happen to friends. They had believed so much in what they were doing, so much of what they were told to believe, that in the end they lost sight of reality and became just an extension of the company philosophy. And, when the company philosophy, so often controlled by one man, changed or, if they dissented in any way, they were cut out of the decision process and discarded like so much old product.

He had felt a change come over Dale in the last few weeks and knew that Dale was desperate to survive, and probably at any cost. Even though he had helped produce the figures he had become unsettled at what Dale was trying to do. It was one thing to produce information to bolster up flagging investors spirits; they were called

forecasts. But it was something else to issue them as fact and borrow money against them. He had worked long and hard to gain a reputation in The Valley as being hard but fair and if any of this became public knowledge he would be unemployable. He would have to do something. He had needed some insurance.

With his head buzzing from the better part of a fifth of bourbon in him, he placed a call to Douglas Wilde's room at the Fairmont.

'Douglas, Marty Wyman. I was sorry not to meet up with you today. You know how year-end figures are! I know that it's late, but I thought that I would just touch base with you and get your feel man to man.'

'Fine, I think. Of what I've seen anyway. The new developments seem impressive. You must be very happy that this breakthrough is just before your year-end. You can include projected earnings into the annual report. Should give the shares a needed boost.'

During the evening drive back from Monterey Douglas's mind had made it through the tiredness wall and his brain seemed awake again. While he talked he thought that this was a little late for a social call even for California but he was interested.

'I'm was just thinking about having a nightcap. Do you want to join me? I know that you live quite close. Why

don't you come over. I can meet you in the bar in about twenty minutes.'

I would prefer coming up to your room if you don't mind. Late night meetings with bankers can be taken many ways out here.'

'No, of course. Room 1205. See you in about twenty minutes then.' Douglas put down the phone and got out the figures that Dale had given him to look at this afternoon. They had seemed pretty impressive on the surface and now maybe he would learn the truth of how the breakthrough been made so fast.

The call made, Marty was now calmer. He had never thought himself as disloyal before. Sure, he had played the ethical field as much as the next man, but he had never actually been disloyal. He was now on his way to blowing his future with one of the brightest stars in the industry-his industry. If he said nothing and let DML take further funding from its bankers and it went horribly wrong he could probably be prosecuted? Would it come under the RICO act- the 1920's anti-racketeer bill that the DA's office now tried to use every time a stock scandal was brought up. What could he salvage? His career would be over. He would be lucky to work west of the Mississippi. However if DML took the money and then made the breakthrough they would all be wealthy. Not just rich but seriously wealthy.

But now the die was cast.

'Marty, welcome. Its good to see you. My, you people do work late here, but I've got my second wind so I'll be awake for a couple of hours yet.'

'It's good of you to see me this late nevertheless. I know that you were with Dale today and I thought that we should meet before things go much further and you commit the bank to actions that you might regret.'

'That sounds ominous. Come in. Would you like that drink?'

'No thanks. I've had enough tonight and maybe that's the only reason I'm here.'

Marty went on to explain in detail how the overheads had outstripped the income at DML: not, as at so many start-ups, where as soon as funding is brought in the VP's and Chairman all lease Ferrari and Porches but genuine overheads like staff and R&D hardware. DML had spent an absolute fortune on attracting the best first-draft from MIT, Berkeley and CalTech. Worth every penny, they had thought, but somehow development just slowed and now they were now in a technical hiatus. There was no doubt that they would make the breakthrough soon, because Dale's designs had never failed before and they would work again this time. But time was not exactly what they had a

lot of at that moment. The market was so hot for a new graphics chip-set. Everybody was talking about this one topic. The major buyers were holding off placing their first- and second-quarter 1991 orders to see who and what would get to market first. Someone would make a killing. The only snag was that DML was fast running out of cash and was in desperate need of new funding now just to meet its current commitments.

Douglas sat and listened to the man pour his heart out. He said nothing. He walked to his mini-bar and fetched himself and Marty bottles of Evian water and sat patiently until Marty had finished.

At last, the truth, Douglas thought to himself. 'Why are you telling me this? Why have you sided with the bank? I appreciate your candor, but you have just attempted a serious fraud. It will mean that both you and Dale are finished, with my bank anyway. The authorities might even get involved.'

'Because, I got carried away with Dale's dream. And, because it was all working at first. Even making up the figures seemed OK. Just an exercise. I was being carried along in the stream. This evening it suddenly dawned on me that it had taken me many years to reach where I am, and I'll be dammed if I risk it on a venture where I can be ruined overnight. Techno's like Dale can fail one minute and be back at the top the two months later. There is no

stopping them because of the power that drives this industry. You know as well as I do that even though we are regarded as just one industry it is made up of many differing parts. Products designed for PCs can end up in jet fighters or refrigerators- no one knows which at the time. Add in defense spending to the consumer goods market and it is the largest market in the world. High-tech companies need the developers, the Wizards, who make it all possible. Industry needs new products so the developers are funded by the bankers who make their money back at the front and the back: from the investment in the technology company and then by syndicating loans to the industries to expand and take advantage of the new product cycle produced with the bank's financing. It's a closed loop. Believe me if Dale failed tomorrow he could be funded and up and running again in no time at all. Sure, a different company, but the same headlines 'Genius starts over'. Me, on the other hand, I would just be another manager who failed to control his company's genius and they don't get thought of too highly.'

Marty was starting to feel better having come clean with Douglas. And he had told the truth. He had seen the genius in Dale when they first met. At first a friendly man, but lately Dale had no time to cultivate staff to get the best from them. Dale's attitude had become that of 'its my toyshop and it's fun to be king' rolled into one. In better

times he would be a man to slip stream, but this had gone horribly wrong and Marty was now risking his reputation, his livelihood and possible prison.

'Again what can I say. I appreciate your candor,' Douglas replied genuinely.

Silence

'Tell me, you were party to the drawing up of our first funding agreement. Is there any legal reason prohibiting us from selling or assigning our investment in DML, should we want to that is, to a third party? I thought that this was just a routine visit so I am without a copy of the agreement.'

No, nothing legal. But I think some of the clauses are not transferable and maybe you should explain to any potential investors that'

'If it was a question of morals Marty, I would be talking to a priest and not an accountant.' Douglas said gently but with an edge to his voice. 'And considering why I may have to sell this stock, I feel that any suggestion of impropriety is somewhat out of place. Anyway, have you never heard of *caveat emptor*.'

'Yes. Sure. Of course. Also, this might not be the best time to ask a favor, but if you are in any way grateful for my telling you all this there is something you can do for me- apart from not mentioning this meeting that is. If you

hear of anyone looking out for a fairly honest General Manager I would appreciate a call.'

Douglas thought a while and whistled gently through his teeth. He was thinking that leverage on a individual can be quite useful.

'How would you feel about being based in London. I have been looking for an assistant, technical advisor if you like, to help me with the high-tech acquisition details. There is seldom a month going by now without the need for a technical feasibility study of one sort or another. We could probably even spring for a modest relocation package as well.'

'Done.' Marty said before the last words came out of Douglas's mouth.

'I'll work up to COMDEX, which is only a week or so away next week now, take a week or so to settle my affairs over here and then join you in he UK first week in December if that OK with you'.

'Fine. I will brief personnel and we can discuss salary when we meet in December. Call my PA, Jane, when you get to London and she will help you settle in.'

Marty considered that this really had worked out for the best. He would be a sort of poacher turned gamekeeper. He had produced enough ambiguous figures in his time. It might even be fun to play detective and he had always

wanted to visit Europe. It might have been rash for him not to have settled the salary and other details but he meant what he said about not wanting to be around when Dale discovered what had happened and anyway he had just saved the bank potentially millions. The next few weeks would be taken up arranging the show and he should be safe till then.

As he showed Marty out of his room Douglas knew that he would not sleep much that night. He must work out how he would free himself from this situation without losing face. Going to the authorities was out of the question. It would be difficult to prove and any court case would mean throwing good money after bad. UK companies suing U.S. companies take deeper pockets than he had access to. And, if there was no actual breakthrough, then there was nothing to fight for and Dale would be broke himself. Also what would that do to the stock price while he was still the major investor? He had to think and think fast. His syndicate's good name was at stake.

Douglas had been grateful as this conversation had probably saved his own reputation. Although he had suspected that there was something wrong at DML, Dale was a good salesman as well as an excellent technician and Douglas knew that he had wanted to believe, to share in the success and that when calling in his report to his partners he would have recommended increasing their

investment in DML.

They had talked for hours. He looked at his watch. It was almost a quarter to two in the morning. As long his secretary's car had not broken down again, she would be in the office by now-quarter of ten London time. He picked up the phone and dialed zero for the hotel reception.

'Good evening. I see that I have a second phone plug in my room. Is it by any chance a dataport?'

'It is. Good. What's the incoming number?' he asked and wrote the answer down on the small yellow embossed note-pad the hotel left on the desk.

He then went to his briefcase and took out a machine the size of a Dictaphone and put it on the desk next to the phone. He unwound the machine's two cords, first the power cord which he plugged into the wall socket behind the desk, and then the phone cord which he clipped into the second phone socket in the wall. He pressed the rocker switch which made the liquid quartz display lights flicker and the fax hummed into life and was ready to receive. He was ready.

Douglas called his London office and asked Jane to get the file on DML from his desk drawer. Was there a copy of the contract in it? There was. Good

'Please fax it through to 408-555-1222,' he asked. 'I will hold on the line until it starts to come through'.

'Any problems?' Jane asked while she thumbed through the file in the London office.

' No. Or nothing to speak of. It has been such a long time I have forgotten the details. I can't sleep so I thought that I'd read-up on some of the details,' he answered. 'I should be back in a few days. Everything OK your end? I have heard nothing so I assumed that everything was all right.'

'Only my bloody car again. The muffler fell off. I had to get a taxi this morning. It cost me fifteen pounds because of the bloody awful traffic. And I had to watch as the meter ticked it upI could have cried.'

Douglas knew where his brass-edged leather jotter was this time and he made a note to speak to his partners about a company car for Jane. Nothing special. Maybe a Metro. He waited holding the phone too tired to make polite conversation.

There was a low buzz and then the eerie tones of the machines talking to each other over five thousand miles of satellite link made his fax shudder into action.

'OK Jane it's started to come through. Thanks. I will call you later in the day for an update.' And with that the line went dead.

It was to be a late night. A little like the early days. He had not felt that urgent hunger to survive since his army

days and a taste of it came back into his throat. He dialed Room Service and ordered a six cup hottle of coffee.

If sacrificial lamb was on the menu then he, Douglas Wilde, was to be one of the diners.

CHAPTER NINE

With Baited Hook

Saturday October 27th was not a good day for Brent Wisenberger. It had now been two days since he met with Marty and he was still seething about their trying to use him. Although every avenue he tried over the last couple of days told him that their story was probably garbage, and that DML was nowhere near a breakthrough, and probably the opposite was true, he had a hunch that there was substance to it. But he also suspected, there was a secret agenda to Marty wanting to have him involved.

It had not been a good Saturday morning and it was still only 9 AM. The mail had brought him yet another rejection notice from a publisher back east and he was feeling sorry for himself. It seemed that everyone-everyone

except him, that is, who had worked in the industry for longer than a month was having a book published: Computers for Beginners; Computers for Computer Owners; Computers for DOS Owners. Every crass title imaginable except Your Computer and You. Eight years in the business, and at the sharp end, and he was lucky to get one of his reviews published let alone a book.

In the twelve months since he had first met DML, his world had turned to shit and he blamed it all on DML. Since Dale had bad-mouthed him to both his bosses, his colleagues and anyone who had a minute to listen, his stories only sold so-so; whereas before he could have auctioned them to the highest bidder.

He was short of money. So far his wife had been patient- for her, anyway. But his alimony check was two months behind and the next step would be for the courts to get involved and that he did not need. He had got deeper into the bottle since his problems started and this had made him unreliable. He was lucky to have his pieces still accepted by The Mercury News.

That morning as he sat cheating his PC at Solitaire instead of writing up the press conference he was at on Thursday he became more and more convinced that this meeting with Marty was not so straight forward. And if he could get the edge on what DML were actually up to, then maybe he could rebuild his career. Maybe even make some

fast money with a series of articles on has-been entrepreneurs.

But he needed to do his ground work before anyone would be interested in such a series. He needed to find out whether anyone else was making the running with DML and these breakthrough chips. He had spent the last thirty six hours calling favors with The Valley's other four or five design facilities who were possibly working on high speed graphics designs: AMD, Intel, LSI Logic and MIPS: not an easy task as the security around such companies was fanatically strict, in the development areas anyway.

However, the people that Brent spent his time chasing down were the sales directors and marketing men whose task it was to spread the innuendo of what was in the pipeline: to encourage buyers to wait for their company's product over the competitors and at the same time not put those same buyers off from buying today's products-a neat trick, and performed almost daily. To achieve this, the sales and marketing men had to know both what was under development and what was real and what was vapor-ware or a near-reality. This truth would only be used in an emergency but it was available. The men that run this thin slice of the industry also have a good idea what their competitors are up to.

So far Brent had received nothing but unsubstantiated rumors, none of which seemed anywhere near interesting.

Most of the calls were from salesman defending their company's position of being on the leading edge but without actually saying anything. The only fact that was becoming clearer to him was that whoever did produce the next breakthrough chips was going to be well and truly in the money.

He had sworn off alcohol from the time that Marty left him in the lobby of the Fairmont until he got to the bottom of this. But it had been a bad couple of days and maybe one or two shots would get his imagination going; he would go down to the Westerner Bar in Haywood.

Just as he was going to go down to his local bar for an early start an old school buddy of his who covered the arrival lounges at the local airports called. He had heard that Brent was interested in DML and had maybe seen something of value. Both Douglas Wilde, the London banker, and Ben Tanaka from Sato Industries had been on the same incoming London flight last Thursday and both had been seen roaming around the same streets in Sunnyvale the last couple of days. Also he had checked with the airline and they had not been seated together, not even in the same class, and both men had empty seats next to them.

'Sunnyvale. What's going on in Sunnyvale?'

'I don't know. But I heard that you were interested in chip design, and isn't DML near there?'

'Thanks a million. I owe you one'

'Yep. Sure do.' And his friend hung up.

Brent had a place to start. But he needed much more. He started his PC again and had the machine auto-dial into the Nexus on-line system. He followed the search parameter instructions as he had done many times before until he was in the newspaper and magazine retrieval section and selected the Wall Street Journal and the San Jose Mercury News.

He entered his search criteria as 'Sato, Tanaka, Wilde, DML, Sunnyvale and San Jose' and had the system search the database for any mention of these words in the same sentence over the last twelve months.

A total of twelve articles were suggested and instead of viewing them on screen which would have been straight forward he copied them down to his PC and exited the system. Even though the system was reasonably fast it was expensive on a minute-per-minute basis and the articles would be easier to browse on his own time; he was not exactly flush with funds at the moment. Of the twelve articles the first seven were promotional articles for Sato and then boom! Pay-dirt...

Dateline: September 26, 1989; Sato Industries were today outbid by an investment group lead by Douglas

Wilde from London, England. Both companies had been openly courting Valley newcomer DML for a share in the chip designers - creators of the SWAT chip.

Brent had read enough. It was stupid of him to have forgotten about the early funding fight. He had also forgotten who the investors had been. Now he recognized the names of Wilde and Sato: his brain must have gone soft. So that's why they are both in town. And that's why Marty came to see me. They are going through a new round of funding and they actually want me to write for them. It's genuine. But they need the information controlled and let out gently.

He brought his word processor up on the screen and started to spin his web of high technology markets, of useless inventory, of breakthroughs, and of new funding. A real slash and burn article that did not have a good word for anybody. Or if it did it was the same good word. Bastards!

He wrote of how Sato and Douglas Wilde were again fighting over stock in DML and that this was because of the imminent breakthrough in DML's graphic processor chips. Japanese companies do not like to lose and so if they are back again after the same company then they wouldn't come back to lose again-so his money was on the boy's from Tokyo. The Japanese were not happy with just some

of the better golf courses, all of the Lincoln Centre, half of Hollywood, and most of Dearborn: they wanted the Valley.

When he had finished he had written an article that would make some people very happy and others very mad, in almost equal quantities. The only thing missing from the article were the facts. This venomous, almost cathartic, article would set the game alight. Marty had been right: when the other companies hear about this they will all pre-announce their wannabe products and the DML market would be totally fragmented.

'Take that Mr Dale Leonard, Mr High and Mighty Wizard,' he whispered under his breath as he filed his copy to the Mercury News by modem. They had turned down his previous unsolicited articles, but this they would print. 'Take that!'

Dale Leonard's office overlooked the main entrance of DML from its corner vantage point on the second floor. It was small as some Valley offices go: it was about four hundred square feet, and sparsely decorated. There are some CEO's offices in The Valley that would make some of the better hotel lobbies jealous; with fountains, trees, some even with obelisks and fountains. But Dale was more laid back than that. Along the back wall facing out was a simple black book case containing a few mementos from trips overseas, a couple of 'best product' awards from magazines,

some software packages that he had been given by developers that he had met at trade shows, a number of industry mementos, and a photo of himself and Jill at an evening Bar-B-Q at Barbados.

Dale's large black wooden desk-it came with the book case, was without drawers, and had been a wedding present from Jill-sat ended on to the window and was quite bare. A twenty-inch monitor, like the one in his den at home, perched on one corner by a blotter that Jill had found in the San Jose antique market. The blotter was bare except for a key board and mouse. His desktop contained no pens, pencils or even paper for that matter; he truly believed in the concept of a paper-less office and had long ago learned to think on screen.

The only compromise to orthodoxy was a compact gray Hewlett Packard LaserJet printer that he sometimes used for printing off letters for the outside world. Memos, when he sent them, were written on-line and sent straight to the person's electronic mail box.

Dale had spent a normal weekend checking up on his staff's progress and was reasonably happy that it was going OK. It was 8 AM that Monday morning when Dale took the call from the staffer from the West Coast edition of The Wall Street Journal.

'Was he surprised to hear that the Mercury had

published a story about a major breakthrough with a new version of its graphic chip? Was he currently negotiating more funding, a re-match of the same fight of almost a year to the day?'

He told the journalist that he had not read the Mercury News that morning and that his call was the first that he knew of any article about either Sato or Douglas Wilde.

Again the journalist asked a pointed question: 'Have sales been so bad that you need funding again so soon?'

Dale went into a controlled frenzy at the journalist, threatening him with a law suit for damaging his business if he spread the unsubstantiated rumor further. The journalist politely thanked him for his time and went off to make some other poor bastard's morning a misery across town.

Dale was elated at the call. It might not sound like exactly the story he had wanted but it wasn't bad and its timing was near perfect, just enough to add some spice to the bake. He went to the reception area and picked up the copy of the Mercury News that was kept with the other papers and magazines for visitors.

The article under the heading Japanese bottom-trawlers back fishing for U.S. chips with the byline Brent Wisenberger was even closer to what he had wanted, closer than he had gathered from the conversation with the

Journal's man. It was the best possible combination; a story that led people to believe that they were on the verge of even greater success and being courted by two serious investors. It mentioned both Ben Tanaka and Douglas by name but that wouldn't give him a problem; both knew that the information could have come from anyone in town.

Both would know that the tourists taking photographs of relatives at both San Francisco and San Jose airports were often industrial spies taking random shots of first- and- business-class passengers as they arrived in the area. The story could have been put together by a number of journalists. Hell! they would probably both enjoy the celebrity status. He was wrong.

Or at the very least they would say he was wrong but he had the game underway and he was going to see the play through. That day on the OTC DML stock would close up six dollars.

Dale was a multimillionaire again. On paper anyway.

At 11:00 that morning the private line rang in Dale's office. It was Douglas and he was spitting feathers.

'Dale. It's Douglas. My partners are not amused at what one of our investors faxed through to London early this morning. We like to be giving them news of our activities not the other way around. We are a very hands-on bank and details on all major investment possibilities are

fully circulated to the investors before we enter into talks with prospective companies and a lot of them have very cold feet after some of the high-tech losses that have been going around. DML has hardly performed well since we funded it. Any further investment would have to have been presented to our people very carefully. And as you know that this was supposed to be a routine visit. Who the hell spread the rumor?'

'I don't know, but when I find out they're history.'

'Well that's easy to say. If we are to talk about us making any further investment-and quite frankly I'm now against it-then we must meet, and today.'

Douglas had experienced an uncomfortable morning talking to his other board members who wanted to know what this was all about. They had known that Douglas was not the type of man or banker to make on-the-spot decisions, especially not unilateral ones of the type that could concern their investors and they were interested to learn the truth of the matter.

He had not felt it right to worry them further by mentioning his deeply disturbing conversation with Marty until he could be sure who, if anyone, in San Jose was on the level.

He did mention that DML was on the edge of a major achievement-one with large industry ramifications and

that, as a safeguard, they might want to quickly poll their clients to see what percentage would like to increase their investment in DML should the rumors be true. Wisely they had done just that before calling him and he was advised that if push came to shove then he was fully empowered to do exactly what he thought fit.

In a way this act of complete faith by his partners had created an even greater quandary. He felt that sometimes following orders is easier than making decisions and that this was one of these times. What if this was some elaborate game for Dale to buy back their option himself?

'Look Douglas, I'm really sorry but everything can wait a day or so. Early this morning we took the decision to go down to COMDEX and show what we have so far,- now that our hand is now forced by this leak. Please join us. We have a hospitality suite at Caesars and my secretary will get you a room. We will have it reserved in your name for next Monday for the whole week. Will we see you there?'

'Yes, OK. But let me tell you that I am really not amused. I thought that we had an understanding. If this is some sort of bidding game then you can count me, my partners, their investors and in turn their checkbooks out.' Douglas answered.

Dale was taken aback by the ferocity of Douglas's reaction. He hoped that he had not misjudged the situation. How would Ben react? Surely he would be more

logical. Less emotional.

He would soon find out.

The second call of the morning, some half an hour after the call from Douglas was, in fact, from Ben Tanaka.

Dale, not knowing how Ben would react, went into his contrite act. But it was unnecessary.

Ben appeared much more relaxed and even amused that he had been second-guessed by the press; he was of the school that any publicity is good publicity. He suggested meeting soon to see whether there was a possibility of making the rumor come true.

Dale switched his tack immediately: 'The rest of this week is pretty bad, but please come down to COMDEX and see the whole circus act.'

Dale played his hand to the full and ended making the same offer of accommodation that he had made to Douglas. Ben Tanaka said that he had a few things to sort out, but it should not be a problem.

He concluded: 'Oh, and if there's any problem with Douglas tell him that maybe this time we can take the DML investment off his hands. His investors might be tired of waiting for a dividend check from this deal but we would be OK with a wait. We understand that patience is not a Western virtue.'

As Ben hung up the phone he cursed. Hawaii was put off for another week and probably for good this trip. But, if he pulled off this coup then he could set his own terms at Sato.Hawaii could wait.

As Dale put down the phone, he dropped his feet from off his desk to the floor, stood up walked to the window and uncharacteristically punched the air in victory.

CHAPTER TEN

Greed is Good!

It was mid morning before Skip read Brent's article on DML. He could not believe how close they had come to missing out on their scheme. They had bought the option with less than eight business hours to spare. Talk about timing. Chances like this came only once. Another day and they would have missed their opportunity forever.

Jill had also read the papers that morning but had not wanted to call Skip. She felt that if she called him it would break the spell and she would find that it had all been a dream.

When they did speak it was mid afternoon when Skip,

who just could not wait to talk any longer, called from a pay phone.

'Well, have you heard?' he asked.

'Yes. Talk about timing. I thought that you hadn't met with your tame journalist yet?

'I know. And I haven't. But would you believe that the guy who wrote the article is exactly the guy I have been trying to contact. How's that for weird?

'Well someone's on the ball. When can we meet?'

'Call me later at 4:00. I have to call my broker.' And with those sweet words Jill hung up.

Dale wasn't the only person to punch the air in Sunnyvale that morning.

As Skip hung up Jill called her broker to find out what impact, if any, the article had made. Had it pushed up the price and if so might a buyer be found for the option? Could she dispose of the option now and profit take? The broker had been as excited as if it had been his own investment. He informed Jill that because the rumor concerned such an exciting area, and one overdue for a breakthrough, the market buzz around DML was now quite explosive. If the right investor could be found then they might well get 8 or even 10 dollars a share over the option price. She gave the broker the instruction to sell at

anything over five dollars a share. She did not want to be greedy. Well not too greedy.

Having seen how the broker had manipulated the option price in the first place she knew that he would again beat the sale price to enhance his own commissions. This would be where the broker started to get his. She told the broker that he had to take all his commission from the buyer - or sort it with the buyer's broker. She was not stupid; she had noticed him beat up the price of her option in the first place and if he wanted to argue then she would take the sale elsewhere. He agreed

On the phone Jill appeared flattered by the broker's comments but in reality she was just concerned that the quick profit would now attract unwanted attention. True, the SEC would take weeks before any pattern was picked up but they still needed to act fast.

Half an hour later the broker had called her back to say that he had found a buyer-a Japanese investment house-for the whole 200,000 units and that as the stock had put on \$7, he had beaten the price up to \$9 a unit over the option price so that the stock that they controlled had made just under \$2 million dollars or to be exact \$1,800,000.

The broker had almost broken down as he told her, he was so excited. He was arranging to wire the proceeds to

the Gibraltar account first thing in the morning; they were rich...

Jill was bursting. Her excitement was too great; she just had to set up her meeting up with Skip. A highly charged and nervous phone call between the two conspirators took place that morning and an evening rendezvous was arranged.

Maybe he was a good partner after all. He had not let her down. Ok, so he had not spread the rumor as planned but the Gods had taken over and why change a winning streak?

It was 5:30 in the evening when Skip pulled into the movie theater car park at the Capitola Esplanade and waited for Jill. And he too was ecstatic: they had rigged one of the best games in town; they had fixed the financial lottery. He could not shake his mind off what they had done. He had read about such things and he had even started to dream about such things; but he never thought that they would actually bring it off and had drifted off into a world of his own. He had not seen Jill drive up and park next to him. The knock on his car window startled him. He had been in a trance.

Jill climbed into the passenger seat and within the small confines of the car they kissed and hugged as they had not

done in months-with real passion. 'I don't believe it, we've actually done it,' they said almost in unison.

'Now what? When can we leave town?' was all Skip could think of.

He had suddenly found himself free of his chains: his customers, his area managers, his monthly forecasts and the bloody technical delays that made his life a constant nightmare. All the chains that ever bound him.

'Not so fast. I told you that I don't really want to hurt Dale. Or at least as little as possible. I know that might sound a little dumb but I still love him-I'm just no longer in love with him. So, please, let's be careful about being seen together for just for another week, maybe two, I promise. The money should be in our overseas bank by tomorrow morning. If Dale finds out about any of this before we tell him from a safe distance then I'm afraid of what he might do. That company is his life and he thinks that I'm part of his life too. I really don't know what he would do. I don't know what he is capable of. But I do know that he is under great pressure at the moment and were all unpredictable at a time like that.'

Skip could see that this was difficult for Jill. She may be a hard bitch when she needed to be but this was not easy for her. He touched her arm as if to say that this was no big deal.

'OK. But please let's move as fast as possible. I don't know how fast questions will be asked after this sort of stock deal goes through. I don't want to wait fifteen to twenty years to enjoy the money,' Skip said slowly.

Even in his sympathetic mode Skip recognized the tone in Jill's voice that told him that they were not free of Dale's influence yet-not by a long way. What if Jill was just doing this to get Dale's attention? What if she had no intention of leaving him?

What if she still loved Dale? Good God!

Had this just turned into his worst nightmare? He had no details on the overseas bank, not even of who the broker had been. Was he to be left high and dry? Had he sold his car, his Porsche, for nothing? Had he become the prop to aid a failing marriage? A Lottery winner who'd lost the winning ticket? His mind spun wildly out of control with each thought becoming worse than the previous one. And it would not stop.

Jill picked up on the vibrations that Skip's panic was transmitting and now it was her turn to quiet his thoughts: 'This is what we both wanted isn't it? If I wanted to be with Dale I would be with him now and fighting with him and for him not against him. I sure as hell wouldn't be sitting in his sales manager's car, one of his company's cars, planning to leave town with a fortune made from trading his stock. I told you DML has serious problems. The

money we have just made would be all the money he needed in the short term to survive those problems and he's not getting it from me.'

Skip's face softened when he saw the logic in her argument and she continued: 'and this will cheer you up. I booked a cottage in Barbados this morning. For a month from November 7th, we just have to wait two weeks. We can do that can't we? We will go just after COMDEX, maybe even during if you want to. While Dale is out of town I will pack what few things to walk away with and you can come down straight from Vegas. That will be such a busy time his mind will be a million miles away. You might even enjoy the show if you know that it's your first and last.'

'My last trade show for anybody. No more bloody selling,' Skip whistled nervously through his teeth. 'I guess I can do that.' Although Skip had never been to a COMDEX he knew its reputation: the computing sales and marketing event of the year; a five day trade show that involves two thousand companies collectively trying to out-tech each other. The five-hundred-dollar suit and the hundred-dollar hair-cut salesmen came from all over the world to hone their skills on their brothers in the trade: the same conversations time after time and day after day, products being demonstrated were a not so subtle mix of the ordinary combined with the same old demonstrations;

clowns and balloons, moving mages and music just done faster each year.

The sensory overload of the noise, the colors, the massing people and just the plain size of the event made the days and the individual conversations all blend into each other. A nightmare.

The show had grown so large over the years that it had now spread from the main convention center at the Las Vegas Hilton and now included the Sands, Bally's, Caesar's, Mirage, the Riviera and any other smaller locations that had space. Over 100,000 professionals visited the show during its five- day run. Not a hotel room could found anywhere in a town that has the same number of hotel rooms a New York City.

The hotel managers had noticed some years ago that the technicians and engineers who made up almost fifty percent of the show visitors neither gambled or used room service-the hotels main profit centers; so room rates were pushed north for the occasion; rooms with stickers on the door setting the maximum room price of \$65 and that were normally either given free or 'comped' for gamblers were snatched up at \$200 a night plus and were all prepaid for the duration of the show.

Tens of thousands of taxi miles were driven daily crisscrossing show- weary journalists and purchasing agents from location to location. Each year more and more

extra cabs were drafted into the area from Los Angeles and carbon dioxide levels grew and grew: the now daily smog warnings on TV became more and more pessimistic and the air often became as wholesome as Los Angeles on a bad day; air conditioning was needed to lower the near hundred degree temperatures that combined with the dry air and the pollutants to make Las Vegas the eye-wash and strep-throat capital of the world.

Skip would not miss experiencing this or any other trade show in the future. He would also not miss having to hide his feelings for Jill in public so as not to draw attention to each other. She cared more than he did about whether they were seen or not at what they were doing. He hated that part of their relationship; he hated skulking around and selecting restaurants out of the way, nothing high profile-apart from Casanova's in Carmel. Somehow Jill did not mind going there even though she knew that Dale also went there for business meetings and with some of his more important clients.

He briefly reflected on how confusing and complex Jill could be. With him it was one of the few things in life that was either black or white and he thought that most men were the same. They were either going out with a woman or they were not, and if they were then they did not mind who saw them. Maybe it was something macho. If it was their boy friend or even husband then that would bring the

issue to a head and a decision would have to be made. Women seem more capable of having relationships with more than one man at the same time, with what seemed to be equal honesty and equal frankness. And that made him uneasy. He had experienced these thoughts before: if she can do it to him, then she can do it to you.

He would have to find out about the bank details and become more of an equal partner in this.

'Where do you want to go now?' Jill asked

I have the keys to a friend's house over a few miles from here, let's go there. We can relax without fear of being seen out together.'

They left Jill's car in the parking lot and drove south out of town. They had all evening together so to avoid the freeway they took the frontage road that ran along side Highway One south towards Aptos. They were becoming more relaxed by the scenery. By comparison to the dry and barren north side of the hill they drove by golf courses and open fields containing nothing more than the occasional AM broadcast antenna.

The mountain-pass highway that divided the Central Coast from the city-like melee of San Jose had done its job well. Only fifteen thousand or so people commuted north to the Valley each morning with most people seemingly not wanting to bother with the daily commute. It was because

of this that none of coastal areas of Santa Cruz, Capitola, or Aptos has dramatically overbuilt spoiling its natural spacious beauty.

Every weekend though, and not just during the summer months or a holiday weekend, tens of thousands of cars would migrate south for the day and then back again north in the evening; the roads became a nightmare with traffic snarls and parking problems invading these otherwise quiet coastal neighborhoods generally infuriating the locals.

Skip drove south for just a couple of miles and then crossed over the freeway and into the small village of Aptos. It reminded him of the wild west. Through the town limits one of the first sights is a gas station made from an old forge- across from an old railway hotel, complete with working railway tracks running out in front. The frontier town atmosphere is enforced by the set of 1850's buildings that were rebuilt after the '89 earthquake when their foundations slid down the ravine towards the freeway.

Driving the few hundred yards down main street they turned left just before the gas station that marks the end of the town and headed uphill inland. During the hunting season a few miles further up the road hunters track wild pig for sport.

Skip had been invited one year by a client but had graciously refused. He was a 'city boy' and although not

delicate about eating meat. If it was factory farmed it seemed more acceptable. He drew the line at killing for sport-even if you ate it afterwards. He could not rationalize the distinction between killing to eat or killing for sport, but thought that if it was a real sport then the animal should be given a gun as well.

Ahead of them, up the winding country road, they passed a series of 'A' framed houses. The houses in the area were well spread out and the cars in the driveways-Mercedes, Volvo estates and BMW's-suggested that the owners were quite affluent.

Following the directions he had been given, they tracked their way to the empty house where they would spend the evening. It was a quite a beauty: a rustic three story contemporary house surrounded by majestic redwoods and ferns perched on the side of an ivy covered hill and looking down into the valley that carried the freeway they had driven alongside.

The unkempt yard contained overgrown fruit trees, both apple and pear, and fir trees. Although the whole area was deep into its sixth year of an almost unbroken drought the yard was kept alive by the moist coastal fog that enveloped the surrounding areas, stretching some two miles in from the coast. It probably made sunbathing at the house a very hit or miss affair, he thought.

The huge double doors were held closed by a twelve inch bolt that would have not looked out of place in a medieval castle. The level that they entered on contained two bedrooms, including the master suite, and a separate bathroom. The entrance hall contained a central staircase that led to the upper floor and a wide spiral staircase leading down to the living rooms and a further bathroom. The living area at the bottom of the house spread out onto what seemed acres of deck running the length of the back and around up to the garage on the left hand side of the house. It was possible to walk out of the kitchen on the far right, along past the dining area and then re-enter the house through the French windows into the lounge. The ground floor bedrooms were open and spaciouly laid out with plate glass windows in both rooms from ceiling to floor. The master bedroom was en-suite with a Jacuzzi jet system.

The upper floor reached by the grand staircase was laid out like a home-office complete with a PC, fax machine, a multi-line telephone system and a spectacular view of the valley in the misty evening light.

As dusk was falling the wispy coastal fog rolled through the distant valley and plains like a scene from of a civil-war battle after the screams and cannon fire had stopped. This place was better than his Scotts Valley condo. These people really suffered, he thought and wondered why, in these

days of advanced communication, more people did not choose to live in such beautiful isolation-or perhaps they did, but chose to keep it a secret in case everyone would do the same and ruin the hills for those that lived there now.

Jill thought the house fine for an evening, a little too countrified for her tastes, but nevertheless quite comfortable.

Skip had forgotten to pick a bottle and went to the ice box to investigate. He returned with a bottle of Piper Heidsieck that had been tucked into the side door. He would replace it after diner or leave a note with a fifty dollars instead.

'Champagne?' 'Mmm,' she purred.

The word always got Jill's attention. 'Is it warm enough to sit outside?' she asked with her soft voice contrasting with her earlier harsh tones. 'I see a bench out there. Let's watch the sun go down and pretend that we're back in the Caribbean.'

Skip relaxed for the first time that day. What could be more perfect than being here with this beautiful woman, in this perfect house, holding a glass of imported champagne watching the sun going down-and having just become a millionaire?

It was a little cool but they went outside anyway and sat on the wrought iron bench positioned to get the full beauty

of the valley that the house presided over. They needed to discuss the future.

Would they buy or rent? A condo or a house? Would it be a place like this but in the sun? How far would their money go? Should they invest some of it? They seemed to agree on what they covered and would see what the future held in store together.

They had been seeing each other long enough to allow a simple evening together to be a great pleasure. And as the champagne bottle starting to approach empty, Skip phoned for a pizza and a video to be delivered.

As they sat there that warm evening watching the cooler air of the fog settle into the crevasses in the valley they had never felt closer. Yes it would work because they would make it work. If, as it seemed life would become more complex over the next few months, if not for years, then they would handle that together as it happened.

As they ate, they watched Wall Street on the video. They made gentle love in front of the fire place while Michael Douglas played the 'greed is good' scene in the movie to the full.

The evening over, Skip tidied up the mess that they had made and they headed back north to collect Jill's car from Capitola.

As they parted they agreed to talk in the morning and

as he drove off Skip gently cursed that, yet again, he had forgotten to ask Jill for details of the overseas company, and especially the overseas bank account details, and he had forgotten to slip a \$50 bill behind one of the fridge-door magnets as he had meant to.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Time Out!

It was now Tuesday afternoon and the last thirty six hours that had just passed had not been very easy for either Ben Tanaka or Douglas Wilde.

Neither was used to waiting.

Douglas had called to cancel-out on his sister and had been convinced to have lunch with his brother-in-law, the UK Commercial Attaché in San Francisco.

Both had been genuinely puzzled by the newspaper article and although neither of them really minded being included, despite Douglas's show of pique to Dale, they were both puzzled at the reason how it had been published so fast.

Why would Dale rock the boat with a wild leak? One was already an investor and the other a potential one.

Douglas wondered whether, as he had accused Dale over the phone, this really was a crude attempt to play Sato and his bank off-against each other. This, however, did not seem sensible. If they both wanted to buy in to the future of DML there was probably room for them both. He knew that Dale was intelligent enough to know that over the next couple of years his research and development expenditures would go through the roof whether this breakthrough was genuine or not; so he would need more investors anyway. Douglas and his partners had seen the DML stock price drop from almost day one and to have a co-investor like Sato Industries might not be a bad idea. It might even help their reputation.

So, what did the leak mean and why was it leaked?

It wouldn't be the first time that incorrect information had been printed but this time most of the pieces seemed to fit, and that was the puzzle. Under the right circumstances he was interested in investing more money and what was Ben Tanaka doing in town. What was his interest in all this?

He knew that Sato had been unhappy at their exclusion from the first level of funding but it had been at their choice. Surely they broke down negotiations on purpose. No one would have signed the agreement the way it was

and they must have known that. Also, both parties knew that the first financier through the door often loses his investment or has to top it up past the level of sensible funding for the potential return. Like magazine publishing in the early eighties, a controlling interest, or at least a meaningful holding of the shares, in a high-tech companies could change hands at a dinner party-the right diner party-but nevertheless a dinner party.

Should he call Ben Tanaka and suggest a meeting to discuss cutting up the cake? Or, should he just sell-up, take his losses like a man and get out. He was after all just playing the percentage game; there were always high-tech investments in the market and some of them were obvious winners. True, these came with substantially less profits than with the long shots-almost to the point of ordinary banking more than investments-but he owed his partners and their share-holders to err on the side of caution.

A true conundrum!

The Ventura Group, a Bay Area investment group under the personal control of Eduardo Baggi, is made up of investors ranging from ophthalmologists in La Jolla to pension funds in Buffalo. The group had been investing in Bay area technology start-ups since the early Eighties and at one time were responsible for almost sixty percent of all the venture capital that was the life blood of Silicon Valley.

And they knew how to protect their investors.

In 1983, a Boston programmer had taken \$5 million dollars from Ventura to develop a powerful mathematical formula processing program for desk-top PCs. The program was to have been of almost universal design-engineering use from the Lawrence Livermore Labs to General Motors. The tremendously fast number-manipulating program was to do for computer-aided drafting and design what Lotus 123 had done for accountants-enhanced design simulation by computers instead of tremendously expensive physical prototypes. Imagine GM test driving new models on computers first and then being able to trust the results enough for tooling-up production lines with the same program output.

The programmer had shown his early work to nuclear engineers and technical organizations across the country to gain press for his efforts and everyone was duly impressed. But when showing the program to an august audience at the Rand facility in Santa Monica his act fell badly apart: during an break for lunch a Rand mathematician sat at the programmer's demonstration terminal and started to enter test data. He ran test after test until he started to notice a familiar effect. A bug that had plagued his own program for months kept coming up. Puzzled, he pulled a disk from his pocket and inserted it into the machine. He then proceeded to bring up a copyright notice from within the Boston programmers

software.

To the amusement to everyone, except the Boston programmer, the copyright was that of the mathematician; the program was a pirated version of his own work. The demonstration ended suddenly and the man from Boston observed a low profile from then on. In fact, he was never heard of again and neither was the \$5 million investment.

Eighteen months later a unidentified body was pulled out of the Potomac and the only item on the body was a computer disk containing the mathematical formula program-unfinished.

Baggi was not a man to be crossed.

Douglas Wilde picked up the phone and dialed an old school friend who had relocated to San Francisco back in 1979.

'Eduardo. How are you, old fox? Bought any good swamp-land lately?' he joked.

'Why Douglas, is there more DML stock on the market?'

Douglas took a sharp intake of breath: 'Ah, nasty! So you've heard, I thought that you might have. I need your advice. I feel like I'm being played but I can't tell who's first violin. What do you know of Brent Wisenberger? Is he in

Dale Leonard's hip pocket?'

'Well if he is, then it's just so he can gnaw to the other side. He hates Dale with a passion. Brent and Marty Wyman are quiet close though, but I expect that you know that already.'

'Yes, but it is good to hear it confirmed. That is part of the puzzle. I wish that I could tell you the whole story. But I can't at the moment. Suffice to say that we are thinking of increasing our DML investment but we are getting mixed signals from differing parts of DML.'

'Well, Douglas if I was you and I had anything left to take with me I would cut and run. As Confucius might have said, 'he who invests badly, and pulls the plug soon enough, lives to invest another day.'

'The word on the street is bad then?' Douglas was now concerned. 'Affirmative! I would get out if I were you.'

'Thanks. Next time you are in London-diner at the Savoy, and it's on me. I would suggest meeting this week but I need to get back to London for another matter. I have already had to put off a trip to my sister up in Napa. She will not be amused. Hell, I hate these flying visits. Just as your body clock is becoming synchronized it gets thrown out of whack again. Look, I must go, Eduardo. But I owe you, I really do.' And with that short good-bye he hung up the phone.

Meanwhile, after talking to Dale about the rumor, Ben Tanaka had decided to take the next forty eight hours off. He had hung the Do Not Disturb sign on the outside of the door to his suite and spent some hours watching the mid-day soap operas on TV. He was not suffering from the diversity of thoughts that had been plaguing Douglas Wilde. If there was a breakthrough and if there were profits to be made then obviously Sato should be involved.

First he had contacted Sato's San Francisco brokers and they had located an option on a block of shares in DML that same morning. His quick action had bought Sato an option on 20% of DML for only \$12 a share. If it was anywhere near as good as Dale had led him to believe then Sato would make a killing financially and own a piece of technology history. Everyone from IBM to Sony would license the technology.

At the same time, he reasoned, if the rumors were just Dale's way of playing a game then he could probably sell the stock for what he paid for it in the market confusion that was bound to follow. Any way he enjoyed a good couple of years with Sato and he could afford to loose a few brownie points- and a couple of million dollars or so. He could not really lose.

Also that morning he had contacted his PA. back in Tokyo with the task of locating Douglas's West Coast hotel. With true Japanese efficiency, within the hour he had

Douglas's hotel details in his file. He would leave it twenty four hours before calling. It could wait.

The next two days were quiet in Sunnyvale save for the noise of people thinking.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Are You Buying Or Selling?

'Douglas, Ben Tanaka. I'm not disturbing you am I?'

'No. not at all Ben, I was just enjoying an early morning pot of tea. How are you?'

'It seems that you and I are after the same big game.' Douglas guessed why he was being called that morning and opened with the offensive gambit determined to play the advantage to the full.

'Well, Douglas, if you as interested in DML as hard as I am then it would seem that your being in town is also a coincidence.'

Ben countered with his own touch of irony: 'Funny, though I wouldn't have thought papers like the Mercury would have traded in gossip. The financial pages are getting as bad as People Magazine these days.'

He paused for effect and then continued: 'Whatever is happening, we should take advantage of being in the same town and meet up. I haven't seen you since that financial conference in Hong Kong. What have you been up to since then?'

'I have moved into our high-tech acquisitions since then and I must admit that it's more interesting than straight finance. If you are free for dinner, I'm going to be in the city and at a loose-end this evening. How about it?'

'Sounds good to me Douglas. Meet me in reception at seven and we can eat in the hotel. The Top of the Mark is pretty good and I love the way the restaurant turns to show the whole of the Bay area.'

Ben had been tempted to suggest the Stafford Court, but the chances of getting a table at short notice would have been pretty slim: twice running would be indeed rare.

Douglas hung up the phone and sighed. It looks like fate is about to play a part he thought. To good an opportunity to pass up on-and I get bought diner.

Douglas called Ben's room from the lobby of the hotel at

7:00 sharp. He was a punctual man and liked the same trait in others. Ben was also on time and stepped out of the elevator at 7.02. The two men took the express elevator to the Top of The Mark which has one of the best views of the city from any building in San Francisco and the quality of the food is very good; a pleasing combination.

Without a wait, they were seated at a window table and they made small talk until the food was ordered.

Although Douglas did not want to make the running he also wanted to avoid insulting Ben by beating around the bush.

'Well, what's the truth-is Sato interested in DML?'

'Of course under the right circumstances we still want a piece of a prime U.S. chip designer. But not at any cost. As you know, as a company we have become very technology oriented-especially when it comes to high powered PCs and workstations. We see them as the future of computing. And, as the man/machine interface is becoming more and more graphically oriented it goes without saying that all technology-conscious companies will be closely following the standards as they are developed. By the same token your investors must be interested in the same thing: how to keep an investment in the future?'

The fifty million PCs in use around the world might not benefit from these developments or revised standards but

that installed user base will seem like a yard-sale when the Soviets come on stream and then the Chinese - there are potentially more than a billion users who will be looking for the next generation machines over the next five years.

As you must be aware, in an attempt to capture their next market share the most unlikely alliances are being forged. Who would have thought that IBM would openly court Apple! Talk about a marriage of the contrasting technologies: a boutique-manufacturer and the Big Blue whale itself. And, that is just the beginning. More and more companies will merge ideas, not necessarily with the desired results. As you and I know, the answer is not just to throw money at problems. Ok it can help but it is not guaranteed. The really clever technology, whether it is hardware or software still seems to originate with the small companies, the start-ups, the clever who only have the will to produce something without the pollutants of office politics or teamwork. The wizards and *prima donnas* will always start their own companies and if they are lucky they will still be there operating when the juggernauts like Sato buy them out or the money-men like you replace them with their own hand-picked management teams.'

Ben Tanaka had only been in the technology business for a couple of years but he was a fast learner. His opinions had been forged by studying Western methods, mainly the likes of Apple, Microsoft and Osborne: he liked to mix

success and failures. But this was an industry of the unexpected. Not many industries worked the same way because there are few products that can be developed in the same way. Try building a car or a fridge in your garage and then getting Ford or General Electric to take an interest in it.'

'Well Ben, I thank you for your honesty. We are not sure whether to pursue DML or not. We're going to sit this one out and wait for developments. As you know we already have a twenty percent stake and that cost us pretty dear. It would take something special to get us to increase our position at the moment. Have you heard anything interesting or are you going on gut reaction here?'

And then added as an afterthought: 'One financier to another.'

'No, Nothing that you would not have heard also. And you?' asked Ben turning the question completely around.

'Well,' said Douglas, 'the rumor in the Mercury seemed to suggest that the new chip was almost ready for production, but I'm not sure. If it was, then they would be going into production first quarter next year. And supposing that to be true and supposing that the market demand would be high, then DML would probably need funding just on the cash flow problems that would be created alone. Not a bad problem to have but maybe one that would need further funding then we are prepared to

get into. We are talking about tens of millions this time and I'm not sure how far my investors are prepared to go.'

'I see. If that is the case, would you consider selling on part of your original investment?'

'Now I didn't say that we had no further interest and neither did I say that we hadn't a customer for our DML stock.' And this comment took Ben aback.

Was this a game of more players than he thought? He questioned himself. The option that he had bought would give him about twenty percent of DML but what he really wanted was to be their only investor, in effect to control the only good game in town-and as it was most likely that Douglas and his partners had a clause prohibiting other investors without their say-so. To achieve that, he would have to buy out Douglas's people and their papers.

'Listen, Ben. As you said when we started, at a price anything is possible.'

Douglas had been thinking on his feet and had seemed to hit the nail on the head for Ben looked animated all of a sudden.

'Well, Douglas, if you want to get out, then I could ask my people if they wanted to take over your complete position in DML.'

Ben could not quite control his evident enthusiasm: 'In fact I'm not sure what your investment works out per share

but I think that we could probably take you out at market rate which is around \$9 a share, I think,' he added

'That is a very generous offer. But I was looking over the file today-it was my major reason of visiting the Bay area-and I'm afraid our initial investment was around \$12 a share and if we were to get out we would have to take into account the tax position and lack of dividends and with a couple of other things we would need to be reimbursed at \$15 a share at a very minimum. Possibly \$20 if we added everything back. Give me a week and I can probably get authorization for that transaction from our investors for \$15 a share without that much of a struggle.'

Douglas had gambled. He had to act confident. He knew that his total investment to date was around \$12 per share and that he could walk away with \$900,000 and his investors' shirts if Ben went for it. But he now knew that Ben was serious if they had already tracked down the pension fund and bought their option out.

'Look. I'll tell you what. I can agree to \$15 now-on the spot, your whole position, the whole 300,000 shares-if you will agree to the sale here and now. If I go back to Tokyo and try to convince everyone that the deal is good then who knows what may have happened by then. Douglas this is a good deal.'

It was! And not necessarily for Ben Tanaka and Sato Industries. Douglas agreed. The two men shook hands: the

deal was done. Douglas smiled, first reluctantly and then with the bright smile of a friend who has just sold his good friend his old wreck of a car for twice the market price.

Douglas agreed to have his office fax the paperwork over to Ben at the hotel the next day. The food came and both men were more relaxed.

Both for their separate reasons, both thinking that they had pulled a flanker over the other.

Sato now had 30% of DML in stock and a further 20% on option. It had cost him dear; almost \$7 million but Ben Tanaka was convinced that he had bought a piece of history.

Douglas had not only got out of what he feared was a rapidly worsening investment but had also made almost one million dollars in profits.

The whole transaction had taken no more than five minutes and was over before their first courses arrived. They toasted the deal with a bottle of Dom Perignon. With business out of the way the conversation was allowed to roam where it might and the two men relaxed. Had Ben had much time to see much of the area this time? Late Fall was a marvelous time for the ocean drive along Highway One to Santa Cruz. Since the earthquake, which demolished most of the downtown stores, not much rebuilding had been accomplished. The local council had

asked for suggestions from both the merchants and anyone who was willing to contribute ideas. But they had all been so diverse that nothing had been really done in the last twelve months; the merchants would spend a second Christmas season operating out of the tents rapidly erected in time to carry out business for the first; Santa Cruz was as laid-back now as it was in the Sixties and Seventies. His brother-in-law had filled Douglas in with the details just the day before as they had lunched in the Stagnaro Brother's restaurant on the Santa Cruz wharf.

A very good dinner over, Ben signed for the three hundred dollar check and both men parted the best of friends in the hotel's huge ornate lobby.

For the first time at least one of them was looking forward to COMDEX.

It was still only nine-thirty and Ben had parted with the deal done. It had been a good evening's work. It had been a while since Douglas had found himself alone in San Francisco and feeling almost uncomfortably full from the splendid meal he decided to walk a while to let his food settle before the drive back to San Jose.

He left the hotel lobby onto the circular driveway so often seen featured in TV and cinema films and turned right, down the hill, and towards China Town, the largest

settlement of Chinese speaking people outside of mainland China.

After a couple of minutes walk, he reached the bridge that borders one side of China Town and he took the twenty or so steps to the street below and came out through an archway into the Orient.

He had strolled there often enough during day time and felt it safe enough at any time; maybe not if he had over-indulged with wine at dinner but with all his senses working fine there would be no problem. Most of the shops were open and doing strong business for that time of day. The smell of five-spice and ginseng mixed with the bitter odor of green leaf tea to transport him to Hong Kong with which he was even more familiar: the jewelers selling precious metals by the ounce, provisioners supplying exotically boxed teas and spices sealed with bright red labels that attest to their Mandarin authenticity, the restaurants displaying almost plastic-like honey-glazed ducks and the stores with no obvious purpose or signs bellowing out smoke past nervous looking Orientals in dark glasses and black leather jackets.

He wandered to the far side of China Town where it became the U.S. again and back. He meandered through dark side streets alternating with bright main thoroughfares, not understanding the Mandarin street signs or being able to ask directions, as if he was invisible,

or in a movie.

Douglas loved this part of his life. Not the traveling but the arriving. True, it was not always that easy; he traveled around the globe working hard, pursued by telephones dialed in other more distant time-zones by people that could not count the time changes and he often worked on board aircraft or in the airport's bustling departure lounges. He sent and received documents by fax as others would write and receive local letters. But when he arrived he did so in style. He stayed in the best suites in some of the finest hotels that the world could offer. If he was in Paris he stayed at the Royal Monceau - now that it had been refurbished-in Singapore at Raffles, in Munich at the Kempinski Four Seasons and in Hong Kong at the Mandarin. And even better than that he could walk these alien streets after business and drink in the local culture at his own speed.

His food digested, he made his way back to Nob Hill and the hotel garage where his rental car had been valet parked what now seemed like two centuries ago. He had been neither solicited with opium nor captured and held for ransom by the Tong: a quiet almost disappointing evening.

Oh yes. But he had made \$900,000.

Back in his car and heading south to San Jose he thought through his dinner conversations during which time he had made his mind up not to go to Las Vegas for the show. He had for the first time in his life experienced the banker's hell of high-tech investment going badly wrong and considered himself lucky to have got out with his collective investors' shirts.

He had often been ribbed by envious friends who were in the more normal businesses of insurance or general commerce and who viewed his swanning around the world buying and selling pieces of high-tech businesses as an easy life. 'Lots of travel and expenses' or 'money for old rope' as they say in England. Not only that but he did it on the interest charged to the smaller companies and start-ups; he helped people mortgage their dreams at high interest rates. He had always defended his professional calling-the worlds oldest profession-by claiming that he also invested in dreams. He was not the manager of a suburban branch of Barclays Bank in a small English high street loaning a man a couple of thousand pounds to buy a newer car. Where if anything went wrong and the person could not repay the loan, then he probably would return the car and the bank would not lose much. He was also not investing in real estate: loaning a percentage on only sixty percent of a low-ball market value so if the builder went broke either someone else could be brought in to complete

the job, or even be bought out, and the bank would not be exposed. He was not even investing in a completed building; complete with tenants and income, where when you throw a switch the lights would come on or the elevator would go up and down.

What he was doing was investing in people's dreams, in what couldn't be seen or touched, something conceptual that probably could not be tested until it became whole. Sure, the bank employed 'experts' to review the ideas and the concepts as a whole, but how does an expert review what does not already exist, let alone take into account any market awareness? They read and evaluate the same wishful-thinking-based proposals as you do. Half an hour thinking and then they write a report that covers their backsides for every point of the compass and describe a scenario that could or could not happen. Then they then bill you 'x' thousands of Pounds for the privilege.

His business, as every professional investor is aware, was a two-edged sword. And the last week or so with DML had proved him more accurate than even he had thought. When justifying his profession before, he had excluded what would happen if a company that he was investing in started to play games or falsify information. That, indeed, would be a nightmare.

In doing so, the first casualty would be good faith. If you are lucky to have a good contract and one with the right

jurisdiction and you have protected your investment well, then you might stand a chance of recouping something. And, once the gloves are off, you employ more highly paid experts to crawl all over the company's financial and technical records in a desperate attempt to find something of value in the work in progress. At the same time the bank applies to the courts for any unused lines of credit to be 'attached' before they are spent.

All staff and especially technicians and management are escorted from the premises. The building and equipment are inventoried, generally to find that the building is in an area where you can't give away a lease-especially one for fifteen years without a get-out clause-the cars are all leased and have not been serviced as they should have been, the equipment is either 'yesterday's or highly specialized or both and has no real market value and there are coffee cup rings and pizza stains all over the desks.

Then the fun really begins as you find out that the developers who have walked away from any responsibility still have the ideas in their heads and may well have been copying the latest version of whatever they were working on to transferable media or down phone lines and out of the building as you and yours were coming in through the front door. If no one thought to place restrictions on the original inventors and could and would reopen for business down the street, the next day, and with someone

else's money.

Try putting that in a report to your investors.

Douglas shuddered as he thought of what might have happened at DML. He had been wise to get his money out before the company imploded into a financial black hole. But he was slightly saddened. He had genuinely liked Dale and Ben. But someone had set him up and he did not like that. He must be getting slow and what the bank indeed needed was a trouble shooter with almost the same level of technical knowledge as these over-bright wizards that he was dealing with. After this little shindig he would have no problem convincing his fellow partners that the hiring of Marty Wyman was not only wise, but it was overdue.

Even though the evening had ended well Douglas was still in no mood to visit with his sister and had told his brother-in-law that it looked unlikely that he would be able to spare the time. Even though their place was indeed beautiful enough to justify the recently published pictorial essay in California's House and Garden magazine, he had seen enough of Paradise for a while and was seriously considering flying back to London on the next available flight.

Damn it! He might even fly back first class!

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

When the Chips Are Up

The Valley had become used to change. Less than ten years ago all computers were operated from the confines of dust free environments-they were the first non-smokers in many buildings-and were tended by acolytes in white lab coats. But now, as anyone who had the misfortune to drop a bag of potato chips or a cup of coffee onto a PC's keyboard will tell you, they are made of hardier stuff.

The main development lab at DML was the same as any high-tech developers. There were remnants of computer boards, monitors, chipsets, cables and half-formed PCs lying on almost every available piece of desk or counter and no one wore white coats any more. Most of the male employees wore beards or stubble and even the female technicians wore jeans and sneakers. When the company first started, they had dressed as they wished but as the visitors had got more grand they had smartened themselves-or been asked to smarten themselves up-by Management decree. As the funding evaporated, it took the

smart clothes with it; fashion is not productivity rightly claimed the technicians who were happier working as scruffs. Accordingly, as the dress sense went down, the development work came up and productivity had begun to rise again. That was when Dale's designs still worked.

Mike Wasnap's lab was one of the least tidy. It was rumored that a family of four could survive for a week eating the left over slices of pepperoni pizza that lay discarded under the papers on his two desks-and it was probably true. He was old school. His first action when he started to program was to take off his watch. Real programmers only have an idea of what month it is and could not come up with the day of the week if their lives depended on it; they worked when the urge took them and often had the capacity to concentrate on the same complex problem for hours and possibly days without rest. These were the good ones, and they were paid accordingly; a good programmer can earn in excess of quarter of a million dollars a year. These programmers have been known to work through whole Administrations or come out of a trance having missed a war.

Dale had not been the only DML staffer to have worked that October weekend. Mike had known for some time that it was up to him to pull the rabbit out of the hat. He had been working on the Cube ever since he had got it to the lab; some six days now, and fortunately his time had been

productive. It was shortly before lunchtime on the last Friday before the big show when he called Dale on the internal phone: 'Dale, can you come down to my lab now? I want to show you something,'

'Give me ten minutes, Mike' responded Dale. 'If I break off now I will lose more than an hour's thought' He was recasting yet another spreadsheet and his mind was a mass of calculations. He did not realize it yet but he had just wasted the last couple of days playing with sales figures in an vain attempt to make DML look stronger than it in fact was.

He could go no further. They still looked bad and he could not lose any more of the super-expensive overheads that he had been still accumulating over the last quarter. He went to the basement where Mike reigned supreme and slid his key-card into the card reader on the door marked 'Merlin' and the door clicked open.

'This better be good. I'm up there going crazy so we can still be in this lovely building next month. It had better not be that new game of dungeons that you have been trying to get a hold on.'

'Sure is,' Mike said in his understated way. 'Watch this.' And he re-ran the demonstration program that he had partially rewritten written for Dale's meeting with the finance men the one week earlier.

'So, BFD, I could have run that from my terminal upstairs.'

'Nope! You couldn't. This ones not the demo. It's real,' said Mike with great satisfaction. 'We've cracked it. The box of tricks that we brought back from Bristol has actually paid off.'

Dale thought for a moment and then asked cautiously pronouncing every word with a half second pause between them. 'Let me get this right. Do you mean to say that the new circuitry that I designed has been tested and it will function? Or do you mean that you have the Cube working properly?'

'Both. The machine runs perfectly and using our modified design through the testing software shows that we have designed a chip of blistering speed that will make for tears for some people tonight. It won't blow a Cray super- computer off the table-if you could get it on one-but it will destroy any work station produced to date by a factor of maybe fifty or more.'

Dale hugged Mike. The act surprised both men.

'OK, so far so good. Now show me what we have been able to achieve and lets see the source code of the program.' He patted the PC on the head and said 'Tonight this program goes home with me and stays under the bed. Copy it and erase it from the system. Use the secure erase

and then take your copy home as well.'

He and Mike spent the next ten hours working through checking, double checking and checking the results again before they were happy that they could be reproduced time and time again. That done, dog tired, he and Mike called it a night.

He climbed wearily into the driver's seat of his BMW and laid his head over his arms crossed over the steering wheel. He could not wait to get home to Jill and tell her. They had done it. Good God, they had done it! And she would go wild with delight. Even though he had not told her of their, no his, financial problems, this time she would understand. When things settle down again he must make an effort to spend more time with her. Now that things were going to change for the better he realized how she had been patiently at his side; he did not know how she kept so calm all the time. He recalled guiltily, that their sex life had gone to hell and now did not exist, period. Jill had been so physical when they met and it had lasted for months, at least six. He could not recall when it actually stopped. It must have been when he started to spend fourteen hours a day at the office, and if not at the office then in his den alone- with his PC.

They should take a holiday, he decided. They had not had on since their honeymoon and even that somehow had turned into business. He felt guiltily about recruiting Skip

at the time. Was he becoming work crazy? When was the last time they ate out together with or without other people-other business people-being there? When had they last had a conversation about something other than DML. Poor Jill, she must be going crazy with the boredom, and as he drove home that night he promised himself that he would smarten up his act. Better still, he would surprise her: he would buy that apartment in New York that she had always wanted and tell her about the breakthrough when he had done so. He would have the keys gift-wrapped. He'll surprise he with the gift after COMDEX.

Jill was asleep when he slid into their king-size bed beside her and he lent over and kissed her forehead.

She decided not to stir.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

No More Bets.....

Las Vegas, Nevada, is one of the world's premier resort towns for gamblers. It is said that if there is an event

happening anywhere in the world- and that includes political elections-then someone in Las Vegas will 'make book on it'. It is also accused as being a cultural oasis as well as a physical one. It prides itself on being one of the most garish places in the world. Atlantic City has Trump's Palace; Munich has, once a year, in late September, its *Octoberfest* and Giza has its Great Pyramid. But nothing is like Las Vegas. Demographically, it is the fastest growing city in the U.S., even in a bad U.S. economy: it has a much underestimated university, a good tennis environment, plenty of the new liquid gold-water-as the city buys it from Colorado, and a generally pleasant climate if you like it a little on the hot side. It has the world's busiest airport, McCurran International, which is less than ten minutes out of town, and an even closer executive jet airfield, McCurran Field, if you need even faster access to the gaming tables. It has mountains and man-made lakes for sport and boating. The Hoover Dam, the Grand Canyon and even legalized brothels, like the famous Chicken Ranch-if your tastes run that way-are within driving or helicopter distances. There are many first class restaurants offering Lobster and Steak dinners for six dollars a plate and Las Vegas prides itself on having anything that anyone could possibly want either flown or trucked in from all over the world.

Las Vegas is also the country's premier conference

venues with among the city's larger expositions each November the COMDEX show during which over 100,000 computer-related CEO's, salesmen, technicians, secretaries, with their bosses, and generally associated persons congregate in this smallish Nevada city and party. The hotels are choc-full of bodies, and the hotel breakfast lines start at 6 a.m., the restaurants serving dinner through till 4 a.m.

The aim of this industry jamboree is to sell, sell, sell, mainly to each other and the TV cameras and journalists that now cover the show. Most of the visitors see the inside of the transfer buses-taxis if they are lucky-the inside of restaurants within walking distance, their hotel rooms, and very little else. CEO's spend the first two days at important events like the opening keynote speech; so they can be seen by those who are important, and then leave.

Middle management are there for the whole week and spend their time with competitors in customer's hospitality suites, and the salesman and other peons spend eight hours a day on the company exhibits answering the same inane questions and going over the same demonstrations until they could scream. Occasionally a visitor is shocked at a curt reply from a sales professional or by how fast the salesman's eyes glaze over and hunt for another target when they realize that the person that they are currently talking to is of no commercial interest. Most people visit as

peons; at that level COMDEX is purgatory.

Caesar's Palace hotel, the deluxe resort complex on The Strip-the main street in town where it all started-boasts some of the best cabaret acts in the country: Tom Jones, The Moody Blues, and Siegfried and Roy, illusionists who make Bengal Tigers vanish on stage. The lounge areas of the hotel, in common with every other hotel in town are gambling areas: slot machines- some taking five-hundred dollar tokens-poker and roulette tables and Keno.

The highlight of every evening is Emperor Caesar and Empress Cleopatra holding audience off-center of the main lounge. They are accompanied, as you would expect, by many hand-maidens and Centurions in full costume with the main centurion carrying The Roman Standard. It drives the punters wild.

The gambling action runs constantly twenty four hours a day and three hundred and sixty five days a year: there are no clocks. Waitresses dressed as handmaidens ferry free cocktails to gamblers, even those playing the humble nickel slots. Every morning the casinos are littered with the handful that can not give up the slots from the previous night. Show visitors pass them, still being offered free cocktails, as they weave their way from the elevators through the casino to the hotel's main door; this timelessness and hope are Vegas. This is what the people come here for: to gamble.

The DML hospitality suite that year was on the fifteenth floor at Caesar's overlooking the Flamingo Hilton and Bally's on the Strip. The suite was as bright and garish as the hotel's foyer but without the centurions; for a fee they could have been provided but DML's show manager decided against it. The suite measured about thirty by twenty and should have been large enough for sales promotions and yet small enough for intimate sales meetings and it was packed.

It was 9:30 and the first day of the show. All the buyers of any importance should have been seen at the Keynote speech at the main convention center, but they were not, they were at Caesar's with DML.

Since Brent's article for the Mercury News had broken the story about the breakthrough, most of the visitors to the DML suite were industry buyers and Japanese and Taiwanese hardware manufacturers. Dale and Mike Wasnap had received calls from companies all over the globe wanting to have samples of the new chips to test for compatibility with their own goods. They had been politely refused and told that if they were serious about what DML had accomplished then they would visit his hospitality suite at Caesar's; and all the important ones had agreed. All the industry leaders were banging at Dale's door for an audience. Dale was in his element. Canapés and drinks

were at one end of the room and a fast Compaq 486/33 with all identifying marks removed at the other. In true Vegas tradition all guests were led straight to the back of the room first so as to pass anything of interest on the journey. Although the PC displayed did not have an arm for gambling, anyone entering the room knew that it might as well as have. This either was or was not the Future. The whole PC industry was in a bad way financially and the future of many of the juggernaut global electronics companies depended on a few individuals whose brains conjured up the next line of electronics for the consumer and the office.

The follow-up to Mike's breakthrough had been exactly what DML had needed but it had been touch and go at more than one time. The transputer-based Cube had proved that Dale had been following the right path, and faster than any other method might, but they still needed to produce the actual chip and at time they had been really up against it. Had it not been for Mike, then all those DML staff in the room would have been part of the Valley's seven percent unemployment statistic by now.

Skip was on form that morning. He was charming the marketing manager from Tandy with great sincerity and aplomb. The chip would go great with a new multi-media machine that Tandy was launching first quarter next year. Skip had managed to keep a low profile for the last week or

so and had not even returned calls to existing customers, let alone taking on any new business and no one in the office knew why: at the company's greatest hour the marketing manger was not only not returning calls but was nowhere to be found. Even stranger, his Porsche had gone and he was now to be seen driving around in a Toyota Celica. Skip always scoffed at all things Japanese and especially their cars. But Skip was a salesman so there was bound to be an angle.

After Marty's attack of a few weeks ago, Dale had also started to notice Skip's absence. He already knew of Skip's attitude towards Japanese goods and as it was likely that they would be taking more and more business from the Land of The Rising Sun-almost to the exclusion to the West-it would be necessary to ask Skip to reconsider his attitude. That is what they would have if they could have located him: even his pager did not seem to bring him scrambling as it used to. But he was here now and that was what was important today. When he was on form he was one of the best salesmen in the business. Perhaps he has a substance problem; if that were the case it might explain his car going, his disappearances and his general lack of interest at this crucial time. Now was not the time to bring this up; they would look into it when COMDEX was over, and if needs be then some personnel changes would be made. Maybe a detoxification program would be a good

idea; it would probably be covered by the company health plan.

Ben Tanaka appeared at the suite door and made his way with some difficulty past Skip to Marty at the far end of the room. He noticed as they saw him they both started to smile like they were sharing a secret. Marty grabbed Ben's arm and struggled over to where Dale was standing.

'Dale, look who I found with a screwdriver over by the Compaq,' said Marty joking.

'Ben, glad you could make it.' And he shook Ben's hand.

'What did you think of our little demonstration? I thought I caught sight of you at the reception earlier but you seemed to vanish. Do you know what you are looking at?' Dale continued without giving him a chance to answer. 'It is the fastest single graphics chip ever produced for a PC. Sure you can get that sort of acceleration out of a mid-range main-frame, and a Cray will wipe the floor with it but we are talking production costs of under one hundred dollars a chip- and that's in low volumes. It will blow everything else off the table. I told you that we could do it given time.' He paused for breath then continued. 'You have been busy. I understand that a Sato nominee company has purchased an option for around two-hundred-thousand shares in DML and bought out Douglas Wilde's thirty percent; that makes us partners. I knew that would happen eventually. Did you know that there are no other outsiders? I bought back all

but the rest earlier this year-had to put the house up but it's been worth it.

Ben was a little surprised that Dale had found out about his active trading in DML shares so fast but grinned.

'Well, you're right. I also felt some time ago that we should be partners. You know that I have a high respect for your abilities and it was just a question of time before you pulled the big one out of a hat. I have a conference call booked with Tokyo for tomorrow. They will be ecstatic. The main board has been a little embarrassed about the lack of investment in future technology and this is just the sort of news we need for our chairman at the year end. In fact one of our subsidiaries has a new line of workstations that were to compete at the Sun workstation level and this will give us the edge that they have been looking for. If Sun can build a multi-billion dollar empire in under ten years using American management, imagine what our boys in Tokyo can do,' he joked. 'When can we have samples to play with?'

Dale grimaced slightly, 'Now lets not rush things. We will have to talk prices and delivery schedules. I'm not sure that we want anyone second sourcing this product until we are a much more secure company.

'What do you mean? Under the investors agreement that we purchased from Douglas we have the rights to any technology that DML produces at a reasonable market

price. You forget that not all countries have the same attitude towards business secrecy as America does, Sato lawyers had a copy of the that agreement you signed a week after you lodged it for safekeeping.'

'Well, in that case you should think about upgrading your legal department. One of the clauses stated that only the initial investor had the co-rights to the technology and that if the investor sold up then that privilege ceased to exist. It was a non-transferable right. It was in the same clause that stated that if the investment agreement was transferred it ceased to be an exclusive privilege and that the status of the shares changed to nonvoting. We only allowed the pension fund in as window dressing for Douglas: all they ever had as an option, which you just bought. As you know, they never owned any shares outright.'

As Dale finished speaking, Ben Tanaka clutched at the table to keep himself from sinking to the ground. Not only had he become the victim of a financial play but he now did not know what or who to trust. My God, he had spent \$7 million dollars on second class paper. What else had his legal people not briefed him about? Had they done this to him on purpose? Unless he could think fast, and before his call to Tokyo, his career was over. The consequences for him were awesome.

'I just thought that friend to friend we could arrange

something informal,' he half joked.

But Dale had seen his expression change and he somehow knew that uncharacteristically Douglas had not fully explained the deal, and not only that: either Ben overlooked some information or more likely he had not been given the information. Dale had thought that this was untypical behavior for the Japanese; it's not their style to get ambushed; he must have really upset someone.

'Don't worry, Ben. I'm sure that we can work something out. Now if you can excuse me for half an hour I have a couple of people from Sony to talk to.' and he left Ban Tanaka still slightly stunned by the recent revelation, and pleased to suddenly find himself alone.

What was he to tell Tokyo?

It was what Tokyo was to tell him that was more important and that he was to find out from the next day's conference call to his suite. At the end of the call they had simply said 'Ben, come home.' And it had taken three senior vice presidents to do it. Since the Mercury News article had been picked up by the Wall Street Journal he had been faxing his progress to his senior VP on a blow by blow basis. When he had suggested that, they Sato, bought the option for twenty percent of the stock in the open market they agreed. When he came back, and before the meeting with Douglas, suggested that they in fact buy

Douglas out from his investment which would give Sato almost control over DML, they agreed again. Now they tell him that they knew about the restrictive clauses and had assumed that Ben had been aware of them too. Surely he had got around them. He could not blame Douglas. It was not Douglas's fault that he might have bought a pig in a poke instead of a bird in the hand: all business was *caveat emptor*.

At the end of the conference call-and it could not have come soon enough for Ben-he was unceremoniously ordered back to Tokyo for the inquest. To hell with them, he thought, as he slammed the phone down at the end of the conversation. Then he picked it up again and dialed the toll-free number for JAL and booked himself on the next available direct non-stop flight to Tokyo.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

In-Flight

The 11:30 AM Los Angeles international flight to Barbados via Miami was full that November 14th. The

magnificent Boeing 747- 400 lifted gracefully off the ground and seemed to drift in space before the wings gripped the air. The flight crew sat on the jump seats waiting to start the rush to feed the three hundred and fifty hungry passengers, their eyes cast downwards in boredom. They had come from Seattle that morning and would stay overnight in a Miami hotel before returning to LAX the next day.

The first and business class passengers had been greeted on board with a glass of Champagne or a mimosa and were already relaxed. In a couple of minutes, when the aircraft had set into a more gentle slope, the waitress service would begin in earnest: first class would dine on caviar and chilled vodka followed by Chateaubriand and fresh vegetables, completed with strawberries and the cheese board while quaffing fine wines and liqueurs; business class would also have fine wines and champagnes, but with pre- packaged food; and the economy class would have beers and plastic half bottles of wines with their food served more obviously in microwave dishes.

The aircraft was clean but old. It has been bought from China Airlines when it recently renewed its long-distance fleet clearing out many of its older aircraft. A studded outline of Marco Polo trading the silk routes graced the rear wall of the upstairs business class cabin. The paintwork was gently peeling and the plastic panels and

baggage holds had almost shaken loose after the enormous strain of so many take-offs and landings.

There were sixteen crew that day, mainly female and mainly over forty. Since the equal employment laws were enacted in the U.S., many of the airlines flew with older crew members, in contrast with the European and Asian airlines who still hired the younger glamorous attendants for such jobs.

As the aircraft steadied into its upward path, the main cabin lights came back on again, and the seat-belt lights came off. The no-smoking light would stay on for the duration of the Miami sector of the flight. The anti-smoking laws had gone a long way to making air travel more palatable to nonsmokers by firstly banning smoking on any flight less than six hours and then on any flight that started and stopped in the continental U.S. International fliers, especially on the overnight routes to Europe, are still subjected to smoke, although filtered many times an hour, being pumped around the aircraft by the club of addicts that gather at the rear of the plane and who seem to be able to chain smoke for eleven hours straight.

Skip sat in first class and had just managed to connect from his earlier flight out of Las Vegas. That day was only the second day of COMDEX but he had decided not to see the whole show through as it had been more difficult than he thought. He had still been under the influence of DML,

not only physically as a member of staff, but also mentally. He had not quite gotten his mind around the fact that he was indeed free and might never have to work for anyone again. His years of selling had left him with the attitude of a salesman not subservient, he liked to think, but accommodating, helpful to his existing and potential customers' needs. The feeling that he was now experiencing was a little confusing. Although he would get used to it, that he was convinced, it would take a little time.

He was looking forward to being alone with Jill at last. Would it be better than before, or even as good? What if it was worse? He quietly panicked again when he thought of what they had done. Would they get on when they were finally alone? Would it work now that there was no one to stop them? Did he really know how he felt about Jill? Was she just someone else's wife? No! He knew that he loved Jill and that was enough. He had never been a dominating man-not that he was soft, he was just not dominating. He had realized some years ago that, with the right person he could have just as much fun without having to make all the running. He had spoken to Jill from Las Vegas airport. She had just finished packing those few things that she was to take. He explained that he was cutting out early and she should meet him at the airport in Barbados; she agreed without argument. It was getting tougher for her too.

The first class purser refilled his champagne flute with Bollinger NV and offered him the lunch menu. He was not in a reading mood, not even to choose lunch, and when the duty-free brochure was handed to him he placed it inside the menu and tucked them both in the seat pocket in front of him. He laid back with his eyes closed. Moments later the stewardess returned again to take orders for pre-lunch drinks. The service was extremely prompt; he should fly first class more often. He should be careful not to drink too much. His stomach had reacted badly to the many cups of strong black coffee that he had drunk that day and he quietly wondered if he would be able to fill his stomach medicine prescription on the island. Should he have brought more with him? Hell, he could afford to fly some in especially. He laughed to himself, maybe a little too loud. He felt reckless and he wanted to tell someone what they had done. But there was nobody to tell and while he sat and thought random thoughts, the trade show had taken its toll and he drifted off to sleep.

Ben Tanaka strode across the airport concourse and through the gaping mouth of the JAL Boeing 747. He was officially welcomed to flight #63 to Tokyo by a petite oriental stewardess and guided to seat 1A at the very front of the aircraft. Ben preferred this seat whenever he could

get as it sat in regal loneliness at the rounded front of the cabin, unable to see any other passengers from its comfortable perch position. Apart from seeing the occasional crew member it was a little like traveling alone on the aircraft.

He had a very unusual time at Las Vegas to say the least and he needed to get away. And he had also wanted an end to his many weeks of traveling but not the way that it had happened. His conference call with Sato corporate in Tokyo had been a nightmare. He had been accused of being reckless: the buying of the 300,000 nonvoting shares at \$15 a unit in a research and development-oriented company was rash. They had not understood the game of high price poker that he had become involved in and saw only the risks; he had become too westernized for their tastes and it was implied that he had become a liability. What had they expected? They knew his methods and they still sent him. Were they expecting him to change into a shogun warrior when he arrived in the West, complete with sword for dispatching troublesome accountants and errant developers? This was approaching the twenty-first century not the sixteenth. He had slaved for SATO as an intern. He had played his part: he had passed up on vacations, he had often worked all night to prepare the figures necessary for his bosses to shine.

Ben thought through his options. If he followed the

conventional wisdom of working only for Japanese companies he indeed had problems. However, he had made friends in the many western companies that he had dealt with over the years and he would make discreet inquiries when he returned home. He could still not quite work out what had happened over the last week or so: he had come to California on a semi-routine investment check up and he had sunk almost \$7 million in DML shares. Perhaps Tokyo was right; perhaps he was losing his touch.

He sat deep in thought as the stewardess approached and gratefully accepted the champagne on offer. To her initial amusement downed it in one gulp. She returned with another and then a third, he had had a hard day, and she was prepared to return as often as he liked but self control told him that three glasses were enough.

The champagne was beginning to take its effect and the world was looking slightly brighter and he was starting to work out what to do next. Then it dawned on him. His experience with American companies told him that they always spent more on general expenses than they did on research and development-it was encouraged by the country's tax policies- and that meant that they were always hungry for new funding and when DML asked for more he would have Sato's shares converted into voting shares and have a technology exchange arrangement written back into the agreement. No, he was not losing his

touch; but having worked through the situation he realized how lucky he had been; someone was obviously out to get him and it had to be someone back in Tokyo. It had not worked but it had come close. He now had to re-establish himself back into corporate favor and when he did that person better look out. By the end of the third glass, Ben had worked through the logic of the last few days and was content with his decisions-all of them- and he would enjoy the fifteen hours or so before anyone could get hold of him on the phone.

His instincts had been right about Dale and it would work out in the end.

Ben Tanaka would be back and whoever had played him for a fool would regret it.

In reality Ben Tanaka did not know how lucky he had been. Like Douglas, he, too, was supposed to have ordered 'room service' that first night in California after such a long flight and it was only because he had given the Stafford Court just one more try that Marty Wyman was only able to place one set of film negatives into his safety deposit box at the Valley Finance the day before COMDEX.

Marty was a careful man: a man who believed in insurance, not just for the small things in life that are really everyday overheads of living in such a fast paced society, but for the big ticket items. He understood that a

high risk meant high premiums but also meant bigger payouts. And, by telling Douglas what was going on before any further monies were handed over, Marty had paid his premium and was covered against all risk. Not only that but the photos of a very tired yet acrobatic Douglas meant that he was very much looking forward to both being the technical adviser to the bank and moving to Europe; he felt sure that with Douglas as a partner- and an accommodating one at that-he was ready for a change.

Marty had thought long and hard before resorting to such dramatic steps but he had been left with little choice. Dale had used him all these months and for nothing. Faking figures and leaking the information was childishly playing with fire. Had Dale really thought that he could affect market forces without getting caught? That the financial community were that stupid: OK, so Dale had pulled it off this time. But that just meant that next time the deceit would be even greater; a bigger fix would be needed; and he did not want to be around when Dale's luck finally ran out.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Rich Man, Poor Man....

Dusk was falling as the huge Pan-Am DC10 glided down out of the clouds and Skip got his second aerial view of the beautiful coral seas surrounding the island paradise of Barbados. The descending jet circled the island twice and then came in for its final approach. Passengers and crew alike had all had enough of their metallic magic carpet of the last six hours. The journey to the island had been extremely enjoyable for Skip, who had begun to relax as soon as they left Miami and U.S. air space. He had won the struggle with his conscience that he had been waging on the flight to Miami from Los Angeles; he would make the best of being a millionaire. If a Modesto farm worker can handle winning the state lottery then so could he.

The forward cabin door opened and the warm evening Caribbean air rushed in past in the cleaning crew waiting to board, warming everyone it touched. He had forgotten just how balmy it got there: over three thousand hours of sunshine a year, a median annual temperature of some eight-five degrees and only a couple of degrees separated day from night. He then remembered how after, dinner and cabaret, at one of the many five star hotels, he would go to his room change into his trunks and walk out into the sea. The beautiful Caribbean was warm, almost too warm, twenty four hours a day all year round.

Skip's bags rolled down and around the simple carousel and were picked up by his porter. Clearing customs in only

minutes he was to spend the next couple of hours in the observation cafe on the upper level waiting patiently for Jill's plane to arrive.

Customs at Grantley Adams airport had been simply a formality. Guards strolled around with pistols strapped to their sides and smiles on their faces. The tourist planes that came in from the U.S. and Europe were never suspected of contraband; it was the smaller planes and boats that island- hopped to and from South America that were of interest, and they seldom attempted to clear customs.

The porter's face was deeply wrinkled and constantly smiling and humming to himself. His two lonely teeth moved as animated as he spoke and Skip could only just make out what the Bajan porter was answering in response to his questions. He told the porter to wait with him for the bags and to take them up to the bar; he would join him up there. Maybe Jill should have given him the address of the cottage; he could have gone and made sure that the place was prepared.

Free of the aircraft at last that day he needed to stretch his legs so he walked past the taxi drivers and tour company agents holding up pieces of torn card with the names of the people they were meeting there that night. As a senseless reaction he looked for his own name but did not see it. He made his way around the small airport and

saw the car park out front, which at this still early hour was almost empty. It was warm. He took off his light jacket and threw it over one shoulder as he strolled. Having lived in San Jose for some years now, he had become accustomed to warm weather-but nothing like this. He thought that night, you could not quite fry an egg on the paving stones but you could probably poach it.

All around was the warm smell of exotic flowers and the constant barrage of cicadas; his ears had been made sensitive by the eleven hours of flying that day and they were almost deafening. He walked until he could go no further without going back into the departures terminal and turned around, passing the bureau de change window again and climbed the two flights to the upstairs cafe feeling as if he had been weighted down with rocks.

His porter was sitting peacefully by the front door of the bar, and Skip gave him ten Barbados dollars for his time, the man muttered something smiling and swaggered away. Skip hauled open the bar door and was taken aback by the ferocity of the air conditioning. He put his jacket back on and sat at the bar in the center of the restaurant. It was almost empty, and he ordered a bottle of the local brew-a Banks beer. He had grown used to its sweet and gaseous flavor on his last visit and it still tasted good. He had been made thirsty by the flight and ordered a mineral water at the same time. His taste buds were jaded and the

mineral water tasted better than the beer. The barman, friendly enough when he served Skip, had friends at the other end of the bar and was not inclined to stay and make small talk with a tourist. For a while he strained to listen to them talk but his ear was not yet accustomed to the dialect and it was too much of an effort. It was to be a long couple of hours. Hurry up Jill, he thought.

Skip jolted awake almost falling off his stool. An hour had passed; he had managed to sleep bolt upright for sixty minutes. He should fly more often; it obviously worked wonders on his insomnia. While he had slept, even in the fierce air-conditioning of the bar both his beer and mineral water had become tepid; the ice in the water had long since melted. He should have a coffee; that would help. He ordered a black coffee and was given a cup of something that tasted between instant gravy and decaff. He would go for a walk instead and leaving his bags with the barman he wandered off in search of something of interest.

He was back again in under fifteen minutes; he had seen everything of interest on his first short trip.

Jill's plane was on time, at 9:30 exactly he saw the aircraft's huge headlights in the distance and according to the arrivals board it had been cleared for landing. She had

only brought hand-luggage; only a few items of clothing. Partly because of not wanting to take any more from Dale than she had already and partly because most of what she owned would be too warm for her new tropical climate. She too had endured a long journey that day but still felt like a million dollars; she had spent the time planning where they would live.

Living in the Caribbean had been a dream of hers for so many years. She had not known why it had such a pull but it had. It could be that the pace of life is just quieter, or the whole area is just one huge film set, with pirates houses adorning Bridgetown such as she imagined the MGM back-lot. Whatever it was, she was here. In the morning she and Skip would visit realtors and look for a house. They should get a palace for well under half a million U.S. dollars. The difficulty would be in deciding whether to get a house and estate inland where the wealthy live, the film stars and the rock stars with their movie theaters and recording studios, or down on the west coast where the more water-oriented live in palatial splendor in their ocean front houses. This was going to be difficult.

Jill had also traveled first class and found that it made a pleasant difference from the business class that she normally traveled on those rarer and rarer trips with Dale. Dale, yes, she must try to forget him, tonight especially as she suffered badly from jet lag when disturbed about

something; it would sometimes cause paranoia waking her with freezing chills at 2 AM. Tomorrow sipping mai tais on her patio would be the time to deal with her past. Skip was strong when it came to these feelings. He wasn't heartless but he had the brutal practicality of a salesman who knows when the time is right to move on to another mark. Yes, He would comfort her.

The no-smoking and seat belt warning signs had been on awhile now and she would soon be on the ground. She instinctively touched the flight bag that she had been clutching since she left home that morning. It contained not only all the Gibraltar company papers but the check book and the bearer stock certificates. Tomorrow morning she must go to the Royal Bank of Canada near the cottage at Speightstown and rent a safety deposit box. She would keep out her Piaget watch and her few good pieces of Bulgari and Cartier jewelry - her medals and remembrances from grateful and successful gamblers in Vegas-for tropical island it might be, but this time of year it was full of wealthy refugees from colder climes.

The aircraft taxied to a stop and its forward cabin door was eased open. She too felt the velvety Caribbean winds embrace her tired body. The realization of where she was and the circumstances under which she was there brought tears of relief to her eyes; she had escaped. Everyone had told her that she was hopeless-a born loser, but she had

shown them and now she would live like a queen. No one would ever guess where she had gone to and she need never bother with anyone from her previous life again. Barbados has no extradition treaty with the U.S. and if she never again set foot in the U.S. ever then that was fine with her.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

No Gain, Some Pain

Jill was met by a beaming Skip as she came into the arrival lounge. He ignored the traces of tears in her eyes and they kissed passionately for a fifteen seconds.

He lifted her off the ground like a doll when they hugged and she felt good. It was still only 10:00 in the evening. They could go to the house, shower and be at the Sandy Lane for cocktails by 11:30 at the latest.

They walked through the airport automatic doors into the tropical night and this time when he looked at the assorted luggage-bearers and taxi drivers signs one of the names being held aloft was indeed for them: 'Mr & Mrs Westin'; the owners of the house had sent a taxi.

There are two roads from the airport to the west coast: one which goes north through the heartland of the island, cutting across to the coast at Holetown, and the other heading due west, striking the coast just before Bridgetown and then running the length of the west coast. As a courtesy to the arriving traveler the rental agents always instructed the taxi driver picking up clients to take the longer and more scenic coastal route so as to prepare them for the idyllic days to come; out of the high-sided plantations and into the pirate town, almost like arriving in Venice in the fog, when it clears you find yourself in Paradise.

As the taxi pulled away from the airport buildings, which were large considering the size of the island, they drove between the sugar cane fields that make up the islands interior, periodically passing the small huts or chattel houses where the locals live; these small, square, clapboard constructions are hoisted up on blocks which protect them from the raging tropical storms that flood the island two or three times a year. Even here in the Caribbean where there is only one television station on the island and the hours are limited to peak viewing, nearly every house that they passed had a TV aerial protruding from its shanty roof.

The fields slowly gave way to the outskirts of Bridgetown and then to the port itself with what had been

a searing pirates paradise some four hundred years ago and now was a haunt of the all-marauding globe-trotting tourist. The official buildings sat back from the road and were lit in all their colonial grandeur. The top of the ancient bridge over the harbor arched into the night sky and shimmered in the moonlight. The warm strains of jazz being played in a rum-cafe added to the strangeness of the evening and Jill secretly wished that the taxi ride could go on forever.

Skip and Jill sat in the back of the cab arm in arm in silence. As they drove, tropical smells filled the air carrying them off to their different worlds and there was no need for conversation.

They drove through Bridgetown and past the huge Cunard ocean liner berthed for the night, its passengers ashore somewhere enjoying the taste of the powerful rum cocktails and spicy Bajan food while watching exotic dancing. The four-lane highway that simply joined the docks to Bridgetown gave way to a dual-lane main road. The traffic slowed even more and they drove past a succession of five-star hotels and country clubs; past the Sandy Lane Hotel where Mick Jagger and Paul McCartney often play golf on vacation, past the local boutiques selling batik dress and vividly colored Haitian paintings.

Jill was back in paradise.

Another three miles and just the other side of Speightstown the taxi slowed and started looking at the cottages more closely. These were named, not numbered, this far out of town and the names were in people's memories and not on the properties.

The taxi stopped and a tall blond English woman appeared at the taxi door and opened it. 'Mr and Mrs Westin. Welcome to Clamshell cottage. I'm Maggie the agent. I look after the property for the owners.'

'Hi.' Skip responded.

'Its good to be here,' Jill continued ' Hope you have not been waiting here long.'

'No, not at all. I live just down the road in Holetown and I called the airport to check on your flights. Please come in. The driver will take your bags to the house for you.' And she walked into the cottage beckoning them both to follow.

As they walked towards the house they could see that it was a simple wood-sided cottage with a dirt path cut away to make a driveway for the car. Aromatic jacaranda bordered the far side shielding them from their neighbors. Quite a simple place they both thought.

As Skip and Jill walked through the side door, the agent led them through a tiny internal courtyard and turned right and stepped into the open-sided thatched lounge;

through the ocean side they immediately heard the ocean gently lapping against the beach.

Instead of sitting down as the agent had suggested, they walked past her and out the far side of the lounge to the patio, and some twenty feet at the far end of the patio, there

it was, there lay the reason for the journey that had cost them both so much- the Caribbean Ocean-and it was beautiful.

The near-full moon was high and bright that balmy night and, as the warm air carried the gently repetitive sound of cicadas around their ears, the ocean water effortlessly lapped five foot from the patio's white picket-fenced edge. Startled sand crabs playing on the beach gave up their ever constant search for food and scurried and danced into their burrows to avoid Skip and Jill's sudden appearance in their world of otherwise tranquil beauty.

Some moments later, when the Skip and Jill returned to the lounge, the agent presented them both with a chilled glass of Veuve Cliquot and they completed the formalities: keys for the house, keys for the car-a topless and sideless English jeep called a Mini-Moke-and a gentle warning to lock up the internal doors to the patio at night. The courtyard that was open to the elements was not dangerous but it would be advisable to lock the kitchen door which fronted onto the courtyard from the bedroom.

The maid's name was Maria and she came daily: she would make the beds, wash up the dishes, generally tidy and wash anything that found its way to the laundry basket in the bedroom. The gardener Michael, was a Rasta and unless asked otherwise his schedule was Tuesdays and Thursdays and he was also a general handyman-outboard engines, scuba gear or anything like that. He would also keep the patio area clean and could provide some of the freshest and cheapest lobster and crayfish on the west coast.

Going back to the earlier point of security she then said. 'Do lock up the kitchen at night as it would be a shame for anything untoward to happen. Even the safest places in the world are not 100 percent safe any more. Oh, and don't worry, when something does happen here it's seldom a local and they are always caught the next day. It is always one of the hooligans imported from England taking advantage of the ultra-cheap package-flights. None of the locals like them because they add nothing to the islands: they rent some of the cheaper apartments; they don't eat in restaurants; they don't drink in bars; they buy all they need in the grocery stores and barbecue for free on the beach leaving it untidy and without having contributed to the local economy,' she further explained. 'The local people are different: they are more appreciative of where they live. When the Barbados authorities sold off the individual

parcels of beach-front land to developers and private home owners they did so on one proviso, that the beaches stay the property of the people-all the Bajan people-so at all hours day and night the voices of locals can be heard enjoying their warm watery birthright.'

And with that second mild warning delivered the agent then excused herself for the night and said that she would see them some time over the next few days.

'Well. What do you think, isn't it just too much? Warm ocean and cold champagne, my favorite combination.' Jill slurred her speech slightly; it had been a long day.

'This place is like a picture book. I've never seen anything like it.' Skip grabbed the champagne bottle and Jill's arm and they went and sat on the patio under the stars watching the ocean.

'Hi mun.' called a disembodied voice from somewhere in the dark shadows of breadfruit plant. 'What's happening?'

It was a Rastafarian, a local philosopher, and one of the late Haile Selassie's spiritual followers enjoying his evening stroll and speaking to everyone he encountered.

Skip answered the call noncommittally and the traveler got the message and went off to find other more convivial spirits.

'I was going to suggest that we go and have dinner at

the Discovery Bay or even drive back into Bridgetown and go to a jazz club but now we're here I not so sure. Shall we just

finish the Veuve, shower and go to bed.' He suggested to Jill.

'Great.' Jill answered, her mind not quite in gear. 'Sounds a plan to me. Any more wine?'

They finished the wine, showered and went to bed. They fell into a deep sleep as their heads hit the soft pillows and they slept like babies. Neither of them had wanted to make love and neither minded that the other had not.

The noise that woke Skip the next day Tuesday, November 10th, was the sharp rapping on the gate to the yard. He left Jill still dreaming as he threw on a tee shirt and a pair of sweats and went to see who it was. Opening the bedroom door to the kitchen, he was almost knocked over by the wall of hot air that rushed through him into their air-conditioned bedroom.

It was only 9:00 but it was 92 degrees with almost the same level of humidity. The sweat pants would have to go when he got back to the bedroom.

'Mr Westin. It's Maria. Am I too early? I have been sitting out for half an hour and I wondered whether it was

time to come in or not.'

'Yes. Of course.' Skip said sleepily, his hair still spiked through sleep. 'Come on in. Can you work around us ? We had quite a journey yesterday and we may take a while yet to surface.'

'No problem,' the friendly voice of Maria answered and Skip noticed her Bajan accent for the first time. He remembered how after a couple of months in the Islands he had learned to tell a Jamaica accent from a Haitian or a Bajan.

'You and Mrs Westin like some coffee? The supplies put in for you by the agent should include some.' They had not thought of food past the champagne last night and when Maria opened the fridge he was pleasantly surprised to see that it had indeed been well stocked. Typically, almost everything edible that would fit, including instant and dried foods was left in the fridge so as not to spoil-not only because of heat but also ants and cockroaches, which would be everywhere if food was left out.

'Yes. A great idea. Cream, but no sugar,' he answered, now awake, then added, 'and please: Skip and Jill, not Mr and Mrs Westin.' He preferred the informality and it would take some time to get used to his new name.....

Maria put the kettle on and started to rinse out the previous night's champagne glasses in the cottage's small

galley-like kitchen. She had liked Skip's smile and would get on with the new guests just fine. Maria would also cook for those staying at the cottage that she liked: a service not mentioned by the agent as it was offered at Maria's discretion and it had not always worked out in the past. But Mr Skip she liked fine.

Jill turned over from her face-down sleeping position and greeted Skip as he came back into the bedroom. 'Who was that? Don't tell me, Federal Express.' she joked.

'No, it was our maid arriving for her daily duties. And she makes coffee,' he beamed.

Jill never quite knew what some people found in coffee but she was pleased to hear it that morning. They had consumed the whole bottle last night and combined with a few drinks on her flight to freedom she felt a more than a little hung-over.

'You should see this place in daylight. It is absolutely beautiful. He opened the bedroom door wide and raising herself up on her elbows Jill could see through the connecting rooms of the kitchen, the courtyard, the sitting room, the patio terrace and finally the ocean stretching out to the horizon. It felt a little surreal, like watching a TV in another room. She had to get up and wander out to see that it was really real.

She slipped on her silk robe and walked barefoot to the

patio, opened the little picket fence gate and stepped onto the hot sand. A few paces further and she was ankle deep in the warm water....

That day and the two days that followed were a tourist's dream. And as they were on a well deserved vacation they went where they wanted to: they visited an inland pottery and bought beautiful local vases and object d'art for the house that they would be buying; they ate in most the beautiful restaurants and drank cocktails in five-star hotel bars and they ate cheaply feasting on rotis packed with spiced beef or vegetables as they were wandering through town; they drank home-made rum punches made in half-coconut shells that were hacked off the palms growing on their beach by local boys working the beaches, and Jill bought a beautiful red coral necklace from another local working the beach.

The third night on the island Maria cooked a local lobster stew courtesy of Michael and his fishermen friends. He had strolled in the day before looking fierce in his long black dreadlocks and talking in a strange distant dreamy patois. He had tended to the small garden and then sat down next to them at their patio table. Maria had vouched for them; they were friendly and out of respect he had made himself at home.

He took out his old leather pouch and offered them some of the best ganja in the islands; they politely refused and offered him a beer. He put away his 'makings' and helped himself to a beer from the refrigerator. He talked about the beauty of the island and how he had never left it and occasionally helping himself to another beer without being asked, carry on his conversation to and from the kitchen as if he had not left his chair.

After a couple of beers, he offered them lobster at half the market rate and when they accepted he said he had to go and he would be back tomorrow sometime. They should ask Maria to cook for them-she was a very good cook. If they were out when he called then he would leave the lobster in the refrigerator. They did not ask how he would get in and he did not ask for keys.

The island was indeed relaxed.

The weather continued to be beautiful and they could have lived in Clam Shell Cottage forever but Jill was keen to find a more permanent house for them to buy or at least take a five-year lease on. They had been there three days now and had achieved nothing more than a basic sun tan.

Jill knew that they must go into town and arrange for local banking and insurances and any of the other things that encumber our lives and seem to have become necessary no matter where you live. She must also arrange for a safety deposit box-a fairly large one, for all the papers

and certificates that they had brought with them: social security, passports, driving licenses, birth certificates, her marriage license to Dale, her divorce papers from her previous marriage and other general papers including the bearer shares and papers for her offshore company. She had meant to do this day one but the manana of the islands was in the warm air that she breathed and she had not got around to it-she would do it first thing tomorrow.

Sitting at the coffee table in the living area she picked up the yellow pages that were sitting under the phone and looked up banks. Someone, probably a previous tenant, had circled the Royal Bank of Canada in Speightstown. She had visited the bank once before, to change U.S. dollars to Bajan and remembered that it was a small and friendly bank and was almost within walking distance. She had decided that they did not need the Fort Knox-like structure that she could probably find in Bridgetown so she called the local manager and made an appointment for the next morning at ten. That done, she turned her mind to more important matters. 'Where shall we eat tonight?' she asked.

'What do you fancy, plain or dressy?' Came the half-lazy reply. Skip was relaxed on the rattan sofa reading a local guide book. In front of him the evening light was just beginning to fade into a magnificent display of red streaks and clouds that made up the horizon; it suggested that the sun was quietly exploding as it had dipped into the cooler

waters of the ocean.

'We haven't been back to Cage aux Folles yet. That place almost opposite The Sandy Lane and next to that fabulous shop.'

Skip knew the store as it had been the spectacularly colored flowing dresses that the shop was renown for that had made him notice Jill in the first place. 'Yes, a great idea. Why don't you book it while you are near the phone'.

Jill phoned the number listed and spoke to the English chef-owner who answered the phone. She had always thought him charming if a little eccentric and booked a table for 9 PM that night at the rear of the small restaurant. Jill loved that little place; it served Dom Perignon and whenever she had eaten there, there had been famous people at many of the other tables. Last time she had recognized the lead singer from a then huge now-defunct Sixties rock band. She knew the face but couldn't put a name to it.

It was early, still only five thirty and she took the guide book from Skip's hand and led him gently into the bedroom-collecting a bottle of Veuve Cliquot from the refrigerator as she passed it.

This was the way to pass time in the tropics.

At 7:30 the alarm went off and Jill got up to get ready and, as Skip lay there, she felt that she could live his way forever. She had no worries; starting on the flight down she had expunged the memories of Dale and Sunnyvale out of her present and into her past. Looking back it had not been bad- she had seen worse times with her first husband-but there had to be more to life than waiting for other people to come home at night to tell you what was happening in the world. True, she could have joined local groups. But did she really care about the whale or whether plastic bottles were being recycled? Had she cared then she would still be there with Dale. She was reminded of Michael Douglas's speech again ' Greed is American!. Greed is good!' And she felt that she was truly a Good American.

As she slid out of bed, Skip awoke and reached for the half finished glass of wine on the bed-side table. The air conditioning was doing its job; the glass was still drinkable. He finished it and sat up. 'Well, what are you wearing? Luckily I had Maria press my white Hugo Boss silk shirt. I think that I also brought the Zegna black silk trousers.' And it dawned on him that California was no longer his home and that he might not going back for a while, so he better have brought what he needed-and had wanted to keep. The uneasiness, if that was what it was, left him as quickly as it had come. 'If not then I might take

a trip into Bridgetown tomorrow and buy some more.'

'It might be an idea if you wait until we have a house or at least a closet to put them in. This closet is not exactly huge you know. And I wouldn't be surprised if it gets wet in there when it rains-most of these houses leak you know,' Jill volunteered.

Skip was relaxed and this was not worth picking a fight over. They were bound to be tense after what they had just gone through. 'Women need closet space,' he thought.

'What do you think of this?' Jill asked, having just put on a red dress that was going to light a fire in the restaurant. Every man in the restaurant would wish to be him tonight.

'Well, I wouldn't want my granny wearing it but on you it's stunning,' he answered correctly. She had purchased it at Victoria's Secret at the mall the day they bought the option and had been saving it for something special.

Skip opened another bottle and they completed dressing. Considerately, there was a champagne cork, the mechanical stopper kind, among the flatware in the drawer so what they did not consume while dressing would be fresh for their return. Now dressed and quite relaxed if not slightly sozzled, Skip drove slowly through the jacaranda-filled air to their just deserts.

Cage aux Folles was just as Jill remembered it: small,

just seating around twenty or so, and run by the chef-owner who greeted them at the door. He was renowned as a gracious host and handed Jill a pure white rose as she was seated by one of the restaurant's ten servers and runners.

The menu du jour was hand written in beautiful calligraphic script on the menu cards and duplicated on a chalk board over the small bar near the entrance. All the dishes seemed excellent and the choice was difficult.

'May I recommend the Salmon Wellington, if you have not tried it here before,' the waiter whispered as in a tone as if others were not to hear. He disappeared and they were joined by a sommelier resplendent with tasting spoon.

'The wine is easy,' Jill answered before he could share his recommendation. 'A bottle of the Dom, please.'

'An excellent choice,' he commented as he shuffled away from their table.

The couple sat there in silence drinking in their moment of triumph. 'Who said that we couldn't do it?' He joked lightly at Jill's expense. 'I don't know why we were so fussed,' he said slightly more seriously.'

'Don't get carried away. Do you know how lucky we were? We have managed to conjure up 1.8 million dollars without having to use a gun. I still don't believe it myself.'

We are so lucky.'

'Well lucky or not, now we have all this money what shall we do next? Do you have a business or something that you want to get into to?' he asked her.

It struck them both at the same moment that they had never thought through what they would do when they had actually got his far. Had either of them really believed that they would? No, seemed the answer and they laughed simultaneously.

'Well here's to us, my darling,' and Skip raised his glass in a salute. Jill clinked his glass and they drank from each others in the corny way reserved for films.

'Tomorrow we should go to the bank and deposit the papers, and then we can visit some realtors for property guides. From what I saw in the New York Times and Miami Herald we should get something fairly decent-say four bedroom, three baths, separate maid quarters-for around six maybe six fifty thousand.'

'U.S. or Bajan dollars?' asked Skip now interested in how his half of the money was being spent.

'U.S. of course. The rate is about two Bajan to one U.S. Don't worry. That still leaves us plenty.' She saw a glint of worry in his eyes and continued with her pep talk. 'And I think that we should start thinking about where our next million is coming from. They say that money makes money

and now is a good as any time to test that theory. What do you think?'

'I think that I've been through hell these last few days- as have we both- and I think that what we should be concentrating on most at this time is the menu.' He had his humor back and that was what attracted Jill to him in the first place. They both ordered from the maître d' who had been gently hovering off their port side for a few minutes now.

They had decided to keep him waiting and savor the new-found freedom that their money had brought them: no more hiding from people when they were together; no more illicit phone calls; no more not being there on birthdays or holidays; and no more having to go home soon after making love.

They ordered and they ate their exotic dishes making small talk and trying to get to know each other under the new circumstances and Jill did not notice Mick and Jerry come in and sit at the table next to them just as their main courses arrived.

Skip paid four hundred dollars cash for the meal. There was no point in giving the people who would be soon chasing them such an easy trail as a credit card charge; from now they would use nothing but cash. And when the right moment came they would invest in new identities. If

it was twice as difficult and as expensive to buy new passports as the newspapers and crime programs on TV suggested then it would still be easy: money opens doors and makes such things easy.

They walked back into the night air and over to the car. When they had first seen the vehicle they had both cringed, but somehow it now seemed to fit and they were happy to have the warm wind blow in their faces as they drove the three miles home to the cottage. On the way home they passed revelers of all types: they were outside bars full of people wearing straw hats and singing calypsos; there was even a British telephone box still painted bright red and functioning as an actual phone outside The Beefeater Grill. It was only 10:30 and people were obviously still out in force.

As they drove slowly along the road every now and then the glint of eyes greeted them from the darkness: black skinned people wearing dark clothes at night, and there were no street lights other than those attached to bars and restaurants. Under other circumstances-like back in the U.S.- it would have been eerie, but somehow, like the car, it felt good. And the little car found it's way home that night.

The champagne-now two and a half bottles between them that day was working as a perfect medium weight anesthetic; they had come a long way and not just in miles, they were now in control of their own destiny, and nothing

would seem strange to them again. They had arrived. They were at peace with themselves and their surroundings.

Jill and Skip changed into their Batik robes and sat on the patio watching one of the Cunard floating hotels drift slowly from right to left on its heading north past St Lucia.

'Wanna buy some coconuts, mun?' a voice came from nowhere.

'What?' asked Skip

'I say, wanna buy some coconuts, mun? I just six left and I need the fare to get back home tonight,' the voice called back.

"Skip, be careful. Remember what Maggie said about strangers.'

'It's OK. She said that it was the Europeans who caused trouble not the locals.' And he leaned over the fence to see a bedraggled black beach-bum carrying a number of coconuts hanging on a yoke around his shoulders.

'How much?' asked the salesman to the local. 'Twenty dollars'"Hell no, they're only two dollars each in the street market. Anyway, we have some, thanks.' He lied but he had seen something in the man's eyes that he had not liked. Either the man was stoned or he was just plain weird. And anyway, stoned or weird, it made no difference; if he was bothering them, that meant trouble.

'Please mister, I have no money to get home, please buy just four. Four for fifteen dollars.'

'OK, I'll take them.' Skip was just going to close the situation out by doing what the man wanted.

Jill was quiet. She did not want to get involved. She had heard something in the man's voice, or maybe because it was night time and the beach was pitch black and that a man she could not see was invading their space and being almost threatening in his persistence. Normally if you say no to locals selling on the beach they want to move on find someone who will say yes. They know that maybe it will be a lonely female tourist from Toronto and maybe she will be interested in more than the coconuts.

Over the sound of the surf Jill was relieved when she heard Skip say that he would buy the man's goods and walk into the house. Moments later he returned with a twenty dollar bill and gave it to the man who in turn handed him the coconuts and walked off along the beach. Skip looked at the coconuts and cursed. 'Shit! These coconuts are rotten. They're useless. Windfalls that have been picked up off the beach.' Skip had been enjoying fresh coconut milk in the mornings fresh from the fridge-his doctor would have had his own heart attack had he known-and he had thought that he had been helping out the guy on the beach. He cursed again. 'What a shit head! You can't help anyone these days,' and Skip sat down next to Jill

again.

Their visitor had given them both the chills. The prices of everything you buy here made Manhattan seem a cheap place to live. Why cheat them out of twenty dollars? It made no sense. Their good feeling had almost been ruined for the sake of a few dollars.

'Let's go in for the night. I'm tired anyway and there's another day tomorrow,' said Jill.

'You're right. As always. Come on, let's go. That's OK; you can leave it for Maria,' Skip told Jill as she started to collect their glasses. And they showered and went to bed.

At 2:30 that night Skip thought that he heard a noise outside and sat upright in bed and looked at the back of a person ransacking their dressing table.

'Hey! You. Get out of here,' He cried. 'Skip. It's OK, it's a dream.'

But it wasn't and as Skip started to get out of bed the bright yellow, green and red colors of a Jamaica flag wool-hat ran across the front of their bed and out of their bedroom, through the kitchen, slamming the door.

'What the hell was that?' Jill whispered

'Not what, but who, you mean. Some bastard was robbing us while we slept but I think that he has gone now.'

'Which side is the phone?'

'Yours,' Skip answered. 'Dial information and get the police while I switch on the light.' And Skip edged off the bed and made for the bedroom door inch by inch.

'I think they have gone now. At least out of the kitchen. Jesus that was close!

Skip waited at the bedroom door while Jill tried the operator for the local police. They would be right over.

'Skip what are you going to do?' she asked.

'I'm going to get a knife and see whether they he has left yet.'

'The hell you are, and what happens if you find him? Then what? Wait for the police. I'm sure that they will be here soon and they can check the area out properly. Can you see what's gone?'

'My wallet... cash and credit cards for a start. Where's your bag?'

'On the dresser.' Jill answered already knowing the answer and her eyes filling with tears. They had been robbed but they were still alive. They could have been knifed where they lay. She had heard of tourists in Jamaica slaughtered in their beds as they slept; and wives watching their husbands killed in front of them and then being raped before being machete'd to death themselves. She

almost threw-up at the thought of it.

'Well, not any more it isn't,' he replied. But Jill didn't really care anymore. 'Fuck!' she answered.

'Yep,' came his agreement.

'The bastard. Wait until I get my hands on him.'

'No! Wait for the police. Whoever it was might be armed. A gun or even a machete. Machetes are used by too many people here to make one hard to come by. Please stay there and wait'.

And they waited for the police.

Skip looked at his Rolex-he always slept with it on-it seemed like an hour had passed.

'It's been fifteen minutes. Do you want to call the police again?'

'Yes if you want.' and Skip picked up the phone and dialed the number that Jill had written down on a scrap of paper.'

The station duty-officer answered.

'What do you mean they left ten minutes ago? We are less than half a mile from your station. Where are they?'

'Yes. Thank you. We'll wait,' he said and hung up.

'According to the duty officer, the police have been outside for ten minutes or more.' Skip lifted back the blind

on the bedroom window and looked out front of the house. He could see nothing. And then he saw a tail light go by. It was now or never. They would drive by again and the comedy would continue, he thought to himself. He dropped the blind and ran out the kitchen door.

He had not thought about the potential dangers; their robber might still be there. He had not even thought about leaving Jill in the house alone but instinctively ran after the car and prayed that his hunch was right.

As soon as he reached the road he could see that he was right. He could see the uniforms in the moonlight. It was a police car and he chased after it shouting.

The car was moving slowly and as he caught up along side it he could clearly see the stripes of the sergeant's uniform and hear the loud bass of the music coming from the car's radio. No wonder they couldn't hear him. 'Stupid pratts.'

'Quick I'm not sure whether he is still here or not but all our cash is gone.

We've been robbed. Did you see anyone along the road?'

'No, sir. But if he's gone then he's gone along the beach. He won't surface until Holetown or even Speightstown.'

'Are you sure that he has gone?'

'No. We thought it best not to search the house until you came. It might be dangerous.' And as Skip spoke Jill

appeared in the road.

'I reckon that if he had stayed in the house any time, he'd have seen and heard the police car and would have been off by now anyway,' she said.

Skip had not been conscious of the police radio blaring into the night air; the neighbors were though and the street was filling up like an early morning market. Somehow with the arrival of more people, maybe half the neighborhood, the crisis had passed.

All that was left was to tidy up.

The police were efficient and friendly. Sergeant Braithwaite and his assistant searched the house with guns and nightsticks drawn, they were taking no chances. Had anything suspicious happened? Had any strangers been seen?

'Only the coconut man,' said Jill. 'He came around about eleven last night and sold us some coconuts that you wouldn't believe. They were rotten through.'

'And for fifteen dollars,' Skip added as they all walked to the back patio as if they needed to illustrate their comments.

The coconuts were still there but there were peanut shells on the patio table that were not there a couple of hours earlier. Their skin crawled. Whoever had robbed

them had eaten first. The constable noticed the refrigerator door was still open. He had eaten all right, Skip's peanuts, the ones that he was looking forward to, as well. The nerve of the bastard!

'Well, looks like you and your missus were lucky, sir. Its drug related. Always is when there's food involved. The thief needs drugs and has no money and he's either already drugged-up or his sugar level rises with the adrenaline and he needs food. The protein in the peanuts probably did him good; keep him cool, it did. Otherwise anything might have happened when you challenged him.'

Skip almost fainted. He had not been brought up in a rough area and this was the closest that he had come to the drug problem face to face. When he had been growing up in the Sixties everyone he knew, including himself, took drugs-soft drugs like marijuana-but nothing bad happened. Not like the crack heads of today: they're serious and Jill and Skip might have well have been hurt tonight. If the guy had not have run off, then they would have been in serious trouble.

'What now sergeant?' Skip asked with a new found respect for the police in his voice.

'We should take some statements, if you don't mind and then we will ask around. Don't expect to get the cash back but they will throw away any papers that they got, maybe keep the travelers checks but ditch the rest in a

trash-can or behind a hedge.'

Jill was happy to hear this but still everything had gone; her passport, her driving license, her credit cards, her identity and with the off-shore company, her future. The thief has got away with what he could not start to estimate the value of; he had got away with almost two million dollars.

Should they tell the police about the company papers? Would they understand? Could it possibly make sense to them and how much would she have to tell them once she started? They seemed friendly but was she in any state to make that kind of decision.

Had the champagne even worn off yet? She pinched herself. Was this all a case of indigestion, she prayed.

Was there really no extradition treaty with the U.S.? Not that this was the right time to ask.

They would find a lawyer in the morning... in just a couple of hours time. The neighbors outside were still growing in number and they were sympathetic.

'Had they seen anyone.' 'Why?'

'We've been robbed.' 'No!'

'Yes. We have. About an hour ago now'

'No, we didn't see no one!' their neighbors answered.

'Well, thanks anyway'.

They knew nothing but they helped search. They helped Jill and Skip look in the ditches and in the storm drains that lined the roads and flooded with every tropical storm that visited the island.

They searched the grounds of the house next door and found nothing. Then came a breakthrough. A constable found Skip's wallet under their rented Mini-Moke.

The cash had gone but the credit cards remained.

'The wrong bloody way around,' Thought Skip. 'Just when I couldn't have cared less if someone used my cards.' And then it dawned on him that if someone did use them, or Jill's, the trail would lead whoever would be looking for them to the island. There was no time to worry about that now. Skip put the slightly torn wallet back in his pocket and helped look for Jill's purse. They searched for about an hour sweeping further up the road towards Holetown but without luck. And as dawn came, one by one their neighbors wished them luck and returned to their own daily routines.

They were lost!

They were without money, they were without identity papers-apart from Skip's credit cards-and they had burned their bridges back in California. Jill had not said as much in words but her face told him that the sneak thief had got all their papers-including the off-shore company and its

millions.

They both sat on the step of the dream cottage as silent tears filled their eyes.

It was Sunday, November 8th, 1990, and Douglas had been at the airport with plenty of time to spare for once. He had changed his mind yet again about visiting his sister and had enjoyed spending almost a week at her 'show' vineyard up in Napa. Her children, whom he had feared meeting again behaved themselves, and her husband, for once, had not been overbearingly an expat Englishman in his own castle. The flight that day was at 6:00 and he had all day to prepare for it. He had said good-bye to his family over a very decent lunch at the vineyard's first class restaurant. The traffic on the drive down to San Francisco had been so light it had been a positive joy to drive. 'Probably because everyone from the Bay Area is at COMDEX,' he joked to the car hire representative when he turned in his car.

She had not understood either what he had said or the meaning of the bits that she had heard but thought that all the Englishmen she met were cute so she smiled anyway.

'A good trip, sir?' She asked politely.

'Yes, very good thank you. I have just had a marvelous week up in Napa after tying up some business down in Sunnyvale.'

'Pig of a place, Sunnyvale,' he thought under his breath, 'full of bandits.' And he joined the bus to the airport departure terminal.

He arrived at the terminal, checked in for the flight and went to the club lounge. He sat at the bar and ordered his first gin and tonic for almost two weeks; Napa had been all wine. He sighed as he took his first long sip of the drink and looked around on the off chance that he might recognize a fellow traveler. Out of the corner of his eye he caught the headline on the Mercury News "LOCAL WIZARD CASTS NEW SPELL AT COMDEX: profile on Dale Leonard and DML on page 32." He walked to the news rack in the club and picked up a free copy of the paper and read the article.

The article chronicled how DML had fought against the odds to make a comeback and that the new chipset had already been licensed to Sony for almost a quarter-billion dollars; the cash would be used to develop the business. His stomach reacted badly to the gin and tonic and bile trickled up into his mouth as he read further about the major local breakthrough. 'A real industry milestone' that would make Dale Leonard, the developer of the now announced chipset, the first local billionaire in almost a decade.'

Despite the article, Douglas was glad that he was out of the situation although it was a shame because he had

genuinely liked Dale. OK, so he had sold the stock. His partners and investors would understand. How could he ever have trusted the man again? It had been his call; his job was to protect his stock-holders from risk and in his mind all the double dealing told him to get out. And he had made a 25 percent return on his investment within a year which was not bad. He had also hired Marty and that meant that he was on safer ground the next time someone tried to pull a fast one on him. All in all, it had been a successful trip.

On November 15th 1990-a week after Douglas had read about Dale's real success with the chipset and three days after Skip had Jill had received their unwelcome night visitors-Dale sat in his car outside his house and reflected on the last couple of weeks before going in. It had been quite a month but he had brought the rabbit out of the hat once again. DML had investors banging at its front door. Now that he had freed himself from the onerous restrictions imposed by Douglas's contract he was free to take money from anyone he wanted to and negotiate each deal as it came along and he had got his own back on that arrogant bastard of a journalist.

The COMDEX had been the best he could remember-the best anyone could remember-and because the star of

the show had been DML, he had felt electrified.

He had not called Jill from Las Vegas because she always sounded so bored when he called to talk about how the shows were going. But for all that she was still the best thing that had ever happened to him and he should listen to her more. He should pay her more attention. She needed more excitement in her life. They would take off for a month; perhaps take Jill down to Barbados-via New York of course. He garaged his car, took the gift-wrapped New York apartment keys out of his brief case and went indoors.

'Jill, It's okay.....'

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Epilogue

High Tech, Low Morals was written in 1992, and has not been updated as and it was pretty representative of the technology companies before the Internet was destined to dominate society. By 2018, when I decided to write the sequel, ANNA'S GAME, the West had lost both its privacy and innocence to the corporations that developed, promoted and controlled the intrusive and addictive online world of social media. My third book, A CALIFORNIA COUP, written in 2019 tells how the world of politics became embroiled in social media and the changes they planned to introduce.

The Silicon Valley Trilogy by Peter Mackeonis

High Tech, Low Morals (1992)

ANNA'S GAME (2019)

A CALIFORNIA COUP (2020)

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Email the author peter@mackeonis.com

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