

# A Horror of an Office

*A Novella by Robert B. Yonaitis*

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## Chapter 1 - The morning

It was one of those days where Kent had to come into the office, there was no trip to take and no excuse to make and it was one of the two days that he had to come into the office every week. Coming in two days wasn't the big problem it was what to do once there that always got him. Deep inside he knew that once he opened his mouth people would know that he knew nothing about what he was talking about. He remembered that he had hesitated before accepting this position. Unlike other positions he had in the past this would be a challenge. It was not a mature business that was just about a sales strategy nor was it simple because its products were specifically for aeronautical engineers.

He was the first one in, he liked it that way, and he would get his parking spot with no hassles. He walked into the office and passed the cleaning man and said good morning and said something about how he liked to be the first one into the office and he wished other people would care enough to come in early. Tex, the cleaning man, said he understood.

Kent walked into the office and saw a framed article that he had written and a feeling of pride came over him. He was happy because the same article was hanging in his father's house and it was a sign of his success. He was very proud of the papers he had written and yes he could tell that Tex was impressed by his work ethic.

Kent got his cup of coffee and sat at his desk as he unpacked his computer bag. He sat back for a second as his laptop booted up. He could smell the blueberry crème coffee with extra cream -- very strong and decided he needed to take a sip. It was a good coffee and he was glad that he had made the decision to purchase the blueberry crème flavor. He thought to himself, French and Italian roast coffees are overrated, maybe he would write an article about that.

The computer booted up, Windows XP, he was prompted with a message that his Norton Internet Security had expired. He had been getting this message for a year and was unsure what to do about it, however he was sure of one thing, he would figure it out on his own so no one would be able to know how little he knew about computers. He started his email and had three new mails; one was from Acme computers with the subject of "You have Missed Contract Deliverable Dates." A gut reaction was to delete it immediately, reading it would just upset him on a day that he had to be in the office, if they really wanted to talk to him they would call.

The second mail was a request for resource from William. This one made him smile as he thought to himself how it was easy to save money by forcing William to work around the clock and what would Acme do anyway as they were already committed.

The last mail was from Johnnie the VC with a question about sales. This brought a smile to his face and he wrote on a yellow sticky "Remind TC to move a sale from this quarter into the last quarter so they could say they hit their goals and pay executive bonuses!" This in his view was legal because they were not a public company and what the shareholders did not know could not hurt them and it was none of their business anyway. A surge of anger came over him and he felt like yelling at someone but no one was in yet. Just when he felt like he was going to lose it he smelled the blueberry crème coffee and

smiled, yes he was smart and yes everyone knew it just like the coffee he always made the right decisions, his smile turned into a grin as he thought what a great day it would be.

The coffee was gone and he needed a second cup but first he had to hit the restroom. When in the hall he saw Tex he waved, Tex waved back and had a smile on his face. Walking to the bathroom it hit Kent, was Tex laughing at him, did Tex know how little he really worked, were people talking about him behind his back. Did Tex know he did not write the articles? Wait he said to himself, Tex knew he was smart he thought, he made Tex clean the article hanging from the wall in the office and he liked to point out that he wrote it and Tex always commented that he liked the picture of him on it, yes the picture, Tex knew he was smart.

After getting his second cup of coffee Kent went back into his office and sat down, he thought to himself that the people in the office should be grateful to him that the office smelled like blueberry crème in the morning on the days that he came to the office. He closed his mail and went on his desktop and clicked on the video file called threesome, it was his favorite porn clip, and Jumbo had sent it to him over a year ago. He like to watch the video in the morning when at the office, he was unsure why and somehow thought it was the coffee, dam the blueberry crème coffee was a good choice!

When the video came on it was too loud he quickly turned it down, and hoped to himself that no one heard it. Then he thought no one heard it cause they were all too lazy and if they did, so what, he had made all the guys come into the office already to see it and if the girls complained and there was any trouble, Johnnie would bail him out as he had done at Moon Crater Software. Why, why was he wasting his time thinking about such bad thoughts he needed to enjoy the video.

He heard the door open, it was Lilly, he knew it was Lilly from the way she dragged her feet. He liked Lilly because she was afraid of him, he liked intimidating people it made him feel big. It was important to him to be bigger than other people. In any meetings everyone remain seated and he would stand, this made him feel bigger! He went back to watching his video.

He heard steps heading toward his office and in a rush put his hands by his notebook and looked at his video as if he was working. It was Lilly she wanted to talk about a sale. Sales, always a sale, he thought to himself that I have been in for an hour and she thinks I can drop everything and deal with her sales question! He looked up and told her he had to answer a couple emails and would be back to her ASAP. He sat back and continued watching his video and sipping the last of his coffee.

The office was getting busy and he had to get going TC was in and being followed around by his people as he went to get tea, he never understood what was wrong with TC, tea! Regardless of TC's flaws Kent could tell him what to do and he did it. TC had no problem lying to Johnnie or the shareholders and loved cooking the books! He would go say good morning to TC and chuckle as he made his tea. Lilly yelled out "Is now a good time?" Oh no caught, just at that moment TC came out of the kitchen with his tea and Kent grabbed him and yelled to Lilly, "No I have to go over some numbers with TC, I will get back to you..."

Kent grabbed TC and brought him into his office, exchanged some pleasantries and explained how the sales numbers had to be modified to assure that he could get his bonuses and stock options. TC objected and Kent said just do it and send the numbers to Johnnie. TC started heading out of the office and Kent yelled shut the door behind himself that he had to get on a call. He was going to invite TC in to watch the video but said that he needed to set an example and make them work. Just then the damn Norton Expired message came up again, how frustrating, he had to call his lawyers to see if they could sue Norton for harassment but no then he would have to explain it (Today he would learn what the message meant or maybe next week), better to watch the video and next week he would make Tex clean the article on the wall again that would reinforce to Tex how hard he worked and how smart he was, but would Tex know he did not write the article...

## Chapter 2 - Numbers

TC started walking over to his office, he was happy that his tea was still warm and a bit frustrated at Kent. This was the morning; he was going to do the right thing. The right thing had eluded him for what seemed to be years or even a lifetime. He paused in front of the article from NewDayPC magazine; he saw the picture of Kent in the framed article. He thought how ridiculous this is and he remembered. He remembered how Kent had demanded that he put his name on a writing that William had done and it was a big fight. He remembered how he had told William that he would talk to Kent and that Kent liked to have his name on anything published from the company, be it press releases or journals but he thought anything the founder penned should be in his own name.

The fight lasted two days and finally Kent gave in and the article was never printed. However, a month later NewDayPC came out with the article in Kent's name. The ensuing fight was bloody and instead of standing up for what was right TC sided with Kent and said that that was just the way it is and that if anyone did not like it they could quit. When it happened again and he forced his name on an international submission with Acme Software for the WorldWidePC Consortium (WWPC) once again Kent did the same thing and TC did not stand up for what was right. No this time Kent had gone too far he had asked TC to break the law one too many times, he had done it all:

- He had lied to employees
- Lied to the State
- Lied to the Board of Directors
- Lied to shareholders
- Lied to friends
- Even lied to Kent's wife as he appointed his girlfriend to a position that led to Lilly getting fired from Moon Crater Software
- And of course lied to himself

Today, TC would be the hero, he would protect the Shareholders and the Venture capitalist and he would turn over Kent to all of the authorities. He walked back into his office and closed the door. He placed the tea on his desk and opened his top desk draw. He could not believe it, what was that noise low murmuring, he was humming; "just what makes that little ole ant, think he could move a rubber tree plant..." He pulled out his Vodka from his top draw and poured it into his tea. He liked his vodka like Johnnie but the real reason for the early morning vodka when Kent was in was to kill the smell of that damned blueberry crème coffee.

He wondered to himself how did he get here, how did he end up working for such a loser? He pulled out a second nip and drank it straight – who needs tea, today was Independence Day! He started typing his email; he hated email, the thought of it bothered him. He preferred the feel of a pencil in his hand freshly sharpened. All this email stuff was so foreign to him.

He started typing:

Johnnie,

Kent has asked me to modify numbers that would increase his shares of stock, his bonus amounts and defraud the shareholders. While I admit that in the past I have done this for him it was under duress and fear. In addition it has been brought to my attention that Kent is violating licenses with "Acme Software" and that put you and all shareholders at risk. In addition, Kent has violated multiple state and federal laws, much like at Moon Crater Software, and the cost of paying off all of the suits may be greater than the company can afford and at least much more expensive than Moon Crater Software payouts. I am especially concerned with the frequent and unnecessary comments about people because of sexual preference.

Best Regards,

TC

CFO/COO/HR

Blue Marine Software

Yes it was Independence Day. He sipped his tea and thought to himself that this was the best thing he had ever done. He would tell his friends that he could take no more. ..

TC looked at his watch, it was 9:30am, Johnnie would be in the office, all he had to do was hit send and he would be free! He looked at his watch again, it was a Swatch, an amazing watch, Kent claimed his family was involved in the engineering of it and perhaps that was true. He remembered that Kent once said that William was the smartest man that Kent knew after his father and William founded Blue Marine software so he believed it.

He had bought the watch with bonus money that he earned because the company hit its quarterly sales quota, he remember how proud he was when purchasing it at JC Pennloes. What did it matter that the sale did not really come in for a week after, they would have hit their goal if the purchasing department was as efficient as him!

Regardless he had made up his mind, he was sick of lying, he would just be done with it, and no matter what happened he would keep the watch! The watch had a lifetime guarantee! He hit his busy button on his phone because he did not want to be disturbed. He thought for a second that this could impact

his after board of Directors meetings; he so looked forward to the dinners in the “Big City.” Johnnie would buy the best foods and the rarest infused vodka from Russia. What did he care he would buy his own!

- He then thought about the other repercussions, he was safe:
- He was an officer but not a member of the board; he had been careful to never be a board member
- He just followed orders; he was careful to never take a real stand
- He was sure the corporation protected him

But wait, the shareholders were all lawyers, would they be smart enough to know when personal money was interjected into the corporation that the corporate veil would be broke? Of course they would. He would just delete the mail.

But if you deleted an email was it really gone? He was unsure and he could not risk inviting one of the guys in to tell him how to turn off the computer for he might be discovered as a fraud. He decided that he could handle it himself, he would unplug the computer.

He pulled out his desk and exposed the power outlet; he never wasted the money on surge protectors as he knew it was just a scam. He got down on his knees reached behind the desk and pulled out the power cord. Relief, he sat on the floor for a second, poked his head above the office window to see if anyone saw him and he was safe, he moved in front of his desk and pushed it back against the wall.

Pleased with himself he sat and smiled and then started to get up as it was time to work! He got back up and sat in his chair. He spun around to get back to his desk and his heart dropped, he looked at the screen and there it was!

Johnnie,

Kent has asked me to modify numbers that would increase his shares of stock, his bonus amounts and defraud the shareholders. While I admit that in the past I have done this for him it was under duress and fear. In addition it has been brought to my attention that Kent is violating licenses with “Acme Software” and that put you and all shareholders at risk. In addition, Kent has violated multiple state and federal laws, much like at Moon Crater Software, and the cost of paying off all of the suits may be greater than the company can afford and at least much more expensive than Moon Crater Software payouts. I am especially concerned with the frequent and unnecessary comments about people because of sexual preference.

Best Regards,

TC

CFO/COO/HR

Blue Marine Software

He had not wasted the money on an uninterrupted power source (UPS) why was his computer still on? He thought there must be a battery, he did not buy that option-it must have been part of the package.

He slowly turned the laptop on its side and read the bottom, yes there was the battery. He slowly pulled the switch and the battery fell out. He turned the laptop back on its correct side and the screen was blank. He would leave it off for an hour, by then nothing would be left. He looked at his swatch and it was 9:45 he had only wasted 15 minutes turning off his laptop. He would turn the laptop back on after lunch and make the numbers correct, the Kent way. He sipped his tea and opened his second drawer. He pulled out his music device and turned on his favorite ballet. He loved going to the ballet. His boje earphones were the best, he remembered the day that an ex-employee fedex'd something to a current employee. He hated that so he opened it and snatched the headphones and ran the box out to his car. Later that night he would throw them in the river by his house.

It would be time for lunch in a couple of hours and he would tell the story of how he got his watch. He loved how the junior employees stared at his watch and he would explain to them, if you are honest and work hard one day you could have a Swatch! He would explain how Kent's family was involved with the design and how smart Kent was; the kids would respond yes did you see his article and TC would say yes, I had it framed.

## Chapter 3 – Eng

Starting the day before 4am was the perfect thing for William, for many reasons, but today was special. This morning planets (Venus and Saturn) were converging and he would go to the third floor observation platform and direct his telescope to view the sight. The last time he had seen these planets so close together was while on a trip to Florence to visit the Uffizi gallery. A stand out memory of this trip, besides the planets, was the statue of Leonardo Da Vinci outside of the gallery and when he looked at this he appreciated, if in the smallest way, what Caesar must have felt when being given command of Hispania. According to the legend, he came across a Statue of Alexander the Great and was dissatisfied (shed a tear) with how little he had accomplished compared with how Alexander had ruled the know world by the same age. Leonardo had accomplished so much in so many areas it was humbling for William to be next to the statue of such a great man.

The planet viewing on that morning in Italy had been good but it was not as good as this morning. He closed up his scope as it was time for a cup of coffee and to kick off the work day. From the third floor observation deck, William walked to the first floor to make a coffee. The first floor had one desk and one cubicle, the first person would be in by 9am with any luck or would be late and there would be a short discussion regarding the traffic or a long line at the donut shop. But again starting early meant there was no need to deal with anything but the computers yet. The coffee was perfect, a black and strong Italian Roast, the third cup of the day. He took a sip and quickly grabbed all the trash from the night before and carried it out to his trash cans. Upon returning he cleaned the bathroom and quickly washed his hands. He had thought to himself that it was kind of funny that Kent and TC said there was no budget for a cleaning person while Kent would take Junkets to Finland to present papers that he did not write and could not understand. However, there was no budget for two so William could not present the paper he authored and he had to clean the trash. This would bother most but in some ways he felt pity for both Kent and TC. So with his coffee and the latest copies of NewScientist and Lift (the Alumni Magazine of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University) in his hands William headed upstairs.

The second floor was a combination of an art studio for sketching and oil painting, chemistry lab with a cool digital Microscope, four development machines, one server for development and a few iMACS lying around for fun. All of the lighting was industrial grade and vapor proof for safety. There was a workbench at standing height for both computers and other devices. Around the walls and under the stairs to the third floor observation deck was books. There were all kinds of books from the classics, first editions, great art works and more. There was also a large collection of lectures on DVD covering every topic; arts, literature, religion, science, history, philosophy, rhetoric and more. On the walls were sketches that William had done as part of his arts training and on the angled high walls on each side of the rooms William had tacked flags from every country he had been to in the last three years. Perhaps his favorite item was a wingtip from the first plane he ever owned attached to the wall. There was one desk by one of the Bench L's that was a standard fold out table with two computers on it. On the L of the bench was a third PC specifically for software distribution. The chair behind the desk was on wheels for easy sliding around between machines.

This morning's task was to continue to clean up the mess Kent had made over the last year with ACME Software. Kent had sold them something and promised to deliver by a certain deadline; demanded payment up front and then of course did not do the work. So now post deadline with no staff, contractors needed to be hired to complete in rapid order the new tool for adapting a reader and writer for Acme Software flagship product for Aviation. It would be completed in a few days and it would do far less than planned or what was even required in the statement of work – it should be noted that this was Kent's M.O. (Modus operandi).

Writing a simple override for a control was nothing special. Steps needed to be taken to accomplish it with some good code and exception handling then there was the testing – the funniest thing was that there were never any resources given for QA (Quality Assurance.) On the rare occasions that some assistance was given in the end William had wished that he had not asked because of the low level of expertise that the resources had on the platform. Everything was going smoothly and he saw the first email of the day come in, it was Kent, with a Subject of Acme Software and the message body of "How you hitting 'em." His messages were always the same, "how you hitting 'em", "do you have an update", "yeah I was working late too", or something about some customer needing something ASAP and could he get him an update before he had to talk to Acme.

On occasion William would respond that he could use resources and there really needed to be more people to deliver what was promised however, those mails, requesting resources never received a reply, like the one he had sent the night before asking for more resources. The best way to handle the mail was to say fine. On occasion the dreaded second mail would come in saying "can we do a call to catch up on where we were at". William thought to himself that he hated the calls the most; it was not that they were hard calls-not at all-they were just frustrating. You see, you could explain something to Kent and he would not remember it, even the simplest things – so on the call there Kent inevitably said "so tell me what that control does again – walk me through it." William would walk him through it and without fail on that call or one later in the day or the next morning the exact same question would arise again. William was fortunate this morning as there was no mail asking for a call-perhaps Kent was busy watching his porn or talking with TC.

Sometimes William wondered why he stayed, the core of the company he founded was basically gone and he did not have to stay. While it was not always evident, he stayed because he felt that he had a responsibility to people that had invested in him to stay. Even if he could not control anything since stepping down and hiring Kent, he could at least be a voice – Hiring Kent, what a mistake but one that was made and no sense crying over it now if only he would have known the Moon Crater software stories beforehand. However these stories were something that Johnnie and TC kept well hid.

A sip of the coffee and a quick break to walk the dog, William thought to himself that it would be a good day – he might have had no control over the end product or the delivery but he would do the best he could with the little resources he had to try to build in some quality however useless the effort was.

## Chapter 4 – Salt Lake

It was 10:00 am and Kent was watching people walk by his door, always cautious to look only out of the corner of his eye so that people would think he was working. He was working, he had told one of his minions to set the mail server to blind copy him on every mail that other employees received. He would read through them when he sat at his desk. He was amazed at how little work was actually done. By reading their mail he could see if they were having any bad or negative thoughts and if they were he could fire or better said have TC fire them for some made up reason. In the end reading everyone's mail was enjoyable but he had to be careful to not ask questions about mails that he should not know about – that was the hard part. Why did he have to play games, why could he not just tell everyone that he was reading their mail?

Yesterday he had gotten a mail that was sent to Richard, it was a customer who was upset because Richard had not responded to a mail promptly with an answer to their questions. It had made him furious and he went out his door and directly into Richard's office. In confronting Richard, he had to be careful to not let on that he had read the mail-God how he hated that game. He asked "How is the sale to Big Apple going, any gotchas? Richard replied that he was still waiting for Kent to get back to him on a price to put on the quote; this enraged Kent, he told him to make something up and send it to him for approval. Richard might have been a VP but he was so slow on the uptake. Kent liked having VP's around him. In fact the majority of the company had VP in their title, there were only 3 employees not called director or VP in the company and they were called managers. It made him feel bigger on calls to say how many VPs were reporting to him, yes he was very important.

Thinking of Directors, he remember that had to call his Director in Salt Lake, the Salt Lake office was a huge win to him and he was very proud of it. Salt Lake was where Acme Software had their worldwide Headquarters. Kent believed his relationship was so important with them that he needed a new office and it had to be there. This way when he went for his meetings to Salt Lake he could say he had to come out anyway to visit his new division. He hated when he flew out to see Acme, saying that "he was in town anyway" and they were unable to have lunch with him. Now he would not have to pretend he had meetings in Salt Lake, he could plan a few day trips there and meet them anytime. Yes, Salt Lake was huge, when he opened the new office he remembered calling a company meeting and setting up the projector on his notebook and showing a PowerPoint that described the importance of the new office to all of the employees. Everyone had to pull their chairs out of their offices and sit/stand around in the center room, around a 10'x24' space. Kent had put on a suit and presented his slides and knew that everyone had been impressed, this was the big time, and it was Salt Lake. The new consulting division would destroy the competitor GGF, GGF never gave him the respect he deserved and now he would put them out of business. Johnnie was also impressed with the idea and thought it should be a different division, yes he would run two full divisions of the Global Blue Marine Software.

When he first opened the office he had sent mails to all the major company partners to inform them of his prowess, he was indeed extraordinary and this German word best defined his skills his "prowess". He had smiled because he knew William would not even know what this word meant if he said it out loud.

Once the office was staffed with three new employees, a Director, a VP and someone as a manager it was set to go. He had the VP of Marketing create a new web page for the new division and a press release. He had liked the new website it was simple and easier to follow, when William ran the company he had a web site with several thousand pages and now Kent had it down to fewer than 100 and mostly PDFs. William always argued that the website was being killed but he would never let William in on the secret that he had. His VP of marketing told him about a site called Alexa.Com. On this site he could see the ranking of the web site. When William stepped down the ranking on Alexa was around 7,000 and right now it was 426,550 an increase in rating of over 410,000, yes and he knew that at the rate they were going they would catch up to GGF's 4,000,000 plus soon, yes he was smart.

He had to call Salt Lake this morning but had sent a mail first to his Director:

Subject: How you hitting 'em

Message:

Let's do a call this morning; I need you to walk me through the proposal for Big Apple.

Regards,

## Kent

# President and CEO, Blue Marine Software Inc.

He hated having to send the mail first but unfortunately the Salt Lake office had not actually worked out like he had planned, after being open for only a few months they had to fire one of the employees and close the office. Now, he had to call his Director at home and if it was before 9am he had to send a mail first so that he did not wake up the Directors wife. This angered him because he had opened the office, he had given the presentation and sent a mail to the shareholders and now it was all gone. He made sure to fire people and tell Johnnie how they failed and were punished. He had the VP of marketing remove the Salt Lake office from the Website; she knew the drill, as she had to do the same thing before with the defunct Roanoke office.

The phone rang and it was the Salt Lake Director. Kent answered the phone quick and with a harsh voice said, "Frank I have concerns with what we are spending time on out there, and can you walk me through it. I am really concerned with the amount of time it is taking to respond to some of our customers".

Frank paused and asked; “what do you want to know?” This always upset Kent when someone repeated his question back, and he said “what are you working on?” Frank could tell it was going to be one of those calls-“I am working on the Response for the RFP for Big Apple, which is a component of their software and services sale.” Kent responded to him that of course he knew that but he wanted to know what he had to do to complete it.

Frank responded with the steps required to complete the process:

First, I read the RFP

Second, I have to respond to each point and / or question

Next, I have to come up with estimates

And lastly I have to send to you and TC for approval so Richard can include it in the final quote

Kent Responded; “OK that sounds good, where are we with it?” Frank, on the other end of the call, rolled his eyes and said; “I sent it to you and TC, yesterday for approval, and as I said in my mail today I would be formatting the proposal for final delivery to the customer.” “Well good then, let me know when you have an update.” Frank thought to himself that there would be no update until Kent approved the price but simply bit his tongue and hoped that Kent would accept an “OK” and get off the Phone so that he would not have to “walk him through” the whole process again, “OK”. Kent responded with a “GOOD, I have to go now and get on a conference call” and hung up.

Kent walked over to Lucinda's desk, she was responsible for certain Acme Software administration, and asked her if she had heard from anyone at Acme today. He was concerned that he had mailed them over 15 minutes ago as he was looking for a quote for a press release about a new product he had invented and he wanted a quote from the Acme business line product manager. He was always disgusted by the lack of response that he got from these people-who did these Acme people think they were? He went back to his office again and opened the mail he sent to Acme

Subject: Required Quote

Message:

Let's do a call this morning; I need you to provide a quote for a press release.

Regards,

**Kent**

# President and CEO, Blue Marine Software Inc.

Did they not see that it “Required” a response? Did they not see it was he, **President and CEO, Blue Marine Software Inc.**, that sent it

and not Lucinda? He wondered how these big companies survived, if they worked for Blue Marine they would respond to him or he would fire them. He would not tolerate anyone not jumping when he mailed, called or demanded attention. Yes dealing with Salt Lake could be trying but he had to do it. He looked up and Lucinda was at his door, he looked frustrated and asked her what, she responded that Johnnie was on the phone, he responded “OK, I will take it” and asked her to shut the door behind her.

Johnnie started in with questions regarding the numbers and Kent responded that TC would get them out today. Then the conversation turned to Salt Lake and the Big Apple Proposal, he responded “yup we got it, it is just in contracts, and should be done in the next couple weeks.” Johnnie was excited and asked how much the order was for and when could we invoice. Kent responded “we will get that over to you today with the numbers.” Then Johnnie asked when the press release was coming out for the new software and Kent responded that he had just received an email from Acme Headquarters in Salt Lake and that they had responded within five minutes and they were sending it up to a VP to get a quote because they thought it was very important. Johnnie said great and they ended the call.

Kent opened the door and walked directly to Lucinda's desk and told her that he would be forwarding the mail to her that he had sent to Acme Software and that Johnnie thought it would be a good idea to have the quote come from a VP versus a product line manager so Lucinda needed to send a follow-up suggesting it. Lucinda said OK, sure and Kent walked back to his office. Maybe Acme was waiting to respond to see if they delivered on their contract, he would suggest a status call with Salt Lake on that project and make William come down to the office and do the call from there. When William came down he would make him explain the diagram he wrote on the white board the last time he was there, yes he would have William walk him through it. He went back to Lucinda's desk and told her to write to Acme regarding William's project and suggest a status call for 2pm. Yes, Kent knew how to handle Salt Lake, he was in total control!

## Chapter 5 – Partners

Mishka got in the office around 11:00 am; Mishka was a contractor whom William had brought in to work on the JavaScript portion of the project for Acme Software. William had dreaded Mishka's arrival because he knew how Mishka would respond to the project. He would tell Mishka that the goal was to create a JavaScript override by hacking into Acme Software code and that it had to be done today for release tomorrow and there was no time for testing. Yes William knew this would bring out the Russian in Mishka-meaning that he would have no problem calling William crazy and saying "NO way", and "it cannot be done." But William knew Mishka and William knew he could do it, albeit lacking in quality due to the compressed time-frame and lack of a Quality Assurance team. But there would be a fight and William did not blame Mishka. There had been over one year available for this project. However it would now be compressed into one week and there were no resources. This wasn't the worst of the problems; the worst of it was that Kent had said there would be a call with Acme. William wondered if there really would be a call with Acme today, it was hard to actually know, because Kent made this up sometimes because he believed his lies inspired work. He was famous for these, there were several great ones:

- If you work all weekend then the team will go to Vegas
- If you work all night you will get a rare bottle of infused vodka from Johnnie's Stash
- If you work on the thanksgiving holiday you can have a week off in the summer not requiring vacation

While these things never came true, William played along because it was the easiest way to get Kent off the phone and that was all he cared about. But today was different, today William had to tell Mishka that he would need to get on the phone with Acme and identify himself as a Blue Marine Employee. This was problematic because Mishka was proud of his company, mRussia consulting, and Mishka did not lie. William dreaded asking him because he agreed with Mishka, but there was nothing he could do. He knew that if he blew the whistle there would be retribution. What would happen to the people who had invested in Blue Marine if his voice was silenced?

This was not the worst of it, what about their commitment to Acme Software. William understood that many people did not understand what a true partnership meant. In fact companies regularly missed the subtle difference between a partner program and a partner. Acme had a Partner program and this program gave benefits including but not limited to:

- Software
- Support Incidents
- Discounts on Merchandise and Booths at shows
- A monthly journal
- and of course a website

While all of this was good it was really more of a membership than a close relationship. When William was running Blue Marine the company had worked hard to build a close relationship with Acme. They had a true partnership but it was not free. Countless hours were spent making Blue Marine the GO TO partner for Acme and there were only a few simple rules that the team had to follow:

- Never lie to Acme
- Never over-promise on anything to Acme
- Always deliver on time and what you promised or more
- Never hurt an Acme Customer or Partner
- Do not view a partner as a profit center

In return for delivering on the above items a small company like Blue Marine received much fruit:

- Entrance into shows
- Discounts to almost free booths in shows
- Referrals
- Speaking Engagements
- Production of Joint Videos
- And so many more things that were simply impossible to put a value on

But that had all changed, now Blue Marine (under Kent) did nothing without demanding an hourly wage. The project William was now working on paid \$150,000 and William was sure that Kent would never really deliver on his promises. But there was nothing to be done. William was also sure that Acme was a good and smart group of people and if William noticed the change so did they. He remembered years earlier when he was running Blue Marine he was out in Salt Lake at a meeting with Acme. They noted that they considered Blue Marine a special partner although that they could not show any preference as they had to be neutral in the market space; but it was clear that Blue Marine never demanded money and always delivered. Acme was used to partners thinking that they had deep pockets and constantly making demands. William had been proud to know that his approach was the right one. However, one of the first things Kent did was to stop all work for or with Acme that did not pay Blue Marine. Slowly over three years he continued to degrade the relationship with Acme. He did more than just the money. He immediately enacted changes:

- He made himself the point person on all communications and any communications had to be cleared through him
- He no longer helped any Acme partners unless they paid time and materials

- If he made any free product (but not free to Acme) he would cripple it and force an upgrade to the paid product or service.

One could sense the strain; it was always in the air. What was amazing is that Kent did not get it. William knew this was odd but somehow made sense. People tend to think that they are the norm or better, so if Kent was dishonest then Kent believed everyone was also dishonest and he would just be better at it. This was the problem and now he had to tell Mishka that he could not say he was mRussia on the phone and that he had to say he was a project manager for Blue Marine. Yes Mishka would freak – William wondered why he himself wasn't freaking but he knew one day soon and most likely very soon he would have to demand that Kent stop his behavior. However, today was not the day as it could only serve to hurt the customers and people to whom he had dedicated the last twelve years of his life.

Mishka and William discussed the project and Mishka asked for the Specification, Requirement Documents, Gant charts, and any customer specific requirements. William responded that there were none. Mishka quickly responded then the first thing he would do is work on the project plan. Yes Mishka thought, he would build a standard project plan and he could be done in a couple of days, he knew however that he would need to provide testing guidelines for QA also. William responded that there was no time for. Mishka would just need to wing it and that he had all the confidence that Mishka could accomplish the task. Mishka grimaced and nodded in disbelief and agreement. Mishka asked how would he communicate to Quality Assurance what was required and William just lowered his head... Mishka knew this look and said "OK I do both white box and black testing, is there an existing test plan?" Before William could answer Mishka said "No, no test plan I am sure am I correct old friend?" William smiled and said none. Mishka then asked a time frame and William responded we may not sleep tonight.

Mishka smiled and said yes we have impossible odds and no resources but we will do our best! William said yes once more and "We both know that it will have bugs but we can only do our best." William knew that the best they could do would be a hack job and he also worried about the end product to the customers but again he had to do his best. Mishka said well you should give me my contact name at Acme Software so I can introduce myself and get started. William put his head down and paused. Mishka with a confused look on his face said what? Mishka, William said; you need to identify yourself as a Blue Marine Software employee not mRussia. With this Mishka went into a rant, "No this is a horror, I cannot and will not do this, I am mRussia!" William said "No worries Mishka-we were not allowed to communicate directly with Acme so all of our mails have to be sent by Kent. You can just write the mail and Kent will send it." Mishka shouted "then I will ask you the questions and you will mail it to this Kent." William said "One more thing, Mishka, today there may be a call with Acme and you can ask questions then." Mishka said "Well if you need me to be Blue Marine on the call then you introduce me as I will not speak these lies". William nodded in apology and agreement.

The conversation changed and the work started. Mishka looked over and asked William what he was working on and William responded a .Net control wrapper for the same JavaScript stuff that Mishka was working to complete. Mishka looked to William and said; "Let me ask you a question", William said sure. Mishka paused and looked at him:

- No Engineering Team
- No Test Plans
- No Specifications
- No Quality Assurance Team

William responded yes, this is true. Mishka then asked "Is this company wide?" and William responded yes. Mishka paused and said my friend you are no longer in charge or in control of any of these decisions are you? William said no, he was not in control any more. He also explained that it had taken him over two months to get Mishka approved as an engineering resource for this task. Mishka smiled and said "You need to leave here my friend, they seem crazy!" William knew Mishka was right and he knew the day was coming where he would demand changes and that would be the end of his days at Blue Marine Software. But there would be time for mourning later today he had huge tasks to complete. He needed to focus on that.

## Chapter Six – Setting up Lunch

Lucinda received an email in response to her meeting request to Acme at 11:45 that stated the call would be at 2pm and they would send a number for everyone to call into, she immediately forwarded it to Kent. Kent upon receiving the mail from Lucinda hesitated for a moment because he was unsure what the mail was about. He was a bit frustrated because there was no email subject and this meant he could be opening mail that was bad news. He rushed out to Lucinda's desk and demanded that she resend the email and this time it would be done the way he expected it, with a subject! Lucinda, said "Yes of course Kent; "I am sorry, it will never happen again."

Kent went on his way and headed directly for TC's office, he had to tell everyone how to do their job, and nothing would get done without him. "Where were his numbers?" He walked right into TC's office and no one was there. He would wait; yes he would see how long he was gone. He looked down at TC's desk, there were folders carefully labeled; Coffee Receipts, Johnnies Vodka, Office Supplies – Paper, Office Supplies Toner, Postage Stamps, Postage Supplies... Kent could read no more, "Why was TC like this, couldn't he just have one folder, office expenses", yes one folder would be easier. TC always complicated everything.

Finally, TC walked into his office and Kent abruptly asked; "where have you been, I need those numbers for Johnnie, he is expecting them. I have been waiting all morning." He had been waiting and he was very busy, why did they always make him wait. TC responded that he had put the numbers on Kent's desk in a folder labeled "Johnnies Revised Numbers as Per Kent." Kent paused and thought to himself, folders, why all the folders, why couldn't he have mailed them, why was he so against using email or technology in general. He thought to himself that TC wore the computer like a Medal of Dishonor and that he would have to do something about it, yes he would have to do something.

"TC", Kent said; "you need to add another 100,000 dollars in sales to the numbers before they are sent out." Yes add another 100,000 dollars. TC said; "OK" and it was obvious that he had a big sense of relief. On any given day, TC had spent 90% of his time with the doors closed on the phone with creditors, they had to pay everyone late and on many occasions hold expenses and payables until an order came in. Because some of these were months old he had developed a complex filing system. Everything had its own folder, everything had to be detailed in actual books and then there was a separate set of books that he kept online that he used to report to Johnnie. Because of the complex and frankly elaborate lies to the investors and shareholders it was necessary, he had to cover his ass. But today was a good day, he would sell the Purchase Order immediately and pay the bills and all outstanding expenses, well all that the \$100,000 would cover.

Kent said; "Just add 100,000 to the Acme account, they gave him a verbal." TC's heart fell, no there was no money, it was a game, and he had to lie more on the numbers. A Verbal-a verbal would increase Kent's bonus and there would be no money to pay it, however Johnnie would front the company the money and in some later quarter they would roll it back out. OH how he hated doing that, it made him sick. TC responded; "do we have a PO?"

Kent turned as if he was leaving TC's office and closed the door but remained in the office. Kent was so tired of being questioned; he would end it here and now. He whispered but in a firm voice, "TC, I do not like repeating myself, I already said it was a verbal and you constantly question me, this is what we need to do to be successful. Why is that is a simple thing like adding 100,000 dollars to the bookings so hard and need I remind you I cannot be surrounded by this negativity we need good and happy thoughts around here you are beginning to sound like William!" Yes, TC was sounding like William, and when he went back to his office he would send a mail to William demanding that he come down to the office and explain what was on his white board, yes, he would make William walk him through it all.

TC responded affirmatively to making the change and noted that he would mail the numbers to Kent in five minutes. Kent tucked in his shirt and stood tall as he opened the door and headed back over to his office.

Kent walked into the main office door and in front of Lucinda's desk, he noticed his framed article was crooked; he looked around to see if he could catch the person that defaced the article, that he had written, in such a way, they were all jealous, all of them. As he fixed the article, straightening it, Lucinda said; "Kent, We get comments from everyone that walks in on about how good that article is and how good the CEO looks," Kent looked at her and said "Do you correct them and let them know that I am the President and CEO?" Kent was firm on this fact and said; "Lucinda, this is very important, you need to make sure they know I am also the President." Lucinda noted it down and assured Kent that she would do so from now on.

Kent then asked Lucinda what the Acme email was about and Lucinda said that the call was scheduled for 2pm. Kent looked flustered and said; "Lucinda, I said to set up the call for 3pm; you need to take better notes." Kent then walked away from her desk and headed to his office.

Lucinda smiled inside; she thought what a group of loons she worked for. She looked at her notes and of course she was supposed to schedule the call for 2pm. It was a worthless fight to have and she was too busy to concern herself with his issues. Yes "issues" was the right word; there was no other way of describing how he behaved like a little tyrant. He could not get the respect of his employees so he demanded it and fired those who would not give him respect. It was a silly game and everyone knew it was true. But again she said to herself that she could not be bothered, she got up from her desk walked around it to head out the door. As Lucinda was leaving the office for her lunch she moved the framed article that Kent claimed to write to make it crooked again, this simple thing brought her great joy.

Kent went back to his office, shut his door and sat down at his desk. He saw an email from TC and it had a subject of numbers. He immediately hit forward and typed in Johnnie's mail address and the email:

Subject: FW: Numbers

Message:

Here are the numbers, as you can see, I just landed another 100.000\$ from Acme, I am still the best salesperson.

Regards,

Kent

President and CEO, Blue Marine  
Software Inc.

Kent hit send and looked down at his swatch, It was just about noon and he did not feel like lunch yet and there would be a call at 2pm, so instead of heading to lunch he forwarded a note to William, saying that William was required to come down for the Acme call, and that he should plan on coming an hour early so that they would have the time to walk through what was needed for the call. Yes, they would walk through that and what was on his whiteboard.

## Chapter Seven – Lunch with Lilly

Like clockwork Fra Angelo's delivered lunch at 12 Noon, Lilly's sub, chips and soda came, and without fail they screwed up the order. It was a simple order: One Extra Large Steak Bomb, One Large Bag of Chips, and a 16oz Diet Soda, without fail they gave a regular soda and not diet. But wasn't this the way things happened at Blue Marine Software. It made no sense-nothing seemed to go right. She unwrapped her sub and peeled back the bread to have the first taste and while not surprised she was disgusted because they forgot to put ketchup on her steak. She had to do it; she yelled out, yup, they screwed it up again regular soda and no ketchup. Lilly got up and walked around the corner and grabbed ketchup packets out of the fridge and went back to her desk.

Lilly applied the ketchup, there were only eight packets, but it would have to do, and she took her first bite. The sub was just horrible, the cold ketchup from the fridge ruined the whole thing, but she would just eat it cold as she was famished. After some chips and soda she felt somewhat relieved. She sat back and started going through her mail, Web Mail, not work mail. She refused to work during lunch; she would open no work mail. She thought to herself-it is my time and no one can interfere with it not even Kent. Just then her cell phone started ringing; it was her cousin, Mildred. Mildred ran Lily's business on the beach-a small shop that sold post cards, lotion, hats, and such. She had always planned it for her retirement and the only thing that Mildred had to do was to go in there every day and manage the employees and for this she got \$400 a week and should have been grateful. But no she could not even do that. Just this morning Lily had to spend over one and a half hours on the phone with her because Mildred could not figure out how to place an order. After spending the hour and a half with her on the phone she had to spend another hour on the phone placing the order, essentially her whole day! No, she would not interrupt her lunch for someone so incompetent. Even if it was a cold steak sub and regular soda it was better than starting a long conversation with Mildred.

Lilly was just about done her sandwich, being cold made it easier to eat faster, when Kent walked into her doorway and asked Lilly if she had any sales updates. Sales updates she thought, as she slowed down chewing so she could make Kent wait. She had sent him an email every day saying she was out of leads and needed Kent to assign her someone else's leads. She was just not making enough commission, how could she live like this much longer. Lilly finished chewing and held up one finger as she reached for her soda to take a quick sip to wash down the food. Kent gave her a look and she responded by opening her eyes very wide. "Kent, as I said in my mail I need more leads, can't you take someone else's sales and assign them to me. As it is I spent all morning on the phone trying to up sell other customers. You need to provide me with some other hot prospects soon; I cannot afford to live this way." Kent ignored what she said and asked her if he could walk her through it; he wanted to understand where she was at in the process. With this Lilly had enough, she said "Kent, this is my only time for myself can I just enjoy a simple one hour lunch without having to work?" Kent responded fine and walked out and Lilly continued eating her lunch. As she was eating her last chips she heard Kent on the phone with William saying not to worry about Acme, that he had it under control and to come down and there would be a

call at two. He wanted William in early to walk him through some things before the call, but he was working through lunch, that everyone was making sacrifices.

Lilly thought to herself that William just did not get how the game was played. In software there it was all about making the money, ethics did not matter. Kent while at Moon Crater software had accepted countless marketing and development dollars to develop and market software for the International Machine Group, Acme's competitor. Instead of building the software and supporting it, Moon Crater had built vaporware and used the money to fund Moon Crater-which included paying for Kent's trips away with his mistress. In the end they never delivered or marketed the product. William was naive, he wanted to be ethical and change the world. Yes, William was an idiot, she thought to herself. Companies like Acme deserved to be taken advantage of, and it was the game. The software would never be built and if it was built it would intentionally be nothing more than a marketing ploy to get customers to purchase Blue Marine Software's products. Beyond that the other money was long since used for Kent to travel somewhere no doubt.

Lilly thought to herself that these are the things that you learn when you are young. Lilly remembered when she first met Kent and all the fun that they had at Moon Crater, well fun until Kent's Mistress had fired her. Those were the good ole days, Kent, TC and Johnnie would get drunk on their vodka and throw around money. It was one big party and the International Machine Group was paying for it all. But Lilly had played it right, she knew that she could make much more if she just waited for everyone to start suing Kent. Just as she had expected the law suits started coming one after another against Kent, Johnnie would be writing bunch of checks, But Lilly knew the game wasn't in these suits it was in payback. So when the lawyers came to her to ask her to testify against Kent she would not. She knew that it was better to have something over Kent. And oh how she was right, she looked up at her white board at her last quarter's sales and she made over 50,000\$ in commission, at best after lawyer's fees she would have gotten less than that at the Moon Crater suit, Yes Lilly was smart and William was clearly a rookie.

Lilly thought back to her first days at Blue Marine, when William caught her in the office running her other business on the beach over and over again. He was going to fire her. After William left her office she had immediately called Kent and said that he needed to stop her from getting fired. One hour later Kent called her back and said he had spoken to William and explained that Lilly was his hire and only he could fire her. She had been feeling charitable that day and had sent William an email detailing the Moon Crater days; how they worked, how Kent's mistress fired her and how she was loyal to Kent and had never testified against him. Because of these things Lilly explained, she and Kent had a special relationship and she could not be fired. She had hoped that William would listened, but no she heard his rants, always saying that they needed to protect the shareholders, that they had to service their accounts and that they had to honor legal contracts. He was just so naive.

Lilly gathered the lunch trash off her desk and threw it in her trash receptacle and was getting ready to start her afternoon work. She would shut her door and call her cousin and straighten out whatever the tragedy was and then get online to her online auction site. She was about to get up when she heard TC, Braxton, and Dresden walking in to go to the lunch room. TC was very tall and it seemed that they all

walked behind him like little ducks. TC was talking about his Swatch again and how if they all worked hard they would be very successful. That was better than the “when it is all over Johnnie will make sure everyone feels whole” speech. Yes, TC was essential to this game, but he did not love it, he always had to lie to everyone about how successful he was. In fact, none of the thievery would be possible without someone to cook the books! Lilly walked over closed her door and dialed her cousin. Mildred answered and said to Lilly I was just calling to say hello. Lilly became upset and explained how she had just left a meeting to call her and she had to go back to it and she asked Mildred to only call her at work if it was important. Lilly sat down at her desk, opened up her top drawer, took out a bag of cookies and logged into her auction site.

## Chapter 8 – Questions

William packed up his notebook and headed out to go to the Blue Marine Software Office; the Blue Marine office was very small and had two sides. One side of the office was for sales people and the other side was for non-sales people. It was drab at best and there was a feeling of anxiousness for most people working there. Even Kent avoided coming into the office at all costs. William thought of the upcoming call with Acme, there were so many useless calls, you see; Kent had removed all resources from this project and the delivery was already very late. Every time that Acme complained, it was customary for Kent to say that the Development team was stuck and had “Questions”, Questions, what questions. Then Kent would call William and say that there would be a call with ACME and he had set it up to answer the development team’s questions. It was sad and perhaps comical that Acme never noticed that this was all a farce. How could Acme not know, William wondered, or maybe they did know but were in shock.

William would always respond to Kent that he had no questions and would not until he actually started the project. This always angered Kent who would demand that we had to have a question because it made us appear as if we were working. So some stupid question had to be made up like; how do we override a field? William could hear the near disgust from the other end of the phone that the question even had to be asked, and he did not blame them as he was disgusted to have to make up such a stupid question. It was ironic because all that was really needed was a few weeks to do the job properly and Acme had paid for much more than a few weeks. However, William knew the project would never be completed according to specification, that would cost resources and Kent had long since spent every penny received on the project on fancy hotels and dinners.

The drive was a quiet one and William was thinking about what to say on the call. He would report that it was being worked on and they were confident it would be done soon, as they were really making progress; (the reality that he would not share was that progress was defined as they had just started what was a simple project and delays like driving today to the main office were doing nothing to help the completion.) There was also no doubt that he would be delayed at least one hour going back because Braxton did not know how to do something and would need his help. It would be something silly, like how to make a font bold with CSS or something very junior like that. It would have been funny if it was not so tragic, you see Braxton was the only Quality Assurance person and he was not technical in any way. It was sad because there was another person that TC had been close to, who had a degree in computer information systems. He had been very capable at following test instructions, but he was gone. Kent had gotten rid of him in a round of firings.

Kent was funny that way, he did not lay people off he fired them, and on firing them he would give no severance in any way and would brag that he paid their vacation time. However that was the law and everyone knew it but he would make it seem like he was doing something great. Personally, William did not think that Scott was qualified for the position he had held before being fired, but he did not fault Scott. Instead, William just thought that he needed the time to be trained-time that he knew that Kent would never give. Kent believed anyone in development was useless-basically worth a dime for a dozen-and he should not have to train or develop people.

Regardless, Scott's being dismissed from the company had been traumatic for TC. TC had done everything for Scott; he had helped pick his apartment, he went to lunch every day with him, he mentored him in every way one could, and in the end Kent let him go because he like Braxton better, Braxton had no problems telling lies for Kent and Braxton could be bought with fancy drinks and perks where Scott was not for sale. Everyone had been convinced that TC would quit or make a stand with Scott's dismissal, but he did not. William could picture TC's outrage and how TC would work up the courage to say something only to chicken out. In the end TC would not go through with the stand.

William was going to ask TC about Scott's dismissal but William and TC no longer had a good relationship, it was as if TC could no longer look at William because he would see that William knew he was a coward. There was an old expression that a coward dies a thousand times while a brave man dies only once. TC had died so many times and William was sure that the years of working with Kent had taken its toll and that he was now only a shadow of the man he once had been.

For some time William had also been asking himself hard questions; when does he leave, does he tell the partners of the lies, does he contact the shareholders and authorities, was he making a difference? William had stayed, at Blue Marine, because he believed that his voice could make a difference to shareholders and to customers, however, he could see this was coming to an end. The impact of him staying was slowly becoming less then helpful and while it might help the shareholders it could be hurting partners and customers. You see, William had a reputation of always delivering quality software on time that exceeded the specification. Kent was able to use this to lie to partners and this was not sitting well with William. William knew that there were only days left but if he could fight through this last project he would be doing something good.

William was almost at the office and could feel his muscles tense and he noticed his awareness rise. He knew this feeling it was how he felt when walking from his house to the lab at 3am and he heard an animal darting through the bushes. He would tense up and be prepared to defend himself. This instinctual reaction was common for someone going into a fight not someone going to work. William thought about the old days and all of the original Blue Marine Software employees. They were all long since gone. Kent's first action as CEO was to eliminate all previous employees because he could never be sure of their loyalty and as anyone would guess the first person fired after a decade of service was the accounting firm. An accounting firm was unacceptable because Kent needed to control the numbers! The customers and partners were buying from Blue Marine based on a ten year history and not one of

the people that had built their reputation, developers or customer service people were left. Blue Marine had declined from being an ethical company to a Kent company bent on stealing from whomever he could; especially shareholders and partners.

William pulled into the parking lot and parked, he could see Kent in his corner office, of course the biggest room in the place. It had been intended as a conference room but Kent wanted the biggest room in the building. Because of this the conference room for the company was off of the kitchen, had no windows and all of the power junction boxes on the wall. There was space for six people to sit comfortably and not one window. William asked himself often how a man so bent on image to the point where almost every employee was called a VP used a closet as a conference room, this was such a paradox! William got out of his truck and started in to the office.

Kent noticed William pull up and started to plan what he would say, this was always a big question for Kent; He would say something smart, yes he would start off with a "How are you hitting em" and then move onto a technical question, he would ask how was William was doing against the schedule. Yes the schedule, he would pull out his Gantt chart and spread it out on his desk and ask William to explain. Kent could not read it and it angered him that William insisted on using it, he was convinced it was just to try to make him look stupid. Kent asked himself why he couldn't just use a spreadsheet or something, or just draw a picture. In every company Kent had been at they just made the stuff up, yes William was an ass, he did Gantt charts to simply try to make Kent look bad. But Kent laid out the chart and would demand a walk through, yes he would make William walk him through the chart.

Kent got nervous that he wasn't ready to ask the questions yet and jumped up to close his door. He would be controlling of this situation. He would make William wait outside, yes, William would wait and everyone in the office would see his business prowess, everyone but William of course, he would make William feel small. He laid out the chart and taped together the three pages so they would not fall apart; Kent was disgusted that William could not create a one page Gantt chart. Kent took his phone off the hook and laid it on his desk so that it appeared he was on the phone and grabbed his coffee cup and opened his office desk. Seeing William Kent said; " I am on an important call with Asia-they need me to go over some things with them, just needed a new fresh coffee, I should be another five minutes then we can meet." William acknowledged Kent and walked around the office, the entire roundtrip walk was less than five minutes if he stopped at every office to say hello or less than one minute if he made no stops.

Kent went back into his office and moved the Gantt chart from the desk to the table by his whiteboard. He looked at it with disgust, even he could see that the tasks were out of order and that there were gaps in the tasks that did not belong. He would make William explain this, William was always full of himself and Kent would knock him down a few steps. To Kent control was everything. One day he asked himself how he could keep TC in line; TC seemed to be questioning him too much. He showed TC and he fired Scott, yes he fired TC's little friend to show TC to watch out or he would be next!

Kent opened the door and invited William in to review the Gantt chart, and started at the first task. Kent said to William it was nice to see this one done, this first one day task but he was very concerned at the gaps in the other tasks. Kent looked at William, tapped his pencil on the chart, said; "explain these delays, they are unacceptable." Kent then picked up his coffee and waited for William's response. William had to hold back the laughter and then said there is no gap; page two is upside down that Kent had taped it wrong. Kent was enraged, called Lucinda in and demanded she fix the Gantt chart so that it was taped properly and then closed his door. Kent turned to William and said; "You cannot find qualified people anymore." Kent then sat at his desk and asked William, "How you hitting em?"

## Chapter 9 – The Acme Call

William just smiled at the “How you hitting ‘em” comment and said, “It does not look good, we are all working on the project and there are steps to be completed. There is just no way to skip the steps.”

Kent looked puzzled and said, “Well walk me through it so I am prepared for the call.” William thought to himself that there had to be an easier way to do this and wondered how Kent ever won the VC’s confidence. Any outsider would think to themselves, for him to have been recommended by the VC must have meant that he was qualified in some way, didn’t it?

William had learned much about Kent’s background and in many ways it all made sense to him now. Kent’s first real position was not listed on his linked-in account; his first position was working sales for his aunt. Kent’s Aunt, Mildred, owned a company that was the number one reseller for Moon Crater Software. So when Mildred noticed that Moon Crater Software was in financial difficulty and that Ships bank was going to close them down and then sell off all of the company assets, she saw an opportunity.

Mildred told her nephew, Kent, to ask Johnnie, from the club, to invest in the company. Johnnie purchased the company for less than one million dollars in bad debt from Ships bank and immediately went in and fired the Board of Directors. With Mildred’s help Kent was inserted as CEO.

From customer to employee law suits Kent’s time at Moon Crater was a mess. Kent had turned the company into a horror. On one occasion Kent had left a message on a salespersons answering machine where he proclaimed that she was not good-looking enough to interact with customers at Moon Crater. It was all just a mess, but in spite of that, Moon Crater was a 20 year old company and was soon ready to be sold. After paying off the different law suits and other debts the leftover money was divided up. In his next position again Kent was placed in a mature company that had developed technology and markets and his job was to be the steward until the sale of it could be accomplished. The founder of the second company never gave up control and the company was sold and that was the extent of Kent’s experience.

William always wondered why it had taken Kent so long to make the decision to take the position at Blue Marine, but at moments like this it was clear, it was classic. At the end of the day, Kent knew how unqualified he was, he knew he had done nothing on his own, he knew it had been his Aunt Mildred he gave him his first real work experience and then he was a figure head for a founder. This was to be his proof that he could do it on his own, as in this case he would be in control of everything. Unfortunately, he was not qualified and was essentially way over his head. This was why, everything had to be repeated, over and over, he just could not understand any of it.

William remembered being at a trade show in LA and during a quiet moment he had met a former Moon Crater employee. The Moon Crater employee had stopped and talked for a bit with William. The woman had asked if Kent was still travelling as much as possible, William said yes, and she started laughing. She said they had never figured it out, was it just that he did not like to work or did he truly dislike being with his family as much as it seemed. William had heard from Lilly all of the stories about

all of Kent's extra-marital affairs and how Johnnie had to force him to leave his girlfriend and go back to his wife, but he was surprised that it was such public and common knowledge.

William walked through the process and the steps and was hoping that that would be the end of it till the call, no such luck. Kent said, "If we cut out the QA Step from each task and do just one big QA at the end couldn't we save time?" William looked confused, he thought, couldn't you save time by not putting a roof on a house!

"No Kent", William said, "if we skip the unit testing we risk turning minor defects into hard to find larger defects that can hurt the customer and be hard to detect by support".

Kent looked confused, and said, "Defects, what do you mean?"

William replied, "Defects, Bugs."

Kent got an angry look on his face and said, "why do you have to make up names for bugs, just call them bugs, why do developers have to use words to make their bugs seem better, maybe you guys should work harder to make sure there are no bugs."

"William", Kent said, "Why don't we skip all unit testing and have Braxton do all of the testing, this will pull in the dates?"

William paused for a moment and replied, "Well that is not how you develop software, it really cannot be skipped"

Kent replied, "fine" and then said "lets walk over to the Hotel and discuss the call"

Kent and William walked across the parking lot then crossed the street to the Hotel. It was lunch time and the Hotel had a bit of a crowd so Kent suggested they sit at the bar. William thought what a waste, he could be working on the project but instead he had to go sit at a bar. These walks to the Scepter hotel were not only common they were annoying. Kent and William sat at the bar, William ordered a coffee.

"Come on, man up William" Kent said, "Have a Vodka, the good stuff, Let's have a shot it will take the edge off of the call and you won't be too buzzed to drive" Kent then said, "do you want something to eat".

William wanted nothing, he wanted to do the call and get back to work, this fairy tale was easy for Kent to play but William knew he would be working late into the night and this was simply a waste of time. Knowing that it would take longer to say no and just go William said, "Sure I will have a house salad."

"Salad, Salad?" Kent said; "let me order for you"

William thought to himself, here we go again, something ridiculous would be ordered and it would be the most expensive thing on the menu. Then Kent would say, "If you want lunches like this in the future you got to keep hitting homeruns!" Kent ordered the escargot, some rare goat cheese and some ham

from Spain. When the food came there was enough for perhaps one person, classic Kent, he had no idea what he was doing but had to be in control. William did not mind much because he was not hungry and just wanted a salad.

“William”, Kent said, “I am concerned that Acme is upset because we are not done the project yet, we keep having delays, three weeks ago you said it would be done in three weeks and it is still not done, what can we do to get this done”

William Responded, “Kent, the estimates only work when you allow me to do the work, when you pull me off the project to do work for Braxton because he is not qualified or to work on other projects-then the work on the Acme project cannot be done, thus we miss the schedule. “

Kent replied, “Why are there always excuses, you just need to get it done, after the call you will not be interrupted again until the project is done, will that work for you?”

William responded, “Sure” and had a drink of his water.

They then discussed the call and William explained the work just needed to be done and it would take the time required to complete it. There were no shortcuts to take. It was already cut to the bone and then end result would be less than was originally promised but Acme had not noticed and approved the SOW. Kent explained he would just start the call and allow William to do all of the talking. He would get on and introduce himself as the CEO and then turn it over to William. The call would be short because William had not asked for it, did not need it, or consider the call to be at all helpful. There would be the fake question and the answer to the fake question and then the call would be over.

On the way back to the office Kent explained that Braxton was having a problem with some web site and after the call William would be required to spend five minutes to help him figure out the issue.

William thought to himself, not even ten minutes had passed since the promise of no more interruptions before the next interruption was announced.

The call was at 2pm prompt, and William was shocked, Acme was no longer saying everything was fine, in fact the Acme project manager said very clearly that if the task was not completed soon that they would have to take legal steps. William was so happy he could cry. Someone had finally caught onto Kent’s games and they would have no more of it. Acme said they did not care what the reason was or what questions there were but=2 0they wanted it done or they would kill the project and seek other remedies! You could see the sweat on Kent’s face and the general nervousness, Kent became defensive and explained that they had to do all the testing and that they could not skip these steps or there would be poor quality. The Acme project manager seemed unimpressed, said that he had to get on another call, and hung up.

Kent turned to William and asked, ‘So what do you think?’

William responded, ‘Well if I was them I would be upset also, you have put this project off for about 8 months’

“So how long do you think it is going to take”, Kent said.

William responded, “It will take the three weeks to complete including the install and full QA, however we will have the full components in unit testing by maybe 10pm tonight, that is if we have enough gas and everyone can stay”

Kent said, “Great, let’s see if we can pull it in a bit, forget about Braxton, just go back to your lab and get to work”

William got back in his truck and headed back north, what a joy to get out of there. William had a little faith that things would start to change, Acme had caught onto the fact that Blue Marine could no longer be trusted, Yes, William was sad, as he had built the 10 year relationship based on trust and Kent had ruined it in short order.

## Chapter 10 - Plotting

After William left Kent immediately went to see what Braxton was doing. "Braxton how you hitting' em", Kent said. Braxton reviewed some errors with Kent and said that in order to go forward he would need to have some of William's time to figure out the problems. Braxton said that he wanted to get it done. It was very important and there were definite errors. The errors that he had were with the airFly product. Braxton hated asking William questions about airFly. He explained to Kent that William would get on his soap box as to how great airFly and the API for it were and that there were no support requests in over five years that were not related to training. Kent responded "Yes, he thinks he is so smart and better than everyone else." Braxton looked up from his computer and said; "Well he may be so smart but he does not have his name on an article hanging by Lucinda's desk like you do". Kent smiled, yes he was smarter than William, he wrote the article, and everyone knew it! Emboldened by the positive comments from Braxton he told Braxton to call William after Kent left, William could help him when driving, and this would not hurt the schedule at all.

With the first point settled they moved onto the second topic, required testing. Kent had hated calling it Quality Assurance it was testing, and in his mind if you knew what you were testing you did not need a test plan. The whole thing was just distasteful and Kent thought it was absurd, why did William always make it so difficult. He remembered William saying that developers would do white box testing and then the quality assurance people would do black box testing. Yes, William was just lazy and if he did his job right, his white box testing, then there would be no problem. If William could do it correctly there would be no testing required. Kent turned to Braxton and proclaimed, "Do not worry about testing the new product coming out; we will ship it with only white box testing". There was no need to do all this black box testing and there was no need for testing, William would just have to tell the contractors to perform the proper testing. Kent then turned to Braxton and said that he was having problems with his mail. Kent was receiving the mail sent to every employee and the filters that Braxton set up were not working correctly so he was getting confused between mails sent to him and mails that he was monitoring. In error was talking about things that he should not have known about.

Kent and Braxton walked back across the hall to his office. He logged into his machine and turned it over to Braxton to look at the filter. Just when Braxton logged onto Kent's notebook the Norton message came up saying that the Norton Internet Security product had expired. Kent noticed but said nothing and anxiously waited to see how Braxton reacted to the message. Kent was sure it would irritate Braxton. "Kent", Braxton said; "you need to get TC over here to update your internet security as your machine is at risk, TC had already done all of our machines." TC! How did Kent just know it was TC who was to blame for this, he was at risk and it was TC's fault! Kent called TC and demanded he come in the office. When TC walked in Kent shouted; "TC for about a year I have been getting the message that Internet Security had expired and now Braxton tells me that you were supposed to take care of this for everyone!" TC looked a bit flustered and simply stated that he had sent everyone in the company an email, and the steps to upgrade the license were included. TC had Braxton search Kent's inbox for the text, "Important Steps to add new Norton License." The search returned about nine items; this was

because the email server was set up to send Kent a copy of every mail received by every employee. TC said to Braxton; “just follow those steps and you will be a set.” TC then turned and walked out of the office, he looked back often as he walked to his office because he was afraid that they would come running out for him if they had a problem.

Braxton installed the update and then looked to see what the error was with the filters, he found that there was no error with the filter and the only issue was that Kent had changed the method of sorting messages to not use groups. Kent seemed happy and blamed it all on TC. Kent then told Braxton to shut the door so they could walk through some things. Kent informed Braxton that they had hired an Ex Acme Employee and that they were going to be firing William. It was very important for them to make sure they had the entire source for the products. Braxton responded that they had the source from the last time that Kent had planned to fire William. Kent got a frustrated look on his face and said can you just do it? Braxton said of course and then asked Kent if the new person would be qualified and would they be able to write code? Kent explained yes and while he had to promise the new person that they could continue to do useless things like work with standards bodies that they would soon get him under control. Kent had no respect for developers and was convinced that they always talked in code to hide how little they worked. Braxton asked if the new person that had worked with Acme knew the plans, and Kent responded that he had been hinting around at the fact.

Braxton left and went back across the hall to his cube, he hopped immediately on the phone and called William, he heard the beep that indicated that William was on another call. William was on the phone with Mishka, Mishka had been doing some testing of the JavaScript and he identified that the deployment had issues. This was odd because the whole deployment code of the product was done by outside contractors that Blue marine had subcontracted the ACME deal out to, Young World Technology Group. The Young world contractor had worked on the components and delivered them to Braxton to test over six months ago.

William was spending time on the phone with Mishka, from what he could tell was that there was an override of the component but no receiver was coded to turn things on or off. This was simply amazing to William as this was perhaps the easiest thing for them to test and this error indicated that they never did any testing. William was always suspicious that they were never really testing but this was beyond negligent. When talking to Mishka he had noticed that the office was calling in but he did not click over because he needed to work out a game plan with Mishka. Braxton continued to call every five minutes but William did not pick up because he was getting a technical briefing.

Kent walked over to Braxton’s cube and said; “How you hitting em?”

Braxton responded that he could not move forward until he spoke with William and William was not answering the phone. Kent’s face turned red and he said “who does William think he is, he needs to answer the phone when the office calls.” Kent handed Braxton his cell and said; “Here is my cell phone, use this to call him, he will answer” Braxton said OK and called William, still no answer. Kent was furious that

William did not answer and told Braxton to call every few minutes until he got an answer. William and Mishka were discussing next steps when the constant calls coming in were just became too annoying. William told Mishka that he would be back in the lab in ten minutes and they would go through what was needed when he got back. William hung up and instantly he saw the call from Kent coming in and he picked it up.

“Yes Kent”, said William; “No this is Braxton” came from the other line.” William asked what he needed and Braxton said he had a problem with airFly that it would not work on a website that Kent needed done immediately there was a bug and William needed to handle it immediately. William thought to himself that there were no defects in the software and it was of course just a user error, not once in three years did anyone spot any kind of a defect in the software. William knew that it was a configuration issue and that Braxton was just doing something wrong. William hated feeling this way, but he knew if the software was written and it was developed using proper engineering processes (pre Kent) then the problem was most likely with the user not the software. Braxton explained that he pointed the software to the page and it came up with an error that it could not grab the page.

William laughed to himself, because he remembered writing the error message years ago, ‘Error grabbing page, and page name.’ What a lousy error message, tech people do tent to write bad error messages and this one was left for fun to see how the product progressed over years. What was even funnier is that he knew that the ‘Grabber’ was from version 1.0 of the product and took nothing for granted; William said “so you are using the Single URL grabber right”? Braxton responded “yes. William said did you type in the HTTP as the grabber requires the full path? As predicted, Braxton said no and that it was not documented. William smiled because this was the exact same thing Braxton had said the last 10 times. Braxton said that that fixed the problem and he hung up.

## Chapter 11 – Assessing the Problem

With the deployment issues it was obvious that there would be no way to meet the deliverables now. There were real problems and while sad, it was not surprising that nothing had ever been tested. While, he liked to believe himself wrong, William had suspected that the office was not doing any testing at all. There was simply not enough activity or defects noted to make it possible. Well no big deal, it just needed to be fixed. He would work closely with Mishka and they would both test each other's work.

While this was not optimal in any way it was all that made sense with everything being delivered tomorrow. Mishka and William decided that the last step would be to actually write the deployment so that everything else could be completed. They put together a project plan with updates using Acme's project software and William forwarded it to Kent. Without fail Kent responded immediately.

Subject: Updated Schedule

Let's do a call

**Kent**

**President and CEO, Blue Marine  
Software Inc.**

William thought to himself that the mail was expected but there was just no time as it was 3pm and he had started his day at 4am and William was getting tired. Kent picked up his phone and asked how William was hitting em. But William was too tired to even answer with humor and said; "Kent did you see the update, if we work all night we may be able to get something done for Acme but I can make no promises, do you think we can count on any testing support when we get something done later?" Kent responded that the new consultant was coming into town and everyone was busy so no support could be provided as everyone had made plans to go over to the hotel for drinks already but he would call into see how it was going. Kent also assured William that if he needed anything he would get it to 'Just let him know". William went back to work and they finished the overrides. Mishka had to go, it was 10pm. William found two more deployment defects and wrote them up but he was exhausted. He would have to come at it fresh again, so he wrote up the new schedule and sent it over to Kent, it would take three more days and if it was really to be tested it should be two weeks, but it was the best he could do. Kent

replied to the mail with extreme anger, "this was totally unacceptable and could not be tolerated." The mail told William that he would come into the office and finish the work from there the next day. William knew what this meant, this meant that his days there were coming to an end and this was something that he had expected. Kent did not want William in the office, even at company meetings he had taking William aside and asked him not to talk on a topic unless asked and not to stand up in the conference room if Kent was standing. William knew that Kent could not live with him being there, he knew that to Kent it represented the end of him taking credit for William's work. Kent hated how William cracked up laughing when he walked by the article that Kent had put his name on. William happily packed up the server and looked forward to a 9-5 day; it had been over three years since there was any real engineering team at Blue marine Software and the long hours had just tired him out. He would deal with all of this in the morning.

## Chapter 12 - The Beginning

William packed up the truck and took his dog for a walk. He knew that he could no longer positively impact the company the way things were and today would be the day that he would inform, TC, Kent, and Johnnie that their days of stealing from vendors, partners and shareholders had ended. The important thing now was to stay stoic, there was no room for emotion the time for emotion was over. William walked into the office and looked at the walls around Lucinda's desk and noticed the emptiness and blandness, empty except for the article that Kent had claimed to write. He took out his camera phone and took a picture and uploaded it to Facebook. How small and petty, the company that he had founded had become.

Kent came out of his office and said he was running late and would be back out in a few minutes and just to wait. William took this time to walk over to TC's office. Once in TC's office he asked if TC had time to discuss some issues with him. TC responded yes.

William began, he told TC that it was over, that it all had to end and it would no longer be tolerated. He listed the items:

- Not paying vendors
- Stealing from Shareholders
- Lying about numbers
- Breaking contracts with ACME
- Retaliation against people who report HR violations
- Jokes about sexual preference
- Breaking any law of any type

William explained that it was over and none of it would be tolerated and that they had to prepare to start telling the truth, William said that he would blow the whistle on them and that he could no longer be part of a company that actively hurt the people they were supposed to be helping. TC asked if he would like to put the complaint in writing or was a verbal complaint good enough, William responded verbal was good enough. William went back to Lucinda's desk and took a seat. Kent came out of his office and said "I am running late, why don't you call it a day and the guys will set up your machines and you can start fresh tomorrow." William walked over and gave the guys his password for the servers so they could set it up and he walked out. He had a sense of peace about him, the type where there was no need to look back and he knew after that complaint he would never be back. It was as if the building behind him was exploding and he had no interest in seeing it he just kept on walking. William got in his truck and was driving back when the phone rang. It was the office, this made no sense, he knew they would not have the nerve to fire him to his face, so why the call? It was BT, he was trying to log into

Williams computer but the password was not working. William asked if he was entering "Test" as the yellow sticky said was his password. BT said no that he was using his own password, William responded how would he, William, know BT's password, BT entered test and said he was in and thanks. Within two minutes William got the email, that he was terminated. What **a horror of an office** and **what a joy to be done with them**, well that is outside of the courts, the state and the government investigators. Now he would spend time calling shareholders and in the future he would deal with these people.