

## CHAPTER THREE - CORPORATE ESPIONAGE

As Paul Pontiac sat, half-listening, to his fourth period Office Skills instructor's lecture on How to Develop Good Computer Skills, little did he suspect that three hundred and seventy miles away in Hidden Valley, Tennessee, the PC game that Gibsonville's Computer Club was developing for Titan Industries' Software Contest was the primary topic of a high-level meeting.

"Is everyone present?" George Witherspoon, the V.P. of Marketing at Krypton Software asked, while cautiously eyeing both Ray Sizemore, in charge of Corporate Security, and Mike Furrow, the Software Development chief, as he sat his cup of coffee in front of him.

"Almost," Mike replied. A stern expression spread across his face as he turned toward the doorway. "We're still waiting for Tom – he should be here shortly. Allen might be holding him up."

George frowned. "Does the CEO know what we're planning?"

Ray smiled then glanced at Mike.

"Are you kidding?" whispered Mike with a conspiratorial chuckle. "We're about to discuss what some might consider corporate espionage. There's no way we can let Allen find out. He'd fire us all." Pausing briefly to take a sip of his coffee, he then continued. "However, if we can keep him in the dark until we're successful, not only will he be thanking us for the millions Krypton rakes in, we'll be set for life."

"Yeah. We'll be smelling like roses," Ray added.

"I just don't know," George nervously replied. "Is stealing a PC game from a bunch of teenage kids really going to be worth it? After all, if anyone ever found out ... we would easily end up in the Southeastern Tennessee State Regional Correctional Facility."

"Yes," the other two aggressively replied.

“I can assure you, George,” Ray continued, while clicking on the icon that would start his PowerPoint presentation. “There is no possible way Titan Industries will discover how this happened.”

“Not to mention ... Thanks to Paul Pontiac and his friend, Tim, Titan Industries fourth quarter earnings was more than what Krypton Software was able to make for the last five years combined,” Mike added.

“Which, my friends, is the exact reason I initiated this project,” Tom (the company’s president) stated as he stepped inside the secure conference room. “With Titan Industries requiring that all contest entries be submitted by May First, I believe that it would be reasonable to assume that by the end of March, Paul’s computer club should have a final beta of their game ready for testing. Thus, the only thing we’ll have to do is – find someone to make a copy of it.”

“But isn’t Paul going to need the assistance of his friend, Tim Hegler, to finish the beta?” George asked. “After all, Clash of the BattleStars was a joint effort.”

“That we don’t know,” Mike replied, giving George a serious look. “But that may not be a problem.”

“Titan Industries is supposed to be announcing today where it plans to re-locate its Game Division,” Ray quickly pointed out. “And Greensboro was one of the sites they’re considering. Since Tim’s father is the President of that division, his kid may already be in North Carolina.”

“That’s true,” Mike confirmed, with a nod. “And even if the company didn’t move their gaming division to Greensboro – sources tell me that Paul has made friends with an eleven year old computer genius, named Daniel E. Whitehouse the Third.”

“Daniel E. Whitehouse the Third?” Tom repeated. “Hmm. He sounds young enough to be easily manipulated.”

“That might be. But most likely, we’re not going to need to,” Ray replied. “Word has it that Gibsonville’s Office Skills instructor, a Mr. Carl Thompson, is in a financial bind. And since he’s the computer club’s faculty advisor, he would definitely be in a position to help us. “

“I see,” Tom replied. “So how much do you think it would take to convince Mr. Thompson to hand over the kid’s game?”

Ray stopped to review a piece of data on his netbook. “Considering his wife’s recent medical expenses, I would guess about 30K,” he then replied. “However, should the guy should turn greedy – The payoff could go as high as 100K.”

“That’s still not a problem,” Tom replied, before turning to face Mr. Furrow. “The game is going to bring in at least five hundred times that amount. Right, Mike?”

“Yes Sir,” Mike confirmed.

“OK then, gentleman,” Tom said, raising himself from his seat. “I believe that were done here. Let’s get Operation Chicken Hawk started first thing tomorrow morning. And don’t forget ... we trying to keep the cost of this operation under 5 million.”