

Shortly after my sixth anniversary with the company, we were called into an all-company meeting where it was revealed that our aforementioned competitor had acquired a company in another state with which we had a reseller arrangement. This was the company that distributed the fund accounting program that I had worked on when I was occasionally helping out with Norma Lee's department. As part of their due diligence, they made it a practice to visit all the businesses with which their acquisitions had a relationship. Nothing much came of this announcement, it seemed like business as usual, but after they had been to our location and had the grand tour, Ana called a few of us in and said that there was a strong possibility that we would be a target for acquisition by this competitor, the letters of whose name could be rearranged to spell "Loneliest Orgy Tech,"¹ so for the sake of brevity, I will hereafter refer to it as LOT. Since Joe and Darrell had been running this company for some 30 years, they had decided that the time had come for the next big move.

The next few weeks were a daze, with the feeling that things were about to turn upside down. For my part, there was just a feeling that this company, which seemed like a family, was going to be assimilated by a corporate machine that couldn't possibly understand what it was that made it work. There were numerous meetings and small gatherings over those few weeks to attempt to reassure us that things were great and moving forward as they should. As Darrell once said, it was to ensure the future of the company for those of us who would continue to work there in the coming years, and, after all, did any of us want to face the prospect of working for Fay Kerr? He had a point, but still, there was apprehension. One thing that Joe and Darrell made clear early on was that they would be staying on in a continued employment agreement for up to three years to assist with the transition. I have to admit, it was a generous offer from someone who had just cashed out big-time.

Still, there were those times that seemed a bit melancholy and bittersweet, like the final Christmas party as a company, right up to the final day before the acquisition, when there was an office party and get-together for drinks at a nice restaurant. Unfortunately, I was unable to make it to that as I had to drive to my hometown for a funeral. I tried not to let that affect my mood at the prospect of returning on Monday to participate in the takeover.

I recall having a gnawing feeling in the pit of my stomach that lasted about four and a half months until the day that we were visited by the management team of our new headquarters. Even though Spring had just arrived, the feeling I had on my drive to work that morning was very much like what I imagined Ishmael, a character in a novel I once read,² felt when he spoke of "a damp, drizzly November in my soul." We all gathered in the atrium, and Darrell introduced the Executive Vice President, Ollie Gark (not his real name, but the letters in his real name could be rearranged to spell "Blew Dismount"). He noted that the transition occurred on April Fool's Day and hoped we wouldn't regard it as an omen. I still had my concerns. One of the interesting things we got to do in the next few days was to go to some of the clients we had recently brought on with the appeal of replacing this company's systems and telling them that, guess what, they are back giving them the business. I'm glad I wasn't part of those updates.

¹ Really.

² Moby Dick