

Microserfs Study Guide

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Plot Summary

The year is 1993, a time when Microsoft has grown into a major software corporation. Daniel chronicles his experiences with the company at its Redmond, Washington, headquarters, his work with a new company called Interiority that he helps to found with his friends and his growing relationship with Karla, the first woman he has ever loved. Michael, one of the older Microsoft employees, quits in order to finish the programming of his brainchild, an object-oriented graphics development program he calls Oop! (exclamation point is part of the name). Michael, along with the people who have been renting room in a group house owned by Abe, quit Microsoft to join Michael's new company located in Palo Alto, California.

Daniel's father has lost his job with IBM and goes to work for Michael. Nobody but Michael knows what the father's project is until it is unveiled in an office building. While the rest of the crew—consisting of Daniel, Karla, Susan, Todd and Bug—put in long hours of programming, the father has been constructing a sculpture garden made entirely of oversized Lego blocks. Work on Oop! moves from Daniel's parents' house to the office building among the sculptures.

Ethan joins the company early on as its marketing professional. He suffers from extreme dandruff, comes off as smarmy to Michael and has major dermatology surgery done to his back. Michael warms up to Ethan when he discovers how much suffering the man is going through. Susan has cashed in all her Microsoft stock to fund the company, but the company runs out of money before Oop! has been finished. Just as the money situation looks the most desperate, Abe decides to leave Redmond and join Interiority. He brings with him enough cash to keep the company going.

Todd meets Dusty, both of whom are body builders, and they begin a relationship. Dusty becomes pregnant and decides to bring the child to term. Susan cannot seem to get any relationship off the ground. Michael finally meets a woman he has been emailing for about a year, Amy, and they immediately hit it off. Bug comes out of the closet as a homosexual man and tries to start a relationship too, which immediately fails.

Oop! finally becomes a marketable product, and it is well received. The company starts to make a good deal of money, but Daniel reports that he was never in it for the money. His relationship with Karla has bloomed, and while attending a technical conference in Las Vegas, he learns that his mother has had a stroke. This event brings everyone together into a loving family situation, which was what Daniel craved all along. He had been haunted by his younger brother, Jed, who had died years before. Daniel often saw people who looked exactly like Jed, but after this turn of events, he can put the memory away and carry on with his life. His mother accepts Karla as her daughter, something that had not been coming together and disturbed both Karla and Daniel.



Chapter 1, Microserfs

Chapter 1, Microserfs Summary

Daniel narrates this story about Microsoft employees in the 1993 time period. Written as a daily journal, he reveals his housemates' characters by imagining what their Jeopardy! Dream categories would be. Daniel's are Tandy products, trash television of the 1970s-80s, Apple computers, career anxieties, tabloids and local flora. Michael has just received a demanding email from Bill, the CEO of Microsoft (Bill Gates), and shuts himself into his office to code the solutions. Michael's dream categories are FORTRAN, Pascal, Ada, LISP, Neil Peart (drummer for Rush), Hugo/Nebula science fiction award winners and Sir Lancelot. Concerned that Michael is not eating anything, Daniel and another housemate Todd shove flat food under Michael's office door (cheese singles, crackers, Pop-Tarts and so on).

The other housemates include Susan (680X0 assembly language, cats, early '80s glamour bands, her secret affair, license plate slogans, the death of IBM), Abe (Intel assembler, bulk shopping, C++, introversion, aquariums, being rich but untouched by it, unclean laundry), Bug Barbecue (bitterness, Xerox PARC, Macintosh, jazz). Todd's dream categories are your body as a temple, baseball hats, psychotic religious parents, frequent and empty sex, SEGA games and his Toyota Supra. Todd and Daniel work together as software testers. A software release deadline is just a few days away, and Daniel doubts they will make it.

Daniel identifies a strange culture at Microsoft, one in which everyone strives to be exactly as old as Bill, 31.2 years. However, Daniel is in his twenties, as are many of the newer Microsoft hires, while others who had been with the company early on are in their forties. Also, nobody talks about death even when someone they know passes. The subject is unofficially forbidden.

Karla works a few offices down from Daniel. She is a small young woman with a very high IQ. Daniel brings her food and origami paper sheets, which starts a relationship. After Michael finishes his programming crunch and emerges from his office, Karla and Daniel break off from the group that has gathered and have a conversation outside the office. The Microsoft office campus in Redmond, Washington, is a large sprawling place with many walking trails around it. Their conversation moves directly into the depths of the human condition, which attracts Daniel more to her.

Later on in the week, Daniel learns that his father has been laid off from IBM. His mother is concerned for his mental stability, and Daniel promises to visit soon. His parents live in Palo Alto, California. Meanwhile, Susan plans her vestment party. This means that her stock will be fully vested and she will then have the option of selling for millions of dollars profit. Susan plans to quit Microsoft once this happens and do something else. Daniel has noticed that other former Microsoft employees who ended up rich have done a good deal of traveling to exotic world destinations, sometimes by



unusual means. He realizes that his career with the company holds no promise of similar outcomes. The stock option plans have been drying up.

Karla learns about Jed, Daniel's younger brother who drowned at the age of twelve, because she has noticed that his email password includes Jed's name. She discovered this by watching Daniel type in the password, another of her characteristics that impresses him. While Daniel's father falls further into anxiety and depression while unemployed at the age of fifty-three, he grows closer to Karla and tells her about the Jeopardy! dream categories that he has picked for his housemates. She tells him that hers would be orchards, Labrador dogs, the history of phone pranks, crime novels, Intel computer chips, things HAL says in the movie 2001: A Space Odyssey, and her parents being psychopaths. The conversation moves into spirituality and the existence of human souls, which they believe do exist.

As the software release deadline approaches, Daniel's boss, Shaw, asks if there is anything he can do to help. Daniel apparently does not respond the way Shaw expected, and so Shaw leaves to talk with someone else. Daniel feels sorry for the forty-something manager who no longer develops code for a living and is rapidly becoming too old for Microsoft. He can understand what IBM had done to his father, since this was typical for the company.

Susan's vetting party gets underway, starting out slow but picking up in the later evening. Daniel's mother calls and tells him that his father has flown to Redmond and will be showing up soon. As Daniel and Karla talk outside the group house, his father shows up drunk in a rental car. They escort him to Michael's room, which is empty because Michael has been transferred to Cupertino, California, and let him sleep off the alcohol while the vetting party continues.

Chapter 1, Microserfs Analysis

The story draws a believable picture of what it might have been like to work for Microsoft in 1993. A common stereotype for that period went along the lines that Bill Gates hired only people who either looked like him or were very close to his age, which explains why everyone was trying to be 31.2 years old. Daniel realizes that this is an irrational myth. He is only twenty-six years old and considers the job merely a way to make a living, not to get rich. This puts him outside the experience circles of those employees like Susan who are becoming rapidly rich. Also separating him from the other housemates is his lack of obsession with programming languages. The problem that Daniel has is that he does not fit in because he desires to live a full and rich life. The developing relationship with Karla strongly illustrates this basic human need.

The relationship with Karla has promise. She is not beautiful, rather mousey by Daniel's estimation, but she has a mind that attracts him powerfully. This contrasts with Todd's desire to have meaningless sex often and with as many partners as possible. If taken as an allegorical story for the time period, the relationship developing with Daniel and Karla contrasts with a booming high-tech industry that seems to encourage a kind of



materialism that denies itself. This could be because those involved in becoming rich have done so honestly through the hard mental work of program development, as opposed to something like selling time-share properties through deceptive sales practices. Another possibility could be that guilt is at work, due to the predatory company acquisition practices that Microsoft allegedly did to grow so big. Bug Barbecue is old enough to remember Xerox PARC and its pioneering efforts with the graphical user interface and mice controllers that supposedly Apple stole for its Macintosh user interface. Apple in turn had sued Microsoft for stealing its interface for use on Windows, a famous argument about stealing the look-and-feel.

An irony rings through the story today. In 1993 the World Wide Web was introduced and was largely ignored due to the slow modems and networks of the period. Over the following fifteen years, the importance of Microsoft would decrease as applications moved from the server-client model to the web-based model. Pushing this along were advancements in network speeds for the average household via DSL, cable modems, point-to-point wireless transmission, Wi-Fi and satellite links. A high-tech bubble would form and burst, throwing many who expected to get rich quick into the street. Daniel finds himself in the early period of the high-tech bubble formation, and he does not think this is a very healthy way to be. He is looking for something better.

The layoff of Daniel's father points to age discrimination in the high-tech industry. The prejudice depends on the idea that only the young can be innovative with computers, and that might be true in software development shops such as Microsoft. Gates founded the company while still quite young and went head-to-head with the IBM establishment. Nevertheless, Daniel must deal with his father after he shows up drunk and depressed because the IBM establishment has decided that fifty-three is too old. Daniel realizes the problem. If fifty-three is too old, then what is one to do until the expected lifespan of eighty-three arrives, thirty years later? What if his father cannot figure out a way to be useful until then? On a more internal level, will Daniel be facing the same fate? His thinking about this takes him to the conclusion that he cannot expect to work thirty years with Microsoft or any other company, a condition that might prepare him to contend with age discrimination. A common attitude about careers in 1993 involved the need to change them often over one's lifetime.

Daniel also realizes that a life of intense software development cannot last much more than eight years before the programmer burns out. His role is in testing and finding software bugs that will be solved by other people, a fairly low-stress job in the field. He likes Tandy and Apple products, probably because they are easy to use, while the programmers like various programming languages that are difficult to learn and use. One of the pushes that began around 1993 was for making software development easier and more intuitive, partly to accelerate program development and partly to reduce the required skill levels.



Chapter 2, Oop

Chapter 2, Oop Summary

As fall moves into the State of Washington, Daniel stops to admire the orange maple leaves that have fallen on his car. He spends about fifteen minutes enjoying the relaxation that the moment affords. He and Susan talk about art and the subconscious, which leads Daniel to wonder if computers have subconscious minds. He creates a file on his machine to hold random words that pop into his head. The file is labeled SUBCONSCIOUS. He reports that Karla has been living with him for three weeks.

Daniel's team has made the ship date despite his misgivings. The team members receive Lucite Ship-It awards, and to test the idea that the Lucite is indestructible, Todd and Daniel drag their awards around town behind Daniel's AMC Hornet, which is a type of car. Daniel's father has been staying with him since the night of Susan's vesting party, and he likes to go into work with his son. Daniel's mother keeps sending him newspaper clippings about the Information Superhighway, and they both wonder what this might mean. The concept is too new for most people to grasp.

Daniel forgets the one-month anniversary of the relationship with Karla, and she becomes upset. Karla puts the correct anniversaries to remember and celebrate on Daniel's electronic calendar out to the year 2050, at which time Daniel would be eighty-three years old.

Daniel's father has returned home and is taking Prozac while looking for work. His mother talks to Daniel on the phone about money problems, and he sending \$500 a month to her out of his \$1,500 monthly take-home pay.

Trying to understand love, Daniel attempts to write about it. He thinks that all the doors are open that are normally closed to people, and he and Karla freely roller skate through them. He also considers her to be his friend. He hopes she understands that he is new at this love situation and forgives him for neglecting the one-month anniversary. Meanwhile, Daniel continues to add random words and phrases to his SUBCONSCIOUS computer folder and recording them in his journal.

Now that Susan is rich and has quit Microsoft, she plans on buying a house. Along with this, she lets her rebellious and creative sides out, dressing like a punk rocker and exploring art. Todd confesses to Daniel that he would want a love like Karla in his life. Karla explains her idea that humans in 1993 occupy a unique place in time and space, and that the rest of the housemates should realize this.

Daniel calls his mother and learns that his father has been hired by Michael, who is starting a new company. Michael later sends a letter to the group house. The letter invites everyone to join his company, an object-oriented software development firm. The



product is named Oop! and follows a Lego block theme. Karla confides in Daniel a little more as the relationship continues to grow.

Daniel, Bug, Todd and Susan decide to take Michael's offer. Abe decides to stay with Microsoft because it can only get bigger. They give notice on the house and sell off junk that has collected, and Daniel is amazed that everything sold. They head off to California on a Sunday in their vehicles. Karla speaks to Daniel about how her parents kept telling her that she was dumb when growing up and that her brother was supposed to be the smart one.

Chapter 2, Oop Analysis

The 1990s was a significant time in the computer industry. Microsoft had made a big hit with Windows 3.1, to be followed by Windows 95 and 98. The area around Silicon Valley (not a real name for the place) in northern California was becoming a hotbed for new company startups. Daniel finds himself at the forefront of a computer industry bubble in which venture capital will flow freely and all sorts of technologies, some of them complete scams, would be attempted. At this point in his young life and career, he has little concept of what it will take to start a company. He only knows that it will be an exciting thing to do.

Susan looks ahead and buys a significant share of Michael's new company with the money she had gained after being vested and selling off Microsoft stock for a healthy profit. Bug and Todd come along perhaps more out of curiosity than any vision of riches. They have become tired of the Microsoft routines.

The relationship between Daniel and Karla blossoms into a true friendship based on trust and understanding. Karla has not opened herself up to anyone as much as she has with Daniel. On the other hand, Daniel carries no deep secrets to share, which must make Karla feel at ease. She can depend on him to be her friend and lover without having to deal with his emotional distresses. She has enough for both of them. At the core are her parents, whom she refers to as being psychotic, and their damaging attempts at setting their children on the right paths, as the parents understood the concept. Being highly religious, the daughter was supposed to be stupid and submissive, while the son was supposed to be intelligent and a leader. Neither child fit this predetermined way they were supposed to be, yet the son turned out happy enough. Karla turned out neurotic and intellectual, needing a grounding personality in her life. This is the most important role that Daniel plays. In return, Karla treats Daniel to massages and gives him all her affections.

The relationship has gone along so well, even with a few bumps along the way, that the reader might hope that it continues well or might expect some kind of major conflict to erupt. Now that both Daniel and Karla have joined Michael's new company, the relationship could be tested under stress.



Chapter 3, Interiority

Chapter 3, Interiority Summary

Daniel meets Ethan, the CEO of Oop!. Daniel's first impression is that there is something evil about him, but he later discounts the character flaw as being smarmy. Susan and Ethan hardly ever agree on anything as the new company struggles with financial problems. Daniel discovers that Karla keeps a journal too, but her entries are not detailed and basically report facts.

Until the company can attract VC (Venture Capital, money invested in new and promising companies), everybody works at Daniel's parents' house in what was supposed to be a rumpus room. The work environment is stifling because they do not open the sliding glass door for ventilation because the dog has a habit of disrupting work.

Daniel works on the Windows version of Oop!, while Karla works on the Mac version. Michael is the chief software architect and he has coded the central Oop! engine. Bug does the database and Todd works on the printing capabilities. Susan keeps an eye on the UI (User Interface) in order that Daniel's and Karla's work results in the same user experience. The company changes its name to Interiority for attracting VC funding.

The whole development team attends a seminar on multimedia (the blending of graphics, sound and interactivity in software products). They do not learn very much, being as everyone had grown up with computer games and continue to play them. The difference between storytelling, being entertained by stories and interacting with software becomes clear. Everybody likes stories. Few people want interactivity because it resembles work. On the other hand, the games that pit humans against humans in a virtualized and networked environment are becoming very popular. This software is easy to develop because the humans provide the intelligence that would otherwise need to be programmed as AI (Artificial Intelligence).

Karla becomes obsessed with having lunch with Daniel's mother. His mother seems to be resisting the situation, which starts to build tension in the relationship. However, she finally gives in. The results are unsatisfying for Karla because she tensed and held back her true thoughts and feelings.

Daniel and Ethan attend a VC meeting, in which they encounter actual venture capitalists. The idea about Interiority receives a cold greeting, since the venture capitalists are reluctant to invest in a company without a deliverable product or the marketing capability to sell the product once it exists. Some days later, Ethan reveals the extensive skin surgery that had been done to his back, all covered in old bandages, to Daniel. Daniel helps Ethan to remove the bandages and cleans the stitches for him. They develop a sympathetic bond.



Chapter 3, Interiority Analysis

Starting up a company in Silicon Valley during this period was more difficult than later on in the 1990s. The successes of Microsoft and Apple created many millionaires among the technical professionals who had grandiose ideas but not much business savvy. Additionally, the idea of multimedia was in its early years, being used mostly on games. Video and sound technologies were still crude compared to today's capabilities.

Daniel's experience with the new company is exciting and frightening. He gets paid irregularly if at all, and he works long hours, as does everyone else. He knows that Ethan has made millions three times in his life and gone bust after every one. Nevertheless, Daniel learns lessons from Ethan that may or may not be actually useful in the business world. For example, Ethan encourages Daniel to stop thinking about money as numbers in a budget, which would be disastrous for most companies and households. The fact that Ethan takes Prozac regularly, an anti-depression prescription drug, does not seem to register in Daniel as a red flag. Ethan may not be as business-smart as he makes himself seem. Daniel does have his suspicions though, and until Ethan reveals his terribly cutup back, Daniel has little sympathy for him.

A minor tension builds in the relationship between Daniel and Karla. She wants very badly to have lunch with Daniel's mother, the desire being to build history that will in turn build family. The mother's resistance hurts Karla, but she does get her wish. The problem becomes one of communication. Karla wants very much to be as open with the mother as she is with the son, but this cannot happen until trust builds. Karla does not have the courage to lay her heart on the table, being that it has been crushed regularly by her parents throughout her childhood and young adulthood. The important event was that the lunch actually took place, thus breaking the tension that had been building between her and Daniel. Getting along with in-laws is a classic failure in nearly every relationship due to the underlying tensions that never become resolved, such as Karla's fear that the mother thinks she is stealing her son away. On the bright side, the mother eventually became willing to join in on the first attempt. The next one might turn out better.



Chapter 4, FaceTime

Chapter 4, FaceTime Summary

Susan designs business cards for the new company, and the members select their own job titles. Bug selects "Information Leafblower;" Todd calls himself "Personal Trainer;" Karla picks "Who can turn the world on with a smile?;" Daniel's title is "Crew Chief;" Ethan chooses "Liquid Engineer;" Michael settles on the enigmatic, "You're Soaking In It." Daniel's father continues to do mysterious work for Michael, and Daniel does not try to find out what it is because his father is happy. Karla takes better care of herself and looks more feminine to Daniel, who reflects on how quickly technologies go obsolete. He and Michael talk about whether humans would ever build a machine that could pray.

While shopping for computer equipment, Daniel thinks he sees his deceased brother, Jed. This prompts Daniel to remember how smarter Jed was and how easy it is to remember the dead as being better than they actually were.

Some of the business members receive job offers from already established firms, which gives everyone hope that if the new business were to go under, they would still be employable. Daniel tells Karla that he worries about Michael stealing his father away. Karla eases his fears with an observation that his father seems like a new man.

On Christmas Day, Abe comes down from Washington to partake in the festivities. He and Daniel had been communicating through email since everyone else left to work on the new company. The company members take Abe to a 7-11 store and buy him all kinds of mundane presents, which was the theme for Christmas—think up the most appropriate inexpensive gifts to exchange.

A few days after New Year's, all the company members go to an office building to see what Daniel's father has been working on. Ethan had sold his expensive sports car to continue funding the venture. Daniel's father has been constructing oversized Lego block sculptures in the office area, which impresses everyone, but the fresh paint makes Daniel sick. His father takes care of him and explains that their father-son relationship is stronger than ever.

Chapter 4, FaceTime Analysis

Karla's transformation from a geeky boyish girl to a maturing woman more confident in herself reflects the growth that everybody associated with the new company is experiencing. No product is ready to ship yet, so the cash flow is always negative. That worries Daniel some but not to the point of panic or stagnation out of fear. He and the others work harder than they ever did for Microsoft, and they enjoy every minute because they are working for themselves.



Along with the hard work comes the quirky humor of the company members. They invent outlandish job titles for themselves, take off on flights of philosophy regarding technology and high-tech cultures, and give what amount to gag gifts for Christmas. The one exception is that Daniel's father receives a new set of tools in a red toolbox, which is a mystery to all until they see his handiwork at the office building.

The Lego blocks symbolize the idea of the software product, called Oop!, on which everyone is working. The product might revolutionize how graphics are rendered for any type of appropriate programming. The construction of the graphics is similar to how Lego blocks can be configured into any shape imaginable, and what Daniel's father has created at the office building affirms this underlying principle. This also shows that he completely understands the brilliance of Michael's vision.

Just beneath the surface, Daniel suffers emotionally that he cannot compete with his dead brother or Michael for his father's affections. His coping mechanism involves working with technology, which he does understand is a common emotional escape from real life among most who work in the computer industry. The relationship with Karla helps them both to live better, fuller human lives, yet the act of working for self rather than vague corporate goals that inevitably land on the bottom profit line is bringing everybody closer to real human life and not fantasy worlds rendered in pixels on a screen. The irony is that their company depends on shipping a software product that will make the fantasy worlds more realistic and easier to create.

Even Daniel's mother shows powerful signs of life improvement. With her husband safely put to work on a project he loves, she is free to explore life's possibilities while in her sixties. She learns new swimming strokes, including the butterfly—one of the most difficult strokes to master—and competes with others around her age. The underlying theme is that life cannot ever be measured in monetary values. Enough money is required to carry out projects, but performance is far more important to the health of human beings than the money collected at the end of the process. In effect, the journey is more important than reaching the destination.

Whether the new company succeeds becomes irrelevant at this point. The reader may still root for success, but the primary story is about emotionally crippled people, who happen to be highly intelligent and competent with computer technology, healing together while working toward a common goal. That Abe decides to visit over Christmas brings home this point. He is attracted to what is going on in Silicon Valley, specifically with this group of entrepreneurs. He is also disappointed with the new group of people who rent rooms in his Washington house. They are focused on only getting rich quick. Abe craves more in life, as do Daniel, Karla and all the others. Visiting Daniel's father's creations in the office building brings the story to its first major climax and resolution. What had existed mostly in the imagination now has physical manifestations in the form of oversized Lego block sculptures.

The sculptures carry symbolic meanings. They include skyscrapers, animals, mazes, railroads, a skeleton laying before robots, flowers, a Palo Alto City Hall, a model Boeing 747—and as Daniel comments, "everything in the world!" (p. 220). Each symbol could

be analyzed by its surroundings and how it fits into the whole, but the point is that real life rendered in Lego blocks is like what the Oop! software product is supposed to accomplish. Another point is that the real world is made of fundamental building blocks we call atoms and molecules. Reality and fantasy intersect in the office environment that Daniel's father has created.



Chapter 5, TrekPolitiks

Chapter 5, TrekPolitiks Summary

An earthquake strikes Los Angeles on January 17, 1994. Ethan takes the news especially hard because parts of his neighborhood as a child have been destroyed. He remembers a toppled overpass near which he had kissed his first girlfriend.

All the company members attend a party in San Francisco. Daniel notices that the house is immaculately decorated but carries with it an artificial feeling that lacks any reflection of the owners' personalities. Susan discusses the decorations with the hostess while showing genuine interest in duplicating the scheme. The current cool thing to do among the San Francisco high-tech crowd is to serve uncommon and expensive vodkas, and Daniel wonders where all the eccentric geeks are. Everybody dresses "like real people" (p. 225). Another man hits on Karla, which disturbs her and indicates to Daniel how much more attractive she has become. He puts his arm around her and removes her from the awkward situation, leaving the man to hit on Susan instead. Susan shows interest from wanting to increase her dating frequency.

Todd starts dating a woman named Dusty. They had met at the gym and both are into body building. At first Karla and Susan do not like her, but they later become good friends. Daniel finds it hard to believe that Dusty and Susan had played with Barbie dolls as children. Dusty turns out to be a strong programmer and very good at math. She starts working for the company.

Daniel's father finds a job with an airlines working on the reservation system. He dislikes his boss and finally quits. Michael puts him to work immediately learning modern programming, which the father enjoys much better.

Daniel and Karla move into a house that they have agreed to house-sit while the owner travels the world. Todd and Dusty take an apartment together in Redwood City. Daniel goes to the gym to bolster his strength. The trainer tells him that he is a thin fat man, meaning that his muscle mass is low and body fat too high. The workouts leave him very stiff and sore at first, and then he starts to improve while the misery declines.

Todd and Dusty become interested in politics, specifically Marxism. Everybody else becomes annoyed by the constant political talk and start to point out how Marxism has never worked. Todd switches to Maoist doctrines, which are less offensive but still annoying. The rest of the company starts calling the couple Boris and Natasha. They do not mind the nicknames.

Daniel worries that Karla is becoming too attractive. He feels that she could date anyone she wants, and due to his insecurity, he tries harder to keep the relationship going. Dusty prepares for a body building competition by practicing standard poses. Karla and Susan learn the poses and perform with her. Todd finally announces that he



and Dusty are no longer interested in extreme left-wing politics. The company members learn that Dusty is pregnant.

Chapter 5, TrekPolitiks Analysis

As Karla becomes more attractive, Daniel improves his health through workouts and the others go through their various eccentricities, an overall theme develops. People tend to become conformists in their dress and behavior when they have reached a certain level of success in a capitalistic system. The irony is that they do this voluntarily, while in communistic countries such as China, the conformity is enforced. Even the nonconformity of the computer geeks is a form of conformity. Daniel notes that the trappings of a computer geek residence tend to have the same oddball arrangements of junk.

The political explorations of Todd and Dusty point to another principle—theoretical politics is boring for most people, and constantly talking about theory annoys more than it informs. Oftentimes talking politics in the work environment builds tensions that can lead to confrontations. However, this group of workers expresses disdain in other ways that are more sarcastic than confrontational. Rather than alienation Todd and Dusty, they make fun of the politics in clever ways, such as making a joke about a handful of items that should go in the trash as being a communistic garage sale.

Serious changes are going on while Daniel describes his superficial observations. Karla is blossoming into a beautiful young woman, which might mean that her selection for a mate is also changing. This is what Daniel fears, although she has not done anything that would support the fear. He channels his insecurity into working out and nurturing the relationship more, an attempt at becoming a better partner. His strategy is healthier than many other commonly taken paths that lead to relationship destruction, and the reader can only hope that Karla loves him for what he is regardless of physique. A contrast is the relationship between Todd and Dusty, who must body build to keep things going. Their attraction is primarily physical. Dusty's pregnancy will likely challenge Todd's commitment.

The company still does not make any money, and Daniel notices Ethan searching for lost coins in the couches. This is certainly not a good sign. That his father quit the job with the airlines is yet another event that reduces capital income. Tension builds and something has to happen—either the company ships Oop! and it becomes a success or they fold the company.

The fiction technique involves telling stories that, on their surface, are simply mundane observations strung together. However, another story is being told beneath the surface. Young people are growing up and becoming mature; the computer industry is creating a culture that seems too conformist for a free country; some people in the industry may never develop true relationships; Daniel and Karla seem to be the lucky ones, but will this last? Additionally, Daniel's father struggles with being too young to retire and too old



to be part of the workforce. His mother has found her way in the world while in her sixties, and she fights to keep it as her husband returns home, again unemployed.

Michael worries about production slipping and Ethan scrounges for money. The company is heading into troubled waters. Everyone knows this, but nobody wants to bring up the problem. The story just beneath the surface is about how the high-tech industry impacts all aspects of life, and the question in the undercurrent is whether this benefits or detracts from people's lives. Daniel occasionally brings up the situation in his own writing and with Karla, but not exactly to the core of the issue. They tend to talk around the subject in philosophical terms regarding hypothetical situations and sometimes in reference to popular science fiction. The other members of the company do the same. This could be considered their way of coping with a rapidly changing world, or this could also be an elaborate method of denial. The reality is that rapid change brings anxiety for what the future holds. Every day these young people approach closer to the dilemma that Daniel's father is experiencing. If they fail at creating their employment through their own efforts, will this mean going back to the corporation and inevitably growing too old to be employable?



Chapter 6, Chyx

Chapter 6, Chyx Summary

Susan starts a support group she calls Chyx for women who develop computer code. Karla and Dusty take to the idea right away, and they develop a special handshake that involves flipping the hair with one hand, smoothly making a pistol gesture with the other and touching index fingers. The group grows slowly, but a feature interview with CNN makes the online group an overnight sensation.

Bug, who has declared his homosexuality, attempts to start a relationship with another man. This fails in the early stages because Bug has no experience with relationships at all, except one brief encounter in his teen years. Susan starts a relationship with Emmett that becomes dysfunctional because she bullies, although he seems to need the bullying.

Abe quits Microsoft to join the company. He brings plenty of cash with him, which greatly lifts everybody's spirits. Ethan begins to explore possible customers for Oop! as it becomes finished enough to sell. Several large software houses express interest.

Michael tells Daniel that he has been carrying on an email-based relationship with a person in Canada who is technically astute. Michael wants to hire the person, but he does not know the gender or age. Michael is too bashful to find out, so he sends Daniel to Canada with the mission to hire the person. Daniel meets the mystery person, a twenty-year-old woman named Amy. Amy is physically strong, highly intelligent and very interested in meeting Michael. Once they meet, they immediately start a sexually charged relationship because the love relationship has already been developed through the email that had been exchanged over about a year.

Chapter 6, Chyx Analysis

Abe's appearance saves the day for the company, which had gone completely broke. When the company members celebrate and drink too much, the conversations turn philosophical about love and life. Bug tells of his homosexuality and what it was like having a crush on a young bank teller while Bug was a teen. This gives Michael the idea of sending Daniel to Canada and bringing back whomever it was he had been emailing for about a year. Michael knows he loves the person, no matter if male or female, young or old. Daniel thinks this is one of the stranger things he has ever witnessed, yet still something marvelous in the computer age.

Some of the philosophy is about how working in computers involves companies that extend people's adolescence on purpose, only to abandon them once they turn thirty or so. The idea then is for the employees to leave the companies first to find some other position, hang onto it until no longer employable (estimated at forty years of age), then

retire from the computer field altogether. A way out of this trap is for employees to start their own companies.

Susan's success with the Chyx support group demonstrates how the high-tech industry has opened the doors to women, since so many have joined in, at least on the software development level. Upper management still tends to be male-dominated, but the technologies and creating new software products are very gender neutral. If a woman can code as well or better than a man, she is seen as valuable within the confines of a corporation. For start-up companies, no confines exist.



Chapter 7, Transhumanity

Chapter 7, Transhumanity Summary

The final chapter of the book takes place eight months later as the company members head to Las Vegas for a technical conference. Ethan does not come along because he has contracted cancer and is undergoing chemotherapy. Dusty has given birth to a healthy baby and is relieved because she had abused her body so much during her body-building phase. She stays away from the conference to take care of her newborn. Daniel's father accompanies the group.

The technical conference does not impress anybody. The company members notice that all the booth attendants look and act exactly the same, and all the females seem to be named Lisa. As a result, the company members refer to both female and male attendants as Lisa-units. While most of the company members stand out because they have not dressed exactly the same, which other corporate representatives have, Amy especially stands out by making loud sarcastic remarks. The rest of the troupe make fun of the conference among themselves and go into giggling fits during a presentation.

Todd finds his Christian fundamentalist parents unexpectedly playing the slot machines. He is greatly upset that they have come to Las Vegas and confronts them repeatedly during their stay. While drunk, he also nearly seduces a Lisa-unit and feels great remorse the next morning for cheating on Dusty. Daniel and Karla point out that he had only kissed the woman and should not feel so guilty.

Toward the end of the conference, they learn that Daniel's mother has suffered a stroke that left her fully paralyzed. Everyone returns home, where Karla gives Daniel's mother massages. She also strongly encourages everyone, especially Daniel and his father, to talk to the stricken woman even if she cannot respond. By the end of the story, the group has propped up Daniel's mother in a chair, where Michael helps her type out messages. She tells everyone that she is happy, loves everyone and considers Karla her daughter. Daniel feels that he has found something that had been seriously missing in his life—a sense of being loved and belonging to a family.

Chapter 7, Transhumanity Analysis

While the story is about the high-tech industry on its surface, the underlying story is about people seeking love in a world that discourages the quest. The high-tech industry tries to keep young people from growing into adults, and then abandons them when they get too old to be productive from the viewpoint of creative software development. Daniel and Karla are very lucky that their relationship has taken root and grown. Others in the group have a more difficult time, especially Susan. Todd and Dusty find common ground, beyond body building, with their child, and Michael and Amy have developed one of the early Internet relationships via email. However, it takes a crisis to bring



everyone together as a family and give Daniel what he has always been craving. He has struggled with the death of his younger brother for many years, doubted his father's love and suffered over Karla's inability to connect with his mother. The mother's stroke brings out the best in Karla, who demonstrates her capacity to love through the massages and getting everyone to talk to the mother. In return, the mother accepts Karla as her daughter.

Humor drives the story up to its dramatic end, which is designed to elicit strong emotion in the reader and does so unexpectedly. This kind of story is known in the vernacular as a tear-jerker, yet it is not a tragedy. The tears are of happiness for the characters and indirectly for the human condition in which unlikely people find the fulfillment of deeply felt love for one another.

While the external conflicts of personalities, money problems and a rapidly changing high-tech landscape keep the overall story moving, Daniel's internal struggles build a subtle set of tensions that are released at the very end. He does manage to make smaller victories along the way, such as accepting Ethan, whom he had at first despised, and learning how to love Karla. His greatest victory involves putting his dead brother's memory to rest, which he could not have done on his own.



Characters

Daniel

Daniel is the narrator of the story. He writes a daily journal, which sometimes has long periods between entries depending on whether he has something humorous and/or important to record. He suffers over the loss of his younger brother, Jed, and at times sees people who look exactly like him. Early on in the story, Daniel starts a relationship with Karla. He chronicles the development of their love while working for Microsoft and later for Michael's company, Interiority.

The character of Daniel has a sharp wit regarding the strange people who work in the high-tech industry and the situations in which they find themselves. He does not quite fit the mold of a programmer, yet he can perform program development well enough to be accepted. Daniel holds onto the growing relationship with Karla dearly and worries at times that she will leave him for somebody better looking and richer.

Daniel goes through several changes by the end of the book. He takes better care of himself and has learned how to be a programmer. Karla has opened up his mind and heart, which makes him a happier person. The love that comes out of his mother's crisis removes the burden he has been carrying regarding Jed. What remains the same is his sharp wit, his curiosity about the world and his ability to feel compassion for others.

Karla

Karla is a young, neurotic and extremely intelligent young woman who works in an office close to Daniel's at the Microsoft Redmond headquarters. She warms up to him after he brings her food and origami paper. Little by little, she reveals herself to Daniel until she becomes fully in love with him. More secure with herself, she lets her hair grow long and becomes more attractive. This attracts the attentions of other men, which she finds uncomfortable and disturbing.

One of Karla's greatest desires is to build a relationship with Daniel's mother. Her attempts fail until after the mother's stroke. Karla gives her massages and keeps telling everybody that the mother is still there, even though the stroke has left her paralyzed. After the mother, with the help of Michael, begins typing messages on a computer, she informs Karla that she considers her a daughter.

A big part of Karla's past involves being raised by parents who expected her to be of average or below intelligence. This simply made her work harder at putting her natural intelligence to use, a method of aggression. Daniel admires her intelligence, which is one of the reasons she became attracted to him. Karla is also intuitive, while Daniel is not, nor does he carry too much emotional baggage other than for his dead brother, Jed. They share similar senses of humor, although Daniel likes to write his out, whereas



Karla simply acts out the humor and is done with it. The couple has very little competition and quite a bit of mutual support.

Todd

Todd works with Daniel at Microsoft as a software tester. They find common ground in this shared work experience and the oddball humor. However, Todd cannot seem to connect with women for anything greater than meaningless sex and one-night stands. His background also has fundamentalist Christian parents in it, which has left him with an insatiable sexual drive. This changes when he meets Dusty, who becomes pregnant and gives birth. Having the responsibilities of a father, Todd may or may not settle down. Indications are that he is moving in this direction because he feels remorse about kissing a woman in Las Vegas.

Susan

Susan becomes rich when her Microsoft stock vests. She throws a party and hunts for a house. However, Michael's new company attracts her as a major investor. She ends up making more money when the company becomes successful. Not very successful with relationships, Susan puts her energy into a support group for women she calls Chyx. The group becomes wildly successful once CNN carries a feature story about it.

Bug

Bug is a programmer who comes out of the closet and admits his homosexuality. He tries to start a relationship, but fails miserably because he has no idea how this works. Daniel admires Bug's courage to finally try to become who he really is, rather than hiding in the high-tech work world.

Michael

Michael is the programmer who starts Interiority. He keeps the others working hard on the project and gives Daniel's father a job. He also builds a relationship with Amy through email, even though he has no idea what gender or age she is. Michael is the chief architect of Oop!, since he understands the underlying software engine.

Abe

Abe is a programmer who leaves Microsoft to join Interiority just when the company has run out of money. He brings in the needed capital to keep the company going. Abe becomes a co-architect with Michael.



Daniel's Father

Daniel's father has lost his job with IBM, has a hard time coping, and goes to work for Michael. His project is to build the Lego blocks sculptures in an office building. He later learns C++ programming.

Daniel's Mother

Daniel's mother joins a competitive swimming group. She later has a stroke, and the crisis brings everybody together into a loving family.

Ethan

Ethan is the marketing person for Interiority. He strikes Michael as being very smarmy and possibly evil at first. However, Ethan suffers from bad epidermal problems, and when Michael realizes how much he suffers, he warms up to Ethan. Ethan later contracts cancer and goes on chemotherapy.

Dusty

Dusty becomes Todd's love interest. She is a competitive body builder, a math whiz and a competent programmer. She later gives birth to Todd's child.

Amy

Amy is a twenty-year-old Canadian woman with whom Michael falls in love. She is strong, tough-minded and intelligent. Amy has also fallen in love with Michael through email. They strike up an instant sexually-charged relationship once they meet in person.

Shaw

Shaw is Daniel's boss at Microsoft. He is in his forties and no longer programs. Daniel feels sorry for him.

Jed

Jed is Daniel's deceased younger brother. His memory haunts Daniel.



Objects/Places

Redmond, Washington

Redmond, Washington, is the location of the Microsoft headquarters. The story starts out in this setting.

Palo Alto, California

Palo Alto, California, is where Interiority starts out in Daniel's parents' house. The story ends in this setting after Daniel's mother suffers a stroke.

Las Vegas, Nevada

Las Vegas, Nevada, is where the technical conference takes place. The company members learn of Daniel's mother's stroke here and immediately return home.

Microsoft

Microsoft is a software company, primarily, that produces Windows. The company has held the largest market share of desktop operating systems since the early 1990s.

Apple

Apple is a hardware and software company. It is the biggest competitor to Microsoft for desktop market share.

Interiority

Interiority is the company that Michael starts and the rest of the main characters join. The company goes through hard financial times but finally makes good profits.

Oop!

Oop! is the software product that Daniel and the others work on while being employed by Interiority. The product makes graphics programming very easy.



Lego Blocks

Lego blocks are building toys, consisting of interconnecting colored plastic bricks. *Oop!* is based on the concept that anything can be built from fundamental components, similar to Lego blocks.

Programmers

Programmers are people who design and write the software that runs on computers. Most of the characters in the story are programmers.

Lisa-units

Lisa-units are the technical conference booth attendees in Las Vegas. This is the term that the Interiority employees give them because they all look the same and the females seem to be all named Lisa.

Massage

Massage is the technique that Karla uses to grow closer to Daniel. She also gives his mother massages after her stroke.

Themes

Conformity

People tend to conform to their cultures, and the same is true about computer programmers. Daniel observes that the culture changes from generation to generation, and even within a generation depending on the corporation. The term "corporate culture" has been coined to reflect this phenomenon. He also notices that the kinds of people attracted to programming share many common traits, such as not having a real life. This means that the job takes up all attention and energy, leaving nothing left for the usual activities in an adult human's life.

Trying to be a nonconformist can also lead to conformity. Susan goes into a punk rock and art appreciation phase, which is quickly replaced by her desire to decorate a house that looks exactly like one she visits in San Francisco. True individuality is difficult to obtain, and its value may be questionable. Of all the characters, Amy seems to be the most unconventional, yet she also may be a bit insane. However, the very desire of nonconformity stems from adolescence, and Daniel has observed that in high tech, extending adolescence is encouraged.

On the other hand, enforced conformity has serious drawbacks. The Lisa-units at the technical convention all look the same, sound the same and seem to have the same names. This cannot help any company to differentiate its products from the others. The employees from Interiority have contempt for employees from another company who all dress alike, but any group of employees from any other start-up company would likely have the same attitude and look the same.

Freedom

Freedom can take many forms, from the freedom of movement to speaking freely. While working for Microsoft, Michael must respond to the demands of his boss and does so up to a point. He then exercises his freedom to leave the corporation and start his own company. By exercising his freedom, he also takes on the insecurity and responsibility that goes along with the choice. His new company could have easily failed had the product not been saleable or had the economy taken a sharp downturn.

Daniel and the others also exercise their freedom to quit Microsoft and join Michael's company. However, each carries emotional problems that are difficult to subdue. Susan wants very much to build a relationship and yet nothing comes together for her. Bug tries to break free from his major burden by declaring his homosexuality, but his first attempt at building a relationship quickly falls apart. Every person has some form of internal conflicts that thwart free movement toward desired goals, and the challenge is to overcome the conflicts. Few people can do this alone.



Daniel needs Karla as much as she needs him, which brings about a healthy balance in their relationship. Both gain the freedom to move ahead in their lives, which Todd notices and comments that he would like to have such a relationship in a sincere but awkward way. His relationship with Dusty is not perfect, as is true about most relationships, and may be seen as restrictive with the birth of the child. Regardless, what Todd needs most is to break out of the pattern of meaningless sex he has fallen into and move into a different level of human existence. He may find that being a father frees him more than anything else.

Love

The search for love has been one of the most common and powerful themes in literature, from the ancient world until today. In this story, Daniel seeks assurance that his father still loves him along with nurturing Karla's love. His journey toward love is difficult but not nearly as bad as it could be. In several ways, Daniel is extremely lucky. He has not gone through a string of disastrous relationships to find Karla, and she possesses a natural wisdom about people and their needs. Neither have dark secrets that, if revealed, would destroy the love.

Oftentimes stories about love turn out to be tragedies. A main character dies, expressions of love become murderous or true love is rejected. This story is a comedy with a happy ending, even though tragedy strikes Daniel's mother. A significant danger in telling this kind of story involves falling into sappy unrealistic scenes in which, through some kind of magic, people come to love each other unconditionally. The love described in the story has plenty of conditions. The death of Daniel's younger brother puts conditions on how Daniel can love. Karla puts conditions on how much and how rapidly she reveals herself to him. Michael and Amy would have never built their love had they initially met in person.

In reality people love somewhat conditionally. Age, body shape, blood relations and a host of other conditions play into the situation. Nevertheless, the story brings unlikely characters together in unconventional ways, and love blooms. This illustrates how the need for love can overpower other misgivings and lead to unexpected levels of happiness.

Style

Point of View

The point of view (POV) is first person, and because of this, the POV is limited. The reader must depend upon Daniel's honesty in expression and accuracy in perception. Generally, readers start out trusting a first person narration unless something happens to cast doubt. With Daniel, he never stumbles over self-contradiction. This maintains the reader's trust.

Daniel sees the world as a young man in his latter twenties. He is part of the high-tech industry, but only in a casual way. He makes a living through programming and does not let it consume his entire psyche, as do most of the other characters. The reader learns this by what Daniel thinks, not by what others think about him other than what Daniel reports. He constantly questions and analyzes the situations and environments in the high-tech industry, usually with a sarcastic wit.

The narrator feels compassion for others and suspends judgment easily. He at first dislikes Ethan, but after learning more about the man, Daniel accepts him as being human, not evil. His POV is that everyone is trying to make their way through life the best they can, and if a person must become a Lisa-unit to survive, it is no better or worse than being a snarky young man among eccentric programmers.

Daniel also has the ability to understand how others must view life. His POV becomes somewhat omniscient at times, and although he claims to not be at all intuitive, his observations indicate otherwise. Daniel has not yet fully grown into adulthood, so he underestimates his capabilities.

Setting

The setting starts out in the wooded environment of Redmond, Washington and moves to the urban environment of Palo Alto, California. The contrast is stark. Daniel observes and appreciates nature in Washington and pays little attention to it in California. This is partly due to the concentration on programming and mostly due to the urban setting. The automated pool cleaning device is more interesting than the planted trees and other vegetation in the Palo Alto neighborhood.

While near Los Angeles, Daniel notices that California consists of two separate cultures, the north and south. Settings in the north tend to be hip and dynamic. Settings in the south tend to be established or decaying. The Las Vegas setting is different from anywhere else on earth. People go there and hardly anyone is from there, or so Daniel thinks. His perception is limited to the technical conference and gambling casinos.

Two major indoor settings are the rumpus room turned office area in Daniel's parents' house and the Lego block sculpture garden in the office building. The house office area



degrades over time into a chaos of toys, junk and messy work areas. The Lego block office maintains its unique impact on the workers and visitors.

The setting of the touching final scene is less important than what Daniel's mother types on the computer, appearing on a screen that casts a bluish glow. She sits on a chair, propped up by others, with Michael bending over her to detect her slight finger movements through his and complete the typing. The others are gathered around, intensely interested in whether Michael might be actually doing the communication and not the mother. A few tests confirm that the mother is indeed communicating.

Language and Meaning

The narrator uses period high-tech slang that tends to invent words and brings new meanings to old words. Those readers who worked in the computer field during the time will recognize the slang, while younger readers will likely need to research some of the more esoteric usages. For example, the technology for connecting to the Internet at the time was the telephony modem. Today Internet connection technologies are faster, and the telephony technology is called DSL. The World Wide Web had only been released. Nobody but insiders knew about the network GUI technology in the 1993-94 time frame.

One of the hallmarks of high-tech slang is the respelling of old words. Chicks becomes Chyx, for example. The intention is to lampoon the odd spellings that high-tech companies come up with, such as Google. This is a misspelling of the math term Googolplex. The underlying humor is that Googolplex itself is an entirely made-up word to indicate a huge number that, by its initial definition, could never be written out.

The reader may or may not pick up on the humor in the language because much of it depends on understanding the history of computer science, programming languages and mathematics. The term ENIAC is used, which refers to the first general-purpose electronic digital computer made. It was built with vacuum tubes rather than transistors, so the connotations are age, first of a kind and obsolescence.

Besides the period slang, the narrator uses the simple syntax that one would expect in a daily journal. Daniel does tend to use odd but genuine English terms, not computer slang, which reveals the writer behind the story winking at the reader as if to say, "No programmer would ever use this or that word. I made it all up."

Structure

The novel is separated into seven chapters with dated subsections. It has no prolog or epilog, and the only front matter is a table of contents. The story follows a straight chronology that begins on a Friday in the early fall, 1993 and ending on Tuesday, January 17, 1995.

The author inserts text in large, bolded fonts that relate his subconscious notes file. The notes file contain random thoughts and impressions that Daniel has. He records them to

supposedly give his computer a subconscious, but the entries are actually part of the overall story. These notes indicate what Daniel sees and experiences randomly throughout the day.



Quotes

"Todd's the most fun of all the house members because he is all impulse and no consideration."

Chapter 1, Microserfs, p. 11

"It's all so new. She's heaven. Imagine losing heaven!"

Chapter 1, Microserfs, p. 45

"Michael has designed this amazing code and the scary part is completed already—the proprietary work that could have only sprouted from Michael's brain—Object Oriented Programming from another galaxy."

Chapter 2, Oop, p. 71

"There's this term used in computers, where you try and squish something into another operating system holus-bolus, and the results are not always effective. The term is called 'spooging.'"

Chapter 2, Oop, p. 101

"Abe emailed from Redmond. He finally fessed up to something that I've known a long time—that nobody really knows where Silicon Valley is—or what it is."

Chapter 3, Interiority, p. 129

"We roared south past the rolling hills that oozed trees and fog."

Chapter 3, Interiority, p. 151

"You just can't compete with the dead. It would be easier if I had another brother or a sister, but I was born after the Pill."

Chapter 4, FaceTime, p. 186

"Interval Research's headquarters were like a middle-class honeymoon hotel in Maui circa 1976, and slightly gone to seed, with Gilligan's Island-style lagoonlets between buildings and a lobby with a vaguely medical/dental, is-this-where-I-drop-off-my-urine-sample? feel."

Chapter 4, FaceTime, p. 212

"Dusty was trying on a new marigold yellow posing bikini she's hoping to wear in this Fall's Iron Rose IV Competition in San Diego. Dusty herself was the color of a roasted



turkey."

Chapter 5, TrekPolitiks, p. 233

"Ethan says Type-A personalities have a whole subset of diseases that they, and only they, sare, and the transmission vector for these diseases is the DOOR CLOSE button on elevators that only get pushed by impatient, Type-A people."

Chapter 5, TrekPolitiks, p. 277

"Susan, Emmett, Dusty and about a dozen Chyx organized together over the Net, and decided to picket Fry's for fostering female de-intelligence by not selling tampons."

Chapter 6, Chyx, p. 307

"Anyway, we concluded that if we were forced at gunpoint to have a tattoo put onto us, the only acceptable tattoo we could think of was a bar code symbol."

Chapter 6, Chyx, p. 315

"At the mall in Caesar's Palace we bumped into the BuildX team at the Warner Brothers store. We bought our Marvin the Martian coffee mugs and house slippers, glared at the BuildX team, and left."

Chapter 7, Transhumanity, p. 347

"I'm worried about Mom . . . and I'm thinking about Jed, and suddenly I look around at Bug and Susan and Michael and everybody and I realize, that what's been missing for so long isn't missing anymore."

Chapter 7, Transhumanity, p. 371

Topics for Discussion

Why do high-tech companies prefer to hire people below the age of thirty or forty?

How does Daniel describe being in love?

What motivates Michael to start his own company?

Why does Abe join Interiority?

What are the similarities and difference between Susan and Amy?

Why is Dusty so grateful that her newborn daughter has all her fingers and toes?

Describe Todd's inner conflicts.

What information about herself does Karla share with Daniel and nobody else?

Why does Oop! become a successful software product?