**Secrets, Secrets Are No Fun Unless You Share With Everyone**

**Introduction**

Bob worked at a publicly traded company in the computer software industry, Computer Inc. He was the Vice President of Sales where he reported directly to the CEO. Joe Smith is one of Bob’s very close friends and co-worker. He was a sales executive and also directly reported to the CEO. Both Bob and Joe had worked at the company for over ten years and had formed a very close relationship not only with each other, but had also become close friends with the CEO of the company.

As a very well experienced manager in an executive position, Bob thought that he had dealt with a lot of situations in which he had to make hard decisions. It was part of his job from very early on. However, he was not prepared for the information he would be told that would turn into a situation involving a close friend and co-worker, his CEO and circumstances in which his ethical values and character would be put to the test.

**Background**

Bob and Joe would soon have to deal with the elephant in the room; the secret that would open a door that could not be closed; a secret that could tear their friendship apart or bring them closer together. The fate of their decision lied in the whisper of three little words.

It was nearing the end of the quarter and it was very important that Computer Inc. meet its goals for revenue and profit and so far this quarter was not looking good. It was going to be a stretch to make the numbers for the end of June, which would directly reflect Bob’s performance as Vice President of Sales. There was a particular focus on a specific customer contract whose outcome would determine whether or not Computer Inc. would successfully meet their quarterly goals or not. It was the last year of a 3-year contract with this specific customer and the terms were that the contract was to expire on June 30th, but would then automatically renew for another three years on July 1st, the first day of the next quarter.

One of Bob’s very close and personal friends and co-worker, Joe Smith was given an assignment by the CEO to travel to the customer and request they formally accept the new three year contract renewal on June 30, so as to allow Computer Inc. to collect that revenue for their end of June quarter benefitting their company by making their numbers for the month. The Customer was going to receive a bill automatically on July 1st for the renewal of the three year contract regardless of whether or not they agreed to accept the contract a day early.

**The Challenge**

Bob received a phone call from Joe on the last day of the quarter on June 30 saying that the customers agreed to the contract a day early and it was already signed and submitted to corporate. Bob could not believe it; this meant that they had made their June numbers. Joe and Bob continued their phone conversation for a few more minutes planning how they were going to celebrate once Joe had returned from his trip. Then, just before Bob went to hang up the phone, Joe whispered to him through the phone “It’s a fake”. Joe confides to Bob that he forged the signature on the customer contract so that they could recognize the revenue for the month of June allowing the company to earn more profit. Making these numbers would also demonstrate Bob’s superior performance to the CEO showing him how well he worked under pressure and was able to get things done as the Vice President of Sales.

Joe is one of Bob’s very close friends and has been for a very long time. Joe told Bob this in confidence and was the only person he had told. Bob knew that the customer was never going to know the difference because they were automatically going to be billed for the renewal of the contract the next day.