

CHAPTER 1:

THE SHARONVILLE JUNGLE

As I pulled off Sharon Road and passed through a mound of earth and barbed wire fencing that looked more like a prison than a factory, I felt a surge of excitement. I had just quit a management position at Procter & Gamble to take a job as a first line foreman at Ford Motor Company's Sharonville Transmission Plant. It was a step down in status, a big step up in salary, and it was going to be my last job in corporate America. When I saved enough money, I would kiss corporate life goodbye and strike out on my own.

I slipped into a parking space in the lot designated as Management Parking Only, pocketed my keys, and got out. I was still about 100 yards from the guard shack, and the immensity of the Sharonville Transmission Plant struck me. There it was, at the end of a lot built to accommodate nearly 6,000 cars. The gray cinder block walls of a two million square foot industrial plant that occupied hundreds of acres of land. An endless expanse of concrete with dirty, 20-foot-high windows, and a loading dock capable of feeding an entire fleet of eighteen wheelers. Steam or smoke, I could not tell which, punctuated a blustery sky above the plant's flat roof and partially obscured the overbearing letters on the immense white sign that spelled a single word: FORD.

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