The Human Hacking Field Guide

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Revision History

Revision 1134	2004-08-20	shlomif
Started working on this document after forking the template of an older one.		
Revision 1143	2004-08-21	shlomif
Added up to the middle of the "Are you done insulting me?" chapter.		
Revision 1152	2004-08-22	shlomif
Added to the end of "I'm just a geek".		
Revision 1158	2004-08-22	shlomif
Added to the end of the first IRC conversation ("BETH!").		
Revision 1168	2004-08-24	shlomif
Added to the end of "She still is…"		
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Added to the end of "Evil HTML E-mail"		
Revision 1194	2004-08-27	shlomif
Added to the end of "TRIZ"		
Revision 1203	2004-08-30	shlomif
Added to the end of "Divine's Good"		
Revision 1266	2004-09-30	shlomif
Added to the end of "'Abandoning' Debian" and fixed many typos and incorrections.		
Revision 1280	2004-10-02	shlomif
Fixed many typos, many of which were discovered by Andrew Dexter.		
Revision 1284	2004-10-05	shlomif
Added to the End of "RMS is Coming to Town".		
Revision 1287	2004-10-07	shlomif
Added to the End of "God Works in Mysterious Ways".		
Revision 1289	2004-10-09	shlomif
Fixed many typos reported by Uri Bruck.		
Revision 1369	2005-05-20	shlomif
Fixed some typos.		
Revision 1373	2005-05-27	shlomif
Finished the document, and spell-checked it.		
Revision 1379	2005-05-28	shlomif
Changed "FreeNode" to "Freenode". Also fixed two minor but important typos and mis-punctuations.		
Revision 1380	2005-05-28	shlomif
Fixed some missing quotes, courtesy of Freenode's AthlonRob [http://rob.axpr.net/].		
Revision 1382	2005-05-28	shlomif
Read the story cover to cover, and fixed many typos I discovered.		
Revision 1384	2005-05-30	shlomif
Fixed some problems courtesy of Steve Harris.		
Revision 1389	2005-06-01	shlomif
Added another joke to the last chapter.		
Revision 1414	2005-10-14	shlomif

Revamped a part in "Divine's Good". Also fixed a lot of other bad phrasing, punctuation, etc.

Revision 1418	2005-10-17	shlomif

Made the "radius" detail much more realistic. (10 km instead of 40 km)

Revision 1443	2005-11-05	shlomif

Fixed the major/minor mix-ups in "God Works in Mysterious Ways".

Revision 1443	2005-11-05	shlomif

Corrected a typo.

Revision 1559	2005-11-05	shlomif

Corrected a typo and changed a word to a variant with more character.

Revision 1685	2007-04-09	shlomif

Corrected a few errors in "Search of Lost Time"

Revision 1752	2007-05-09	shlomif

Revamped the beginning (discussion of how to get into a better college) to make it more believable.

Revision 1841	2008-07-15	shlomif

Revamped the start of the beach scene.

Revision 2710	2009-09-07	shlomif

Revamped the "Committing Adultery in Your Heart is…" part, a little.

Revision 2768	2009-09-14	shlomif

Made various corrections and enhancements.

Revision 3001	2009-10-06	shlomif

Some grammar, and formatting corrections. Changed dot-dot-dots to Unicode ellipses ("…"). Converted a quote to a blockquote.

Revision 3135	2009-11-06	shlomif

Converted the spelling of "Maths" to the commonwealth spelling (which is the standard spelling used for my English stories).

Revision 3904	2011-02-27	shlomif

Converted to DocBook 5, upgraded the licence to CC-by-sa-3.0, and added my homepage as a link.

Revision 3954	2011-03-12	shlomif

Revised the paragraph describing RMS to those unfamiliar with him, per his request.

Revision 3955	2011-03-12	shlomif

Add the third IRC conversation - "She must be a fine cat".

Revision 4354	2011-04-12	shlomif

Finished writing the "She must be a fine cat" chapter.

Revision 4356	2011-04-13	shlomif

Converted a lot of punctuation to Unicode.

Revision 5179	2012-09-20	shlomif

Correct some spelling errors reported by a spell checking script.

Revision 5656	2012-01-30	shlomif

Correct university into college. Thanks to muskrateer.

Revision 5758	2013-02-11	shlomif

Start correcting the English phrasing to be more somewhat more mature. Thanks to ssta (from Freenode) and Joel (from the E-mail).

Revision 5759	2013-04-10	shlomif

Add the abstract.

Abstract

Jennifer (loosely based on Buffy [https://buffy.fandom.com/wiki/Buffy_Summers] from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buffy_the_Vampire_Slayer_%28TV_series%29]) is a trendy and popular high school senior who is living and studying in the vicinity of Los Angeles. Her best friend, Taylor (Xander [https://buffy.fandom.com/wiki/Alexander_Harris]), convinces her to try to become a developer of open source software. He puts her under the tutorship of a different friend of his, the female open source contributor Eve (Faith [https://buffy.fandom.com/wiki/Faith_Lehane]), who prefers to be called "Erisa", and who is a self-conscious and rebelling

punk, with whom Jennifer finds it hard to deal. Jennifer remains determined to learn how to become an open source developer from Erisa, but there are some surprises along the road.

Table of Contents

The Things you do to Get to College

My name is Jennifer. Jennifer Susan Raymond, to be exact. I live near Los Angeles, in one of those nice neighbourhoods that they always show in movies. I'm in my high-school senior year now.

Allow me to introduce myself further. The first thing to note is that I'm an honours student. I especially like Mathematics, whose high school exercises are easy and fun and the difficult ones, which can be found in puzzle books and Math competitions, are challenging. I'm also good in other subjects, but Math is really my passion. Other than that I'm blonde, have a cute face (I don't really consider myself beautiful, but most guys seem to think so) and try to dress as elegantly as I can. As a Math geek, I sure have a social life. Everybody around me seems to like me.

Finally, I should tell about Taylor Lawrence, who is my best friend. When we were in the fourth grade, we were both grounded for 4 weeks, and, as a result, quickly became friends. When we were 12, we started having, eh, sexual sensations, so we started dating each other at first. However, we then both had a crush on different people, and we were relieved when we found out. We decided exploring our feelings would not be a worthwhile goal, and we dated other people since.

Taylor is probably even more popular than I am. Even though he wears prescription glasses, he looks great, and girls almost always agree to go with him on dates, and sometimes ask him out themselves. One thing he seems to like and I don't is computers. He spends hours on end tampering with his computer at home. Mine, on the other hand, is almost always turned off. I have good hand writing, thank you, so I don't need a word processor. I turn it on only to listen to audio files, do some random browsing on the Internet (either for research, or to kill time or whatever) or play Freecell or Tetris. I think computers are impersonal and boring.

It all started one day, when I was attending class, paying attention to the teacher, when suddenly it hit me: I don't have any special skills, and have never really been involved in the community. So, no prestigious college will prefer me over someone else. This bothered me so much that for the rest of the day, I just mechanically wrote down what the teacher said in my notebook, and kept worrying about this issue.

I would really like to graduate from somewhere nice, so I can be proud of myself, and have the entire world at my disposal. But my entire life I've been concerned only about myself and my friends, trying to be happy (and being very successful at it), and just doing what my studies required me to do. I've never really been involved in anything for the community. And I never found it necessary to get any special skills, unless you call hitting the gym twice a week (with Taylor), jogging, and biking — special.

So I was relieved when I met Taylor that day, when we both finished school.

"Taylor, I'm worried about college." I told him.

"Why?" he said.

"I don't have any special skills and no community involvement."

"Jenn, you're sweet, intelligent and the kindest person I know. Every college will be glad to have you."

"So are most of the other candidates they get, but as opposed to me, they do have some special skills and show some community involvement. How am I going to get it by the end of this year?"

"Well, you might as well try."

"Try what?"

"Learning a special skill", he said.

"A special skill? Like what?"

"You could study Sumerian!"

"Sumerian? What on Earth would I do with Sumerian?", I said, unamused.

"Talk to native speakers of Sumerian, of course."

Now I was angry. "They're all dead!"

"OK, OK. How about Latin or Hebrew or Greek?"

"I have a hard enough time studying Spanish, and you know how all of its vocabulary just clutters my mind, and I do not really need to learn another language."

"Si, comprendo." Taylor said. "OK, OK", he continued. "I know - why don't you help the poor or whatever. Tutor kids with difficulties."

"Well…" I thought for a moment, "Taylor, you're just making up random suggestions."

Taylor thought for a moment.

"How about if you do something that I can help you with, and you can relate to, and that will also expand your knowledge. Jenn, what do you say about becoming an open-source hacker?"

From talking to Taylor, I already knew that hacker did not necessarily mean a computer intruder, but rather someone who was technically inclined, and who liked to bend the rules. So I told him:

"Open-source hacker? You know perfectly well that I'm a computer-phobic."

"Jennifer, you're a computer-phobic now, but you can grow to like computers. I mean what are your options? Become an Electronics hacker like Jonathan is?"

Jonathan is my boyfriend, and has been since the start of the eleventh grade. He likes to build machines with wires, batteries, and many other components. Taylor and he have become good friends.

"Electronics? You know I have two left hands with these kind of things."

"But Jenn, you're left-handed!"

"So I have two right hands! Taylor, are we going to argue about semantics now?"

"OK, but Jenn," and he held my hands, "I want you to better relate to what I'm doing".

"Hmmm…." I said. I started feeling guilt and confusion and lots of other feelings. "Alright. ", I said, "I'll be an open-source hacker. Or at least try to. So… are you going to give me private lessons and stuff?"

"Sure, why not. " he said, "Wait a second! Hold that thought - I think I have a better idea. Come with me." he said, and he went down the hall.

I followed him for a few hallways and then we entered a computer lab. There he walked over to some figure (looked like a girl) with purple (!) hair.

"Hi!" he said.

"Hiiiii…" I heard an enthusiastic feminine voice. "Whatcha doing here?"

"Jenn, please come here. Jenn I'd like you to meet Eve Siegel, who likes to be called 'Erisa'. Erisa, I told you about Jenn."

I looked at this Erisa character. Her hair was dyed purple, her face had too much makeup, and her facial expression was horrid. Remember that episode in *Sabrina - The Teenage Witch* where Sabrina transforms herself into a punk? She looked only a bit better than that.

"Hi…" I said reluctantly.

"Hmmm… " said Erisa, "a bit too elegant for this school, aren't we. I know your type of girls. Let me guess: you are an honours student, right?"

"Yes," I told her.

"You exercise a lot".

I was becoming worried — "Yeah.".

"You listen to these girlie bands like NSync, All Saints, Backstreet Boys, Britney Spears and…"

"Well…", I wanted to say that I did not like NSync much.

"Yes, Atomic Kitten! These babes are the worst."

How does she know that I have all their CDs?

"Furthermore, you're a goody two shoes, never violated any rules, your parents are proud of you, you watch shows like *Friends* and *Seinfeld* and *Sabrina*. Eukh… I hate Melissa Joan Hart so much…"

I could not take it anymore. She seemed to know everything about me, I started crying and left the room to the hallway. I hardly even noticed that everyone in the lab was looking at me.

Taylor went out and came to me. He hugged me and calmed me down.

"Am I as superficial as she describes?" I asked after I stopped crying.

"Jenn, don't take Erisa so seriously. She's a bit of a punk, and seem to have a grudge against the world at large and pop culture in particular."

"Why do you want her to tutor me in hacking?"

"Because she is a girl, so you won't have prejudice."

"She might be a girl, but she doesn't seem like a human being."

"Trust me, she is once you get to know her better. And she gets to know you."

"Can't you find another girl hacker to tutor me?"

"Jennifer… she's the best girl hacker in a 10-kilometre radius and one of the best hackers I know, female or male. She's the best person I can think of."

"Fine," I told him, "I'll give it a shot.". The things you do to get into college.

We entered the room again, and Taylor and I approached Erisa.

"Erisa, Jennifer here would like to become an open-source hacker."

"She?" she made a fake laugh, "What for?"

"To get into a better college." I said.

"You want to engage in a purely altruistic activity for a selfish cause? Well, I won't be the judge of that."

"Hmmpff," I said.

"Anyway, if you want me to tutor you, it will cost you. My software is free, girlfriend, but my time isn't. 20 bucks an hour. And trust me, I'm almost never this cheap. I'm just doing it as a favour to Taylor here."

"20 dollars is fine, I guess." I told her.

She opened her bag, took out the school's students list, said "Jennifer?", (I said "Raymond"), and checked my address. "Heh", she said, "a couple of blocks from my house." She took note of my name in her PDA, which she placed on the computer's desk.

"Now for some homework. Go to the Internet and read 'How to become a Hacker' by Eric S. Raymond. I'll drop by in two days, and guide you through the installation process of 'Mandrake Linux'. Chicks dig Mandrake, and while I'm using Debian, it'd probably be the best for you."

"Thanks, I said." I took a mental note of the resource, shook Erisa's hand, and left the lab.

Are You Done Insulting Me?

The next day, I approached Taylor in one of the breaks, carrying a printout of this "How to Become a Hacker" essay. I was quite vexed, and wanted to consult him about it.

"Taylor," I said without saying hello, "what the hell does this Eric Raymond character want from me?".

"What did you find wrong with what he wrote?"

"Let's see: role playing games - you know I hate them."

"You don't need to like RPGs to be a hacker."

"Or Science Fiction. I prefer humorous writings and Realism."

"It won't make you any less of a computer geek."

"Here's another thing:", I said as I went over the document, "'Zen or Martial Arts'. You know the mere thought of hurting someone else freaks me out and that I hit like a girl.".

"Hit like a girl?", Taylor said, "Tell you what - here's my open hand. Hit it as hard as you can with your fist? Let's check your claim."

"Really," I said looking at his open hand?

"Yeah sure. I'm ready."

I backed up my right hand, and hit his fist as hard as I could. Taylor cried "ow", and rubbed his left hand with his right. Then he said while still in pain, "You forgot that we go to the gym twice a week."

"Oh, right… weight-training… among else. Are you alright?"

"I'll be OK.", he said as he released his left hand. "But I don't think you hit like a girl. Keep that in mind in case you get into a chick fight one day."

"Heh", I smiled, "So I'm a bit strong. So what? I still don't want to learn Martial Arts." I said. "And what kind of language is 'Python' . Who would name a language after a snake."

"Well, as far as I know Erisa, she'll probably teach you Perl instead."

"But Raymond says…"

"ESR (that's how we refer to Eric S. Raymond), is a nice guy, but he has several faults. One of them is being a Pythoneer who bashes Perl quite irrationally. Erisa has learned Perl as her first language out of the so-called 'scripting languages', and she still prefers it to Python. She also told me that someone once told her that he'd rather teach people Perl first, because it's a language they can express themselves in."

"Well, I also recall Pascal from my days,", I said, "so I guess I'll be alright."

"Jenn, " he told me as he held my hands, "I'm sure you will.".

Are you Done - Part 2

Erisa dropped by my house on Saturday. My brother answered the door, and was shocked, and a bit scared of the way she looked. After consulting me, I told him it was alright, and let her into my room.

Erisa brought the CDs of the Linux distribution (they were burned), and said I could keep them. "Before we start, let me start Windows and check for configuration and stuff," she said.

"Wow!" she said later, "65 Gigs free out of 80? You obviously don't make too much use of this machine. Well, that'll give us enough space for installing Linux."

"OK," she said, "now you sit at the computer and go through the installation, read the instructions and let me know what you think. I'll let you know what you should do next."

"OK," I said, as we switched places.

Well, except for the part about re-partitioning which confused me a bit, everything was reasonably understood. Then Erisa instructed me to reboot the computer.

When it started, it displayed a nice graphical menu which said if I would like to start Linux or Windows. I chose Linux naturally. Then a large number of messages appeared (Erisa said even she didn't fully knew what they meant), and then I got the so-called "login" prompt, that asked me for a username.

"OK, " said Erisa, "we took note of your username and password, and of your root password. The root user can do anything, so it is considered a bad idea to use it all the time. When I started using Linux like you, I worked as root all the time, but you shouldn't duplicate my mistakes."

"Heh heh", I giggled. "OK, I'll just enter 'jennray' here, and 'schrodinger6590' here. OK?"

"Yes."

After that, this thing called KDE loaded ("KDE is the number one desktop for chicks"), displaying a nice boot screen. And afterwards, I saw the work screen.

"Wow!" I said, "this is beautiful.". And indeed it was: the icons were smooth and attractive, the windows had very nice decorations, it just invited people to play with it. I figured out the menu with the star was equivalent to Windows' "Start" thingy, and started browsing the menus and starting applications.

"Hold it right there, girlfriend!" Erisa barfed at me, "You ain't paying me to play with Linux on my time. Now let me show you some things…"

She showed me how to access the two control centres (one for the desktop, and one for the entire system). How to browse and manage files using the file manager (it had a cute Home icon), and explained about the kate text editor and why text editors in general are useful in UNIX. ("Linux belongs to a large family of operating systems, past and present, called UNIXes, which share a lot in common. So if you hear the term 'UNIX', don't freak out.")

She ended up with searching Google and the Web for some good resources for learning HTML. She bookmarked all of them in the web browser, and then said:

"Now, your homework for the next week is to prepare a homepage for yourself, after you've read everything I bookmarked for you. (Possibly, along with reading it). Because you're such an uninteresting girl, you'll probably want to fill it with things you like, useless links, and raves about the *Power Puff Girls*. But I won't judge you. Just make sure it has a lot of content in it."

"Are you done insulting me?" I answered.

"For now," and she grinned, "see you next weekend."

"Bye, I said!" and I paid her for her time.

She sure seemed to know her stuff, but had a strange way of conveying it to me.

I'm just a Geek…

"I hate her, I positively and completely hate her." I said to Jonathan. (Who, like I said, was my boyfriend)

We were sitting in a nice restaurant having dinner. Yet, I could think of nothing more pleasant to bring than Erisa and her idiosyncrasies.

"Jenn, Taylor seems to be fond of her, so she cannot be all bad. Maybe she just sees you as a stereotype."

"Well," I told him, "I'm not going to stop liking Atomic Kitten, just because she thinks they are a girly band. And I am a girl, damn it!"

"I have a better idea: why don't you prove to her that you're competent as a programmer? She seems to like Taylor, even though we both know that he likes Atomic Kitten and all the other girly bands as much as you."

"Well, maybe you're right. I still have time on this weekend, I could try learning HTML and getting most of my homepage done. I think the next week won't be so busy and so I can tweak it even more."

"Right, maybe that way you'll earn her respect."

And so I did. I studied HTML (Hyper Text Markup Language) and its CSS (Cascading Style Sheets) thing. I created a homepage with:

1. Some information about myself. My bio, my C.V.

2. Pictures of myself and my family.

3. Some jokes and quotations I was fond of.

4. Links to books that I liked.

5. Links to my friends' web-pages.

6. Some rants and raves about movies I've been to.

7. Some pages about the *Power Puff Girls*, Atomic Kitten and Britney Spears. (I added them to tease Erisa)

All of this with a nice style — I played with the colours endlessly to get them right — and everything. It was actually quite fun, and I found myself doing it when I got too tired of doing homework.

Eventually, I had a lot to show for. When Saturday came, I showed it to Erisa.

"Not bad." she said, "Not bad at all. Good content, nice style; nice , portable markup. You have validated everything right?"

"Yes."

"Good. Now let's upload it. I happen to have my own private place on the Internet, for which I'm paying good money. I'll give you an account there, if you promise not to abuse it. Wait a sec! Thinking about it, there's no way someone like you will know how to abuse it."

"Hmmpppfff…" I said.

"In any case, let me sit in front of the computer for a second."

We switched places, she opened up this weird window full of monospaced text, typed a few obscure commands, and after about 10 minutes, she said: "here you go. Your username is 'jennray' and your password is the same as one on this computer. Now, I'll write a script that will upload it to the server, if you just type the password. Meanwhile, just take it for granted. Later on, I'll explain what it does, but we still have a lot of ground to cover beforehand."

I was beginning to like her.

"Another thing - our Linux User Group (or LUG for short) gathers around every first and third Wednesday of the month at 17:00 at the local university. You should come and get to know Linux better by listening to the presentations that people give there."

Wow! These Linux guys have nothing to do twice a month, than attend a presentation about it. But, then I thought about graduating from somewhere nice like Harvard or Berkeley and I said, "OK, I'll come."

"Heh, the other girls there are more similar to you than to me."

"Man, I am relieved."

"You should be, girlfriend!"

"My name's Jennifer."

"Listen, Blondie, I couldn't care less about you or the whole culture and values you represent. I'm just a geek who is trying to make the world a better place. What have you done for the world recently?"

"Heh", I snapped at her, "at least I care about myself enough to dress properly, and to look my best, and to care about other people. You, on the other hand, make me miserable, so I would not call it making the world a better place."

"Tough luck, Blondie. Your feelings are not facts, and you cannot sue me for making you miserable. I have plenty of friends whom I seem to bring a lot of joy to."

"Who, like your boyfriend?"

"I don't have a boyfriend and haven't had one for a long time. I'm still dating guys, though."

"Do they call you back?"

"Not usually, and that's because I ask them not to."

"You're pathetic."

"At least I don't need your help in learning how to hack."

"Which reminds me," she added, "if you want to get your money's worth, you'd better want us to continue the lesson, instead of ping-ponging accusations between ourselves. Shall we go on?"

I stopped liking her after this twist of the conversation.

Hardware Hackers are…

I decided to attend these LUG meetings, from then on. Thus, on the next Wednesday, Taylor and I took the bus to the local university, and went into the room. Immediately after we entered, some guy wearing a T-shirt with a Penguin on it and some shorts said, "Hey Taylor!" and as we got closer he said, "Who's the fox?"

I blushed, and then reached my hand and said "Jennifer Raymond". He shook my hand and said "Jeff Burtkowsky."

"Are you new here?" Jeff asked.

"Yes," I said. "I'm Taylor's friend and Erisa's pupil."

"Nice. Erisa is a first-class hacker, whatever her other faults may be. Just note that you shouldn't be offended if some guys here hit on you. Most of them are heterosexual and most of the viable girls in this club are already taken."

"That's quite alright. I'm used to guys hitting on me. I guess Linux guys are not different. But I have a very sweet and caring boyfriend, so I kindly interrupt these passes."

"What does he do?"

"He's in high school, too. Heavily into Electronics."

"Electronics? Wow, that's impressive. Hardware hackers are a whole class above software hackers. I mean we software hackers write code, and it can run everywhere there's a GCC backend on. It just works, and if it doesn't, it is almost certainly the fault of what's above the hardware. Hardware hackers… now they deal with the physical world, where one wrong wiring can make a world of damage. Now, if we are cool, they are above-cool."

"What's 'GCC' and what are its backends?"

"Well," Taylor interrupted, "GCC is a compiler that is not very fast, does not produce spectacular code, but is one of the seven wonders of the modern world."

"How's that?" I asked.

"Well, it can run everywhere and compile code for almost every architecture, and has tons of useful extensions, and can compile many languages, and can cross-compile, and it's open-source. The Linux Kernel, for example, can only be compiled using gcc."

"I understand you're not a programmer" Jeff said.

"Well, I studied Pascal for two years in high school. Could not get myself to really become enthusiastic about it. And I had better things to learn at school."

"Well, Pascal is a sexless language, if you ask me. And, plus, I think programming is not something you can be taught in school. Some people are better programmers after 1 year, than many are with 10 years of experience. It vastly depends on your attitude."

"Hmmmm…" I answered, "I confess that the only reason I want to become a hacker now, is because I want to have something good to show off to get to a good college. But I admit that creating a homepage for myself turned out to be fun."

"In that case, you might grow to like hacking. If you don't - I suggest you find something else to do, that you happen to like. People who are not enthusiastic about their work, are almost never good hackers."

It made me a bit worried, so I just said "Yes, naturally".

At that moment, Erisa entered the room. She looked around, and eventually fixed her gaze upon me. "Jenn, you came!". (Could you believe it? She called me "Jenn"!) "Yep, " I told her, "I had a very nice conversation with Taylor and Jeff over here."

"Hi guys!" Erisa said, as she approached us.

"Jenn here is quite clueless about Linux, but she is actually quite persistent, so she may become a really leet haxor, sooner or later."

I did not understand what a "leet haxor" is, but I figured it was probably something good. The other guys laughed.

The presentation was way over my head, but Taylor, whom I sat next to, was kind enough to explain some things. I eventually understood or thought I understood most of what was going on there.

At the break, I noticed that some other guy was typing enthusiastically on his laptop's keyboard and constantly using the mouse. I approached him. I saw a huge black window saying "XChat" in the title bar, and lots of weird text looking like a conversation.

"Are you talking with someone?" I asked him.

"As a matter of fact, yes. It's called IRC - Internet Relay Chat. It's actually quite useful for resolving random problems, but it can also become very addictive."

"Can you show me how to use it?"

"I guess."

Apparently, you connect to a server, and then join various "channels", where "channel" is a fancy name for a chat-room, where you talk by entering text in a small text entry. You can also initiate a private conversation and do other stuff. I found the idea intriguing.

"And the people you talk to, can be from the other side of the world." he said. "And I recommend Freenode for most purposes. It's a really nice network. Here, let me E-mail it to you."

Taylor, Erisa and I took the bus home. On the way, Taylor and Erisa spent their time talking about computers and computing news, while I was too afraid to interrupt their conversation and ask what they were talking about.

BETH!

The next time Erisa came to tutor me, she showed me some Perl tutorials (Taylor was right!) and started instructing me on how to program. As homework, she gave me a pageful of exercises.

One exercise, that involved a lot of text-processing and the so#called "regular expressions", turned out to have a bug, but I could not find it. I thought about calling Taylor, but then thought that maybe the IRC would be helpful.

So I logged on to Freenode, and joined the #perl channel. Here's what happened:

```
-->      You are now talking on #perl
---      Topic for #perl is Welcome to #perl :: Do not flood, use
         http://sial.org/pbot/perl/ to show us code.  This is a
         Perl help channel, please ask your question. :: Latest
         perl golf can be found at http://terje2.perlgolf.org ::
         Latest perl is 5.8.5
---      Topic for #perl set by qualoo
<jennray>  Hi all!
<rindolf>  So like I was saying, I did not had a serious experience
           with the BSDs, so I could not say.
<rindolf>  jennray: hi!
<jennray>  Can you help me with debugging some code? I'm trying
           to learn Perl.
<rindolf>  Sure. Just don't paste it here. Use the pastebot.
<rindolf>  perlbot: nopaste
<perlbot>  Paste your code here and #perl will be able to view it:
           http://sial.org/pbot/perl
<jennray>  Okey dokey.
<rindolf>  jennray: I see on your /whois that your name is "Jennifer
           Raymond".
<rindolf>  So you're a girl?
<jennray>  Yes, I am.
```

```
    <rindolf>   jennray: nice. We could always use more girl perlers.
    <rindolf>   We have another female regular here called "beth". She,
                on the other hand, knows her stuff pretty well.
    <jennray>   :-)
    <rindolf>   Also, guys flirt with her all the time here. (And she
                flirts back.)
    <jennray>   Well, I have a boyfriend.
    <rindolf>   So does beth.
          -->   beth has joined #perl
    <rindolf>   jennray: talk about the devil!
    <rindolf>   BETH!
       <beth>   RINDOLF! HOW ARE YOU?
    <rindolf>   jennray: something you need to know about beth is that
                you must always greet her with ALL-CAPS.
    <jennray>   Heh heh.
    <rindolf>   beth: jennray is trying to learn Perl and she has
                some erroneous code. jennray: will you please post it to
                the pastebot now?
    <jennray>   Yeah, OK.
  <pasteling>   "jennray" at 127.0.0.1 pasted "Erroneous Code"
                (16 lines) at http://sial.org/pbot/3326
       <beth>   hmmm… jennray, are you sure you want to use a '*' in the
                regex on the last character and not on the whole string?
    <jennray>   Oh! It affects just the last character?
    <rindolf>   Yes. You need to cluster it by using (?:mystring) or
                capture it using (mystring).
    <jennray>   Trying…
    <jennray>   It works!
    <jennray>   Thanks beth and rindolf!
       <beth>   no problem. i'm here to serve.
    <rindolf>   beth++
    <rindolf>   jennray: whenever someone helps you must increase
                their karma by plus-plusing them.
    <jennray>   rindolf: ah, OK.
    <jennray>   beth++
          *     beth hugs jennray
```

"She still is…"

Erisa continued to tutor me, and I continued to learn new things. Perl is positively huge and has many nuances. Eventually, Erisa told me that I was good enough to start contributing to open-source projects. She recommended looking for interesting CPAN (= Comprehensive Perl Archive Network) modules, adding automated tests, doing bug-squashing, and maybe even adding a feature or two.

That's what I did, and found myself contributing to various modules. Then, one day, Erisa approached me as I was taking things out of my locker. "Jenn," she said, "I told my Mum about you, and now she bugs me about inviting you to dinner at my place. Would you like to come?"

"Sure! I'd love to come." I told her.

"Good, it will give you a chance to see my computer and I'll show you what a working environment of real men and real women is. Not the sissy environment that I recommended you to start with."

"Heh." I said and smiled.

We scheduled for the next day at 19:00. So, the next day, I wore some of my best clothes, and prepared myself for two hours. As I looked on my final form in the mirror, I said to myself, that I probably would have looked better than Erisa with much less effort. And so I walked to Erisa's home.

She answered the door. Looking at her, I noticed I was right - she did look awful. "Hey Jenn," she said, "please come in.".

"Now I can warn you that my family likes to call me 'Eve'. I don't mind it too much, but to avoid bad habits, you should refer to me as 'Erisa'."

"OK. Why did you change your name in the first place?"

"Well, every person should have a right to choose his own name. My parents called me 'Eve' because they wanted a nice Hebrew name. I, on the other hand, am trying to be unique and individualistic, so I renamed myself."

"I'm never going to change my name. I like it a lot."

"Girlfriend, it's you who succumbs to society, not me."

Then I noticed a young boy (dressed perfectly normally) descending down the stairs. He looked at me, and said, "Eve, is this Jennifer?".

"Righto." Erisa said.

I approached him and said "Jennifer Raymond! Nice to meet you. Are you Erisa's brother?".

"Yeah," he answered, "my name is Daniel Siegel."

"Nice to meet you, Daniel."

"Nice to meet you, too, Miss Raymond."

"Hey, you can call me Jennifer."

He looked a bit puzzled, and after a few seconds said "Whatever." and ran to a different room.

"Well, as a good hostess, let me tell you what there's to do here." Erisa addressed me. "In the living room we have video games, a DVD player, and a VHS player. My family has bought a large selection of movies and video games. I have, for a long time, frowned upon this practice, as it pumps money into the content industry's lawsuit machine. Nevertheless, I still don't mind using them once they are purchased."

"My personal computer is in my room up-stairs." she added, "There are a few things I'd like to show you there."

"I'd love to see your room. And to meet your parents." I told her.

"Well, let's go to my room now, OK? And then we can find some other entertainment for you until the food is ready."

And so I followed her up the stairs. Erisa's room reflected upon her personality. While the walls were white (luckily), it was filled with posters of Heavy Metal bands, with activism posters, and with a large amount of books (some of them had Hebrew writing on the cover). It exhibited a lot of disorder. In one corner, stood a desk with a nice PC computer beneath it, a flat screen on top, and a keyboard.

Erisa took the seat next to the screen and hinted that I should take the seat next to her.

"See, this is Debian - a distribution that real men and real women (trademark) use. It is maintained by a group of packagers worldwide, is controlled by an organization, instead of one of those companies that don't really care about their users."

"The first thing you should notice is that I login with a text mode. Newbies dig an X-login, but it causes many problems. After you are in a virtual console, you can start X-Windows [= the Linux windowing system] using 'startx'."

"And here's IceWM - a usable window manager that actually does not eat your computer's resources like KDE or GNOME do. Other people use fluxbox or whatever, but Ice works for me."

"Cool," I said. "I suppose I can give it a try. It does not seem to have as much eye candy as KDE does."

"Eye candy in - memory and speed out."

"Heeee." I giggled. "Anything else you want to show me?"

"Well, can't think of anything now. Why don't you go downstairs and meet my family? The food should be ready soon."

I went downstairs. Daniel was watching a film I really liked so I joined him. Eventually, Erisa's mother called everybody to say that the food was ready.

Erisa's family talked a lot during the meal, and I joined them whenever I could. I noticed that they called Erisa "Eve" (as she had previously noted). The food was delicious.

After the meal, Erisa's father and her older brother had volunteered to clear the table, and her mother asked me if I'd like to look at Erisa's photo albums. "I'd love to." I said.

As a girl, Erisa was super-cute. "Us being Jews, she grew among lots of Jewish and Israeli kids, and she learned Hebrew very quickly. She also eventually learned how to read it, even without diacritics. Some of our Israeli friends and relatives were amazed at her mastery of the language, and said her accent hardly revealed her true birthplace."

"She was so proud of her Jewish heritage and culture. Here are some pictures of her during her Bat-Mitzvah."

I looked at them with interest. "So when did she become such a…"

"Punk?" Erisa interrupted me, "That's alright - I fully acknowledge this fact."

"Well, " said her mother, "around the age of 14. She started staying away from her usual friends, dressing weirdly, and colouring her hair in flashy colours. We don't believe in dictating our children how to lead their life, so we just let her be."

"Was it because of her interest in computers?"

"Oh no," she said, "she's been tampering with computers since she was a little girl. She used to invite her friends, both girls and boys, home and show them how to play games and program. It was all very social. We don't know what happened. She was always so caring for other people."

"She still is…" I said.

Erisa smiled, and then went back to reading her book. After a short while, she said: "You know, I'm not exactly Miss Altruism here. As much as I think commercialisation is evil, and Big Business is aiming to ruin our country and the world at large, I still think tangible goods and especially people's time is something that does not have to be given away."

"Fair enough," I replied, "I can agree with that. So?"

"Well, just for your information, by charging people for my time alone, I now have over 20 thousand bucks in the bank."

"You're kidding?" I asked surprisingly.

"She isn't." Erisa's mother replied.

"How did you earn all of that?"

"Well, Mum and Dad finance my food, my clothing, and school, so I don't have to worry about that. I used to work during the Summers for software shops, and I also give lessons (as is the case with you), work as a freelancer and have other gigs."

"I'll give you an extreme example: one day, in the very beginning of the Internet craze, this old man sent a mail to a mailing list I was a member of, asking for help trying to form a web-site of his own (with pictures of his grand-children, and stuff like that). I told him, that it won't be scalable to create and maintain the site for him, and that he should learn HTML. It turned out he was living in the other side of L.A., so I said that I will be willing to teach him that, if he pays me for my entire time, including the long rides."

"So he agreed and I actually taught him. Took a long time. You know, people his age can sometimes type very slowly, and he was not exceptional. After that, when he learned HTML, I told him that I'll be willing to host his site on my server for a uniform monthly fee. He agreed."

"So I got a lot of money teaching him, and now I get a constant stream of cash from him. He and his wife actually now totally dig having a web-site, and they fill it in with reviews and recommendations of their favourite movies, recipes, bio's, memorial pages, and stuff like that."

I shed a few tears and wiped them with my elbow. "Erisa," I told her, "that is one of the sweetest stories I've ever heard. You must be the most compassionate girl in the world, and…"

"'Compassionate' my ass!", Erisa interrupted me, "I'm charging this poor old man, instead of just hosting him on my server, free of charge."

"I still think it's very sweet of you."

"Well, Blondie, sweet or not, my time and my resources are not distributed freely. It's a tough world, and if you want to make it a better place, you should not give away your time, because it's too precious to be worthless."

"'Blondie', again?"

Erisa grinned. "Jennifer, the only reason I call you 'Blondie' is because I'm a sweet and compassionate girl who totally digs your hair colour."

I reached to hug her. "No hug!" she snapped at me, as I stopped, and retreated, while she returned to her book.

MIME, POE, XUL and other Beasts

I continued to learn new things, everyday. With the help of Erisa, I learned about C, (which is much sexier than Pascal), Internet Network programming, writing web applications, some GUI programming (very hard to get exactly right, but still fun), working with databases, and more. Erisa gave me problems like "fix at least three of the bugs in the bug-tracker of project foo", or "add a new feature to project bar".

One thing I discovered was that reading code and understanding it was difficult. Much more than writing it. But after I understood how it worked, I could implement the fix or the new feature reasonably easily.

The IRC chat was also a great help. Whenever I encountered a problem, I could join the appropriate IRC channel, and ask about it. If that did not work, I usually tried searching the web, or posting to the local Linux User Group's mailing list, or to web-forums. IRC was a very nice experience: I met many people from all over the world, and chatted with them endlessly. Many of the chats were fun, but quite redundant, but a lot of them provided new insights or gave me useful new knowledge.

There was only one thing that bothered me. When working on my homepage, I could very easily express myself. I was able to put pictures, sounds, hyperlinks, styled text, and files there. This was much more difficult in the IRC that was text only, with a few pretty useless embellishments, URLs that had to be copy and pasted, and all kind of other limitations. I wanted more.

In one of the LUG meetings, Jeff, some other guy called Ervin, and I chatted between ourselves before the presentation, and somehow we ended up discussing IRC. So I brought this along.

"So, maybe, " said Jeff, "we need to create a new IRC protocol, that will allow such media. God knows I heard some people say they also want to be able to use Mathematical notation. Ever been to a Math channel before? The expressions there are not a pretty sight."

Ervin and I laughed, and Jeff joined us.

"So we need a new protocol? What are we going to base it on?" I asked.

"Well, on MIME probably.", Jeff said. MIME is a standard for sending and receiving data and sub-data, identifying its type, etc.

"Tell you what?" he said, "we can write a prototype for a server in Perl or Python using POE or Twisted." I was surprised to realise that I knew what it meant.

"Yeah," I said, "and let's write the client in Mozilla's XUL. That will give us all the media handling for free."

"Nice thinking, Jenn, " Jeff said, and we gave each other a high five.

"But then we have lots of potential security issues, which we would like to avoid, and we need to think of a robust protocol." I added.

"So let's go to the blackboard and start designing everything." Jeff said.

We scribbled a lot of boxes, arrows, buzzwords, state machines, and all other kinds of things. It was Erisa's turn to give a presentation, and when she saw everybody next to the blackboard, being involved in the design, she was immediately puzzled.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

"Hi Erisa! We're designing the next generation IRC protocol, with many improvements over vanilla IRC."

"Yeah, like Media support, styles, Math, a more robust and powerful protocol, and more features, etc. It was Jenn's idea."

"Interesting," Erisa said, "since you all seem to be so much involved in it, I say that we delay my presentation in an hour. Jenn, I'm running out of things I really need to teach you, and you may wish to embark on this project, just to try and get closer to a demi-god status for yourself."

I blushed. "Sure, Erisa. It sounds very exciting. I don't know how good a coder I am. Can anyone here become my partner for pair programming?"

Lots of people volunteered. "Jeff,", I addressed him, "Will you be my partner?" I felt I could trust him.

"Sure, why not? If only to make my girlfriend jealous. OK, Jenn and I will write a spec [= specification] together and send it to you. Jenn, do you know DocBook?"

"Heard about it, but no."

"Then I guess I'll have to teach it to you. It's not that hard."

"Cool. " I said, "Now back to designing this baby…"

"That would be as Evil as HTML E-mail is…"

Jeff dropped by, a few days later. I offered him a drink, and we chatted about the latest Linux developments, and then we went to my room.

Jeff instructed me to checkout a certain initial working environment he prepared for working on DocBook documents in advance, from its version control repository. We then started to work on the specification.

DocBook is very verbose in comparison to HTML or any other document format I knew until then. Here's a small glimpse of it:

```
<orderedlist>
    <listitem>
        <para>
            First Item.
        </para>
    </listitem>
    <listitem>
        <para>
            Second Item.
        </para>
    </listitem>
    <listitem>
        <para>
            Fourth Item. Just kidding! It's the third.
        </para>
    </listitem>
</orderedlist>
```

But with a lot of fast typing and copy and pasting, it was pretty much OK. DocBook can be translated into a great deal of other formats: HTML, Acrobat Reader PDF, Microsoft Word, and even UNIX man pages. We routinely did the conversion only to HTML, but occasionally converted it into PDF as well.

We made a lot of progress that day, despite the fact that Jeff or I initiated some breaks sometimes. It's really good to work in pairs like that. At the end of the day, we checked in the most recent version into the version control repository, uploaded the specification in its various final formats to a pre-designated web-site, and sent a link to what we had so far, to the Linux User Group's mailing list.

The next day, when I checked my E-mail, I saw several messages about it. It also caused a flame-war. ("Media-enabled IRC? That would be as Evil as HTML E-mail is."). Anyway, some of the input was useful, and some people even said they may be able to donate some time and help us out.

Jeff and I finished the specification after two more meetings like that. We submitted it as a "Request for Comments" document, and started working on the client and the server.

This took a while as we both had to learn Mozilla XUL, but we were able to get a working version in a relatively short time, that implemented a subset of the functionality. It was pretty neat talking with it, even though we were only two people there. So we set up a testing server for it, packaged the client and the server as media-irc-client and media-irc-server-perl (versions 0.2.0 for both), placed them online on a web-site, and announced it on Freshmeat. (The uneducated reader should know that freshmeat.net is a site that categorises software for Linux and other UNIX systems, and displays news of their recent releases.)

It was a project of mostly just our LUG for a time being. Erisa decided it was a cool thing, and kept using the bleeding-edge of the program and talked with it. She also contributed some very nice patches (= changes that are both human readable and easy to apply) to it. Taylor got very enthusiastic about it ("You're a first-class hacker now, Jenn!") and kept suggesting ideas for the code, and doing clean-ups. Even Jeff's girlfriend, Amanda, who wasn't particularly technologically-inclined (well to be honest, she wasn't computer- phobic, either) used it to talk from work and home, and reported bugs and stuff.

We opened a channel for this on the old-fashioned IRC, where we could coordinate the efforts if the server broke down, or if we needed something simple. Eventually, we also started a mailing list for the developers. Some others of the user-group's members gave a hand or lurked on the mailing list. It was all a lot of fun.

TRIZ

At one of our semi-weekly gym sessions, Taylor and I discussed the latest happenings and traded gossip. Somehow, the conversation got to Taylor's current girlfriend, Rebecca, and then Taylor said:

"Becky broke up with me."

"Really?" I said. "I'm shocked. I actually kinda liked her, and you two seemed so happy together."

"I know, I liked her too."

"Are you OK?"

"Yes, I'm fine. In any case - I have a great idea for a very nice girl I'd like to ask out, and wanted to for a long time."

"Really? Who?"

"Oh, I want it to be a surprise."

"Fair enough." I said and we decided to go back to exercising.

The next LUG meeting, I arrived relatively late, only to see Erisa standing with her back against the wall, next to a guy standing facing her with his hand on the wall. They were talking happily, and Erisa laughed a lot. It was obvious from Erisa's movements that she was feeling flirtatious.

"Another one bites the dust." I thought to myself and decided to approach her. "Hi Erisa!" I said.

"Hey Jenn, what's up?" Erisa said and then the guy next to her turned around to see me and said "Jennifer, hi! What's up?". It was Taylor.

"Taylor!" I said surprisingly, "… hmmmm, can you and I talk outside for a moment? Out… side…?"

"Sure. Erisa, can you excuse us?" he said.

"No problem." she said.

After we went out and got farther away from the room I said, "So it's Erisa, isn't it?"

"You mean the girl I'm asking out? Yes."

"Are you out of your mind? Don't you know how she treats her dates? She usually asks them not to call her back!"

"Yeah, I know. Not always, though. And I feel that she became a lot more solid since she started tutoring you."

"Possibly. But she's still full of it."

"Jenn, don't worry too much. We'll go on a couple of dates and if she won't be interested, I promise to you that I'm not going to get hurt. But it's worth giving it a shot."

"OK," I said, "so when's your first date?"

"Friday's night."

"OK." I wasn't particularly happy about that. I cared too much about both of them.

When I returned home this night, I started talking on the #perl channel again, my mind still occupied by this.

```
        <jennray>  Hi all, I'm back.
        <rindolf>  jennray: hi!
           <beth>  hi jennray!
        <jennray>  Hey beth, rindolf.
             -->   perlygatekeeper has joined #perl
  <perlygatekeeper>  Good morning, #perl!
           <beth>  good morning, perly!
        <rindolf>  Hi perly!
        <jennray>  Hi perly.
        <jennray>  Can I consult you guys on a personal matter?
        <rindolf>  jennray: shoot.
        <jennray>  OK, here goes: my best friend (a boy) has started dating
                   a good friend of mine, who treats her dates awfully,
                   and looks positively awful (purple hair, too much and
                   inconsistent makeup, and general neglect).
        <jennray>  She's not really what his type of girls was so far, so
                   I'm afraid he's going to get hurt. What should I do?
        <rindolf>  jennray: TRIZ!
        <jennray>  rindolf: what's TRIZ?
        <rindolf>  TRIZ == Theory of Inventive Problem Solving.
               *   jennray is puzzled
        <jennray>  That should be TIPS.
        <rindolf>  jennray: well, these are the initials in Russian.
        <jennray>  rindolf: ah OK.
  <perlygatekeeper>  jennray: why don't you just perform a makeover on this
                   girl and get her to at least look better.
        <jennray>  But what about her attitude?
  <perlygatekeeper>  Well, one bird in the hand is better than two in the
                   bush.
        <jennray>  perly: you might be right.
               *   rindolf gives perlygatekeeper the international TRIZ
```

```
                      medal.
        <jennray>  perlygatekeeper++
```

After this, I picked up the phone and called Jeff. "Jeff, you know Erisa, right?"

"Yep. " he said.

"She doesn't look too athletic, but does she pump iron or practice martial arts?"

"Oh no - she hates exercise. She says she'd rather exercise her mind than her body. Why?"

"I have this absolutely wicked idea…"

"Divine"'s Good

That Friday's afternoon, Jonathan, Jeff, Amanda (who is Jeff's girlfriend as you may remember), and I arrived at Erisa's home carrying a lot of makeup and female care accessories. We ringed the doorbell, and Erisa's mother answered.

"Hi, Jennifer." she said.

"Hi Mrs. Siegel!" I said.

"You guys are doing what carrying all these things?"

"We are planning to give Erisa's a thorough makeover. 'Clueless'- style."

"It's high time someone did, if you ask me. Did she agree to it?"

"Not yet, but we brought ropes just in case."

"Lovely. OK, come in."

We entered the house, climbed the stairs and knocked on the door to Erisa's room. "Come in" we heard her say within a large amount of heavy metal noise.

We opened the door. Erisa was sitting next to the computer, doing something and as we entered she turned to face us. "Hi guys!" she said, "Whoa, what are all these things?"

"We are making you ready for the date tonight." I said.

"What? You mean a makeover? No way I'm letting you…"

"Yes way, and we can do it the easy way or the hard way."

Erisa rose up from her chair, "The hard way!" she said as she positioned herself in a defensive position, with her fists clenched, "You'll have to get me first.".

"Let me take care of this." Jeff said, "I have a black belt in Karate."

"I'll take care of it." I said. I approached Erisa, quickly grabbed her hands, pushed her against the wall, and spread her hands across. She kicked my feet with hers - it hurt a bit but was nothing I couldn't handle. "I go to the gym twice a week with Taylor. Weight training, among other things." I told her.

"I can see that, Ms. America…" she barked at me, "OK, OK, I'll let you get on with this makeover thing."

I let her go. "Do you promise?"

"I swear by Life, Liberty and Tux the Penguin that I will let you do the makeover, while being fully cooperative."

"Are you doing it for Taylor's sake?" I asked her.

"No, I'm just doing it so I could move my fscking limbs, damn it!"

"Well that's good, too." Amanda said, "Now do you boys want to stay here for the beauty care session?"

"It depends:" Jeff said, "will we get to see Erisa naked?"

Erisa picked up a random object off her desk and threw it at Jeff.

"Just kidding! No, we'll go downstairs. Have fun here."

"Ta ta." Erisa said.

Jeff and Jonathan left the room, while Amanda and I stayed to improve Erisa's look. The first thing we did was to take off her hair dye. Then we instructed her to bathe and wash her hair. We washed all her makeup, and showed her how to apply a new one in a better way. We then arranged her hair, and asked her to choose her favourite evening dress.

She was ready shortly before Taylor arrived. We let her look at herself at the mirror to see the improvement.

Erisa looked at herself at the mirror smiling. "Wow!" she said, "I look… I look… nah! I'm not going to say it - it's too corny."

"Suit yourself," I said. "I think we're done with you."

"Excellent. Well, transformed or not, I still have my responsibilities as a computer hacker. I left a few people in limbo when you arrived, and hopefully can catch up with them."

"Sure, " I said, "just don't overwork or anything. I'm going downstairs."

"I'll join you." Amanda said.

Downstairs, Jeff was playing video games with Daniel, while Jonathan was eating some fruit salad. "She's ready." I said.

"Excellent." Jeff and Jonathan said simultaneously.

We then heard a ring in the door. Erisa's mother went to answer it. It was Taylor. He was wearing some jeans and a T-shirt. He looked OK, but not much more than OK. He had a very nice flowers' bouquet in his right hand, though.

"Hi Taylor!" we said one after the other.

"Hey guys, " he said, "what are you guys doing here?"

"Helping Erisa get ready for her date." I said.

"I'll get her." Amanda said, and went up the stairs.

"Don't you think you look a bit plain for the date?" I asked.

"Well, it's only a movie and a pizza. Plus, there's no way on Earth that Erisa is going to look better than I am."

"Holy virgin mother of god!" exclaimed Jeff. He was looking at the staircase where Erisa stood, descending it slowly. Her jet-black hair was arranged in a ball and a pony tail, shining from the light. Her dark purple dress made her look especially beautiful, and complemented her body. She looked wonderful.

"So, " she said after she reached the ground floor, shaking her body and extending her hands, "how do I look?"

"You look… " Taylor said, "divine!"

Erisa thought for a moment and then said: "'Divine's good."

"Here, Erisa…"

"Hey, 'Erisa' was the old (and temporary) me. Call me 'Eve' now."

"…Eve! Here - I brought you flowers." and he handed her the flowers he had.

Eve (!) smelled them, and said, "they smell nice. Mum, can you put them in a vase with some water?"

"Ahhmm… Eve, can we stop by my house and give me a chance to pick up some better clothes?"

"Why?" Eve said, "we're going to miss the movie."

"Well, people will look at the two of us and say: 'she is **way** out of his league!'"

Eve approached Taylor. "Well, to quote Richard P. Feynman, " she said as she tied her arms around his neck "'What do you care what other people think?' We both know you're a great guy and I'm so lucky to go on a date with you. Mwaaa…" and she kissed him on the cheek.

"Well, " he said, "I guess we'd better get going. Bye all!"

"Bye!" we all said. Eve and Taylor left and Taylor gave us a thumb's up as he left, and we gave him back.

"So, would you guys want to stay for dinner?" Eve's mother asked us.

"I'd love to, Mrs. Siegel." I said. "Yeah, me too." everybody else said.

Committing Adultery in Your Heart is…

We did not stay late enough to see Eve return from her date. The next Monday, I arrived at school in time only to discover my first lesson was cancelled. So I went to the computer lab.

As I was pounding on the computer, I heard a "Hey Jenn!". It was Eve. She was wearing some Jeans and a T-shirt with the Linux penguin and some inscriptions on. Her hair was flowing in all directions and she was wearing good makeup. She looked great.

"Hi Eve! So how was your date?"

"Heh, Jenn, I'm gonna get you for this… one day… I swear."

"What's wrong?"

"Well, Taylor could not help staring at me the whole time. When we got to the cinema and the movie started he actually hugged me with his arms."

"Using the stretching trick?"

"No."

"So what did you do?"

"I sort of cuddled into him. Then he smelled my hair. So I asked him 'How did it smell?' and he said 'It smells lovely.'. Is he British?"

"No, he's not." I said.

"That wasn't the worst part. After the movie was over, he told me that I was too good for a Pizza, and instead took me to Loro's."

"Loro's a very nice restaurant. Not too expensive but very nice."

"I know!", she exclaimed, "and we were chatting all this time. And when the meal ended, he insisted on paying for my part of the dinner. You know I have my financial resources."

"Yes, I do."

"Then he escorted me home, and when we arrived there, he asked if I want a good night kiss. I said 'OK', and we kissed. Well, it turned out to be more than a kiss - we were totally making out."

"And…", I said eagerly.

"I stopped him, said 'Good night, bye, see you at school.' and went inside. Didn't want to push it too far."

"So you're not going to see him again?" I asked her, puzzled.

"Are you kidding? That was my best date of all time. I'd better set up another one."

"Nice, " I said. "It's really nice seeing you two together."

"OK," she said, "I'll better get going. Oh wait… can you come with me, two days from now, and help me shop for new clothes and for things to decorate my room with?"

"Sure," I said, "why not?"

"Great! And do you mind if I join you and Taylor in your gym workout? 'Sound mind in a sound body'?"

"No problem here. And I think Taylor would love to see you more often."

"Judging by yesterday, I think he actually may. Ta ta!"

"Bye!".

Taylor entered the same room after about 20 minutes. "Hi!" I told him, "How was your date last Friday?"

"It went pretty well."

"That's it?"

"I guess…" he said hesitantly.

I was shocked. "Man, you guys make awful gossipers."

"Oh… Eve was here, wasn't she? And she told you all about it."

"Yep. You smelled her hair and said it smelled lovely. You bought her dinner at a rather fancy restaurant."

"Yes, it was a wonderful date, I guess. Eve was so great the other night."

"Yeah, she was."

"Thanks for… you know… transforming her and all."

"You're welcome."

When Eve and I got together to go shopping, we went to a clothes shop. "You know, my newfound powers are intoxicating. Three guys hit on me at school since the weekend, including this really cute Football player." she said.

"Hmmm… " I said.

"Are you ladies alright?" the shop's clerk (Tim, a young and handsome man) approached us.

"Hey Tim!" I said, "I don't believe you know my friend Eve here."

"Eve Siegel!" she said and extended her hand.

"Tim O'Brian." he said and they shook hands. "OK, I'll be there if you need me…"

Eve followed him with her gaze for a few seconds, and then smiled and went back to looking at the clothes.

"Will you stop that?" I whispered to her.

"Stop what?" she said.

"You're totally into him."

"So I'm lusting him a little bit, so what? 'But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.'"

"Well, girlfriend, committing adultery in your heart is perfectly harmless and quite rewarding. And I'm not really raping anyone. I'm tenderly making love to them."

"Listen," I snapped at her, "Taylor is my best friend, and I swear that if you…"

"I'm crazy about Taylor." she interrupted me.

"What?" I said.

She changed her pose. "I'm crazy about Taylor. Always have been. I promise I wouldn't do anything to hurt him."

"You always have been crazy about Taylor? Why didn't you tell him that?"

"Come on, have you looked at me then? I wasn't his type. He always dated these well-groomed girls, who had some sense not to rebel like I did. Hell, he also dated this incredibly dumb cheerleader once."

"Stacie wasn't dumb!"

"I was being sarcastic! My point is that he was way out of my league."

"Oh!" I said and tried to hug her.

"No hug!" she said. "In any case, I'll do my best to make things work between Taylor and I. And even if they don't, we'll remain good friends. The kind of friends who go to movies together, or socialise at LUG meetings, fix dates for each other, etc."

"Good, I'm glad to hear that. Now where were we?"

"Picking clothes." she said, and after a while added: "You know, we should drop by Radio Shack and get some dolls of Tux and Beastie the BSD Daemon. I totally dig these guys. Oh! And a nice Looney Toons poster. I'd hate to pump money into the MPAA's lawsuit machine, but I really like Marvin the Martian."

"Who are you, and what have you done to Erisa?"

"Hey, the makeover was your idea, Jennifer. What have **you** done to Erisa?" and we both laughed.

Man, it was so exciting!

Eve has certainly changed. Taylor, Eve, and I socialised a lot in school, and spent a lot of time discussing our Media-IRC project, and just exchanging news or gossip. I also saw Eve hanging around Israeli or Jewish kids speaking in Hebrew. Asking her about it in one of our mutual gym sessions, she said that she secretly still read the Hebrew books she owned, so she won't forget the language.

One day, I was standing across the hallway from Taylor's locker, and saw Eve and Taylor kissing each other passionately. I wondered if it was a pleasant or revolting sight, but then realised I had to talk to both of them.

"Hi!" I said as I approached them.

"Hi Jenn!" Eve said, as she let go of Taylor. "Hi Jennifer!" Taylor added.

"Listen, regarding M-IRC, I've been thinking that maybe we should start converting the server to C. The Perl version probably won't scale too much beyond what we have now, and we are probably getting more and more users."

"Right, " Eve said, "the Perl version was only a prototype, anyhow."

"Now regarding making it multi-processed or multi-threaded, that's something I could use some guidance with, as I've never really done it."

"Hmmm… " Taylor said, "kernel-assisted multi-tasking is a can of worms. Especially multi-threading. But I don't suppose it's substantially different than what other plain-IRC servers are doing."

"So you mean I should just read their code and see?"

"I guess. Cannot really hurt."

"OK." I said.

A few days later, I was sitting next to the computer, and checked my E-mail. Then I noticed one E-mail to the Media-IRC mailing list that said "[PATCH] Client - Implement Logging." from someone called "Jean-Pierre Gordo" from .fr (France). This was our first contribution from outside the user-group! I was so excited, that I decided to call Taylor on his cell-phone.

It took some time to answer, and then Taylor said, "Hi Jenn! What's up?"

"Hi Taylor! Guess what? We received a patch from some French guy!"

"Eve, " I heard him saying on the other end of the line, "we received a patch from someone outside the LUG."; "Aaaa!" I heard Eve shouting happily. "OK, Jenn, we're coming right now. Meanwhile, review the patch."

They arrived shortly afterwards, "So, you two were together. " I asked "What were you doing?"

"We were watching a movie." Taylor said decisively. I took a closer look at them. Taylor had lipstick smeared on his cheeks, and smelled like women's perfume (Eve's). Eve's hair was a bit disorganised. But I decided not to comment about this.

"OK. Well, the patch looks fine from what I saw. It's pretty long, though."

"Maybe we should take a look as well." So together we went over all the code, and reviewed it. Took us some time, but we were finally convinced that it worked well. Then we applied it on our local copy, and tested that it does what it should do. After we were happy with the results, we committed it into the version control system (while acknowledging Jean-Pierre), and sent him a "thank you, your contribution has been reviewed and applied" E-mail.

Man, it was so exciting!

"Raesha - meh ho owmer?"

Eve dropped by the computer lab some time later. "Listen, my extended family is holding a Passover Seder at our house next Saturday's night. Normally, what I would have done then, is go out of the house to avoid it. But this year, I decided to stay."

"OK, " I said, "So?"

"Well, I was wondering if you'd like to join us?"

"Sure, " I said, "I've got nothing better to do at that time."

"Great." Eve said. "I'll see you then."

So the next Saturday, I took some time to prepare. I recalled that some observant Jews frowned upon females wearing pants and stuff like that, so I wore a nice dress. And so I walked to Eve's house.

Eve answered the door. "Hi Jennifer!" she said. She was also wearing a nice dress with flowers and all. There was a lot of commotion in the house, and many voices, both of grown-ups and children were heard. "Please come in, make yourself at home. Here, let me introduce you to my family."

And so I met Eve's uncles, aunts, cousins, and grand-parents. After we finished meeting all of them we went to the living room, where Daniel and his cousin Deborah were busy playing a video game. "You suck at this. " Daniel announced, as he won another round.

"Well, you have this game at your house, while I don't, so you can get much more practice." his cousin responded.

"Would you two like a round?" Daniel asked Eve and I, "this game is stupid anyway."

"OK.", "Sure." we said.

Deborah looked a bit at us as she released her game-pad. "Say, you two have such wonderful hair. Can I play with it?"

"Hey, I want to play with it, too!" Daniel said.

"Sure!" I said as I grabbed the game-pad.

"No problem here, either. Just don't… don't mix the strands of two different people." Eve said.

"Here, we'll sit apart." I said as I took a little distance from Eve.

"So what does every button do?" I said.

Eve explained as best as she could, and we started to play. I was not particularly good at it, but Eve seemed to suck even more.

"Daniel's right. This game is stupid." she said. "You know, some of the old DOS games were much more intelligent. Lots of puzzle games, Adventure games, and things you need to think to progress in. I still like to play them using a Linux-based DOS emulator."

"Well, I've never been a big computer games fan." I said, "Freecell is almost the only game I play. Of course, I find playing it with PySol on Linux much nicer than with the Windows-shipped one."

"Heh. Microsoft Freecell is absolute crap." she said, as her character successfully hit mine.

She added: "You know, I actually read a review for a recent game that came out - a first-person shooter. The review said it had good graphics and all, but otherwise you had an infinite amount of ammunition, and you just had to kill an infinite amount of monsters coming at you. Pretty dull. Still, it concluded by saying it may be good for the hot summer, instead of saying it sucked completely."

"You're doing it all wrong!" Deborah said to Daniel, "Here let me show you how to arrange a girl's hair."

"Heh." I said, and we continued playing for several minutes.

"Everybody, we're getting started!" Eve's mother cried, and we gathered to the dining table. Eve and I rose up, and walked towards the table. As we passed by, Mrs. Siegel said, "Eve, Jennifer, what happened to your hair?"

Eve and I looked at each other, then burst out laughing simultaneously. "Heh, never mind." Eve said, "we'll fix it later."

Eve and a few other relatives who knew how to read Hebrew, started reading the Passover Hagaddah (= Ceremonial Transcript) in turn, translating it to English on the fly, each time instructing us what to do. When we reached the part with the four sons that the Jewish Law spoke against, and the Evil one, Eve said:

"For this part, I have prepared in advance a Goyah…" and she pointed at me.

"Heh, a Shiksa."

"OK, I'll read it with your help." I said.

"OK: 'Rasha - mah hu omer?'"

"Raesha - meh ho owmer?"

"Close enough!" and so we continued.

After a while the food came. After the meal, some people continued reading the Hagaddah, while most of the others packed everything, or simply talked or played around. It was a lot of fun.

After the ceremony, Eve and I fixed the strands of each other's hair. "You know, Daniel and Deb may have a hidden talent as hair stylists." Eve said.

"You think so?" I said, as we switched places, "Your hair is a bit inconsistent. If they do have a talent, then I guess it is indeed very well hidden."

"Abandoning" Debian

From: Eve Siegel <eve@eve-siegel.eu.org>
To: Debian Devel <debian-devel@lists.debian.org>
Subject: "Abandoning" Debian

Hi all!

Debian has been my distribution of choice for 3 years now. I can testify that
I have been quite happy with it, and as you may have noticed also contributed
by being a packager. Recently, however, I noticed several trends
in the community and attitude of Debian that induced me into abandoning it.
Part of the reason for this was a personal transformation of mine, (a very
good one in fact) that made me realise that Debian was not the distribution to
which I belong.

The reasons I dislike Debian now are:

1. The community consists of many people who are loud, smug, feel a sense
of superiority in their distribution, and denounce all other distributions.

While I don't accuse any of the Debian Leaders of this, it seems we all have
done too little to make clear this behavior was unacceptable.

Debian has or had some advantages over other distributions. It also had or
even still has some drawbacks. However, telling the world and his mother, how
much we are better than the rest (if we are indeed better) is not going to
help us making it better. And workers of other distros are less boastful,
and invest time in filling in the gaps.

2. Trying to apply the Debian Free Software Guidelines to things that are
not software, will bring no good. Software is something that should abide
by the free software ideology. Documentation, fonts, graphics, music and
other types of content, play by different rules and warrant different
guidelines for inclusion in the distribution, than these applied to software.

The last thing I need is documentation disappearing into the oblivion of
the non-free repository, fonts rejected for being non-modifiable, and other
annoyances like that.

As an extreme example, are we going to remove all the packages license
files, because their text is not free-as-in-speech?

3. The arrangement of Debian as an online democratic country, is heavily
causing a lot of bad side-effects. People are simply not accepted because
there's too much red-tape. There are plenty of procedures. Many things
are decided according to a vote instead of what is better to do.

Re-structuring Debian as an anarchy controlled by a loose leadership will
do it very good. Otherwise, it seems things are progressing too slowly:

Debian used to have a very poor installer until not long ago, and even
now it is not a graphical one but a character based one. Furthermore, the
Debian release cycle is too long to be effective for most users. (and we
should remember that using the bleeding edge distribution is not an option
for many users, who cannot excessively download packages from the Internet).

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Furthermore, Debian still lacks many of the graphical configuration tools
that are common in other distributions. That's not good.

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It is beyond my power to fix all these problems on my own. So I looked for
an alternative distribution. I bought a new hard-disk which I'm dedicating
to distribution experimentation. For a long time I recommended using Mandrake
for many newcomers I've introduced Linux to. So I decided to give it a try.

Mandrake is very nice, and I'm happily using it. I have one partition with
Mandrake Cooker (the bleeding edge distribution) and one partition with the
stable one. There is a lot of glue and integration in the distribution and
everything is made to work together. The distribution is kept up-to-date and
the releases are more frequent than Debian.

Granted, there are more bugs than in Debian, especially in the Mandrake
Cooker. But they are nothing I cannot handle, and so I'm just trying to
fix what I find. I already contributed some bug-reports, and even fixes
there, and also submitted several new packages.

Note that I can still use and work on Debian, either by booting to it,
or running it on a PC emulator. I will continue to maintain my packages in
Debian at least until someone else volunteers to take over them. But I'm
officially no longer a Debianist.

Sincerely yours,

    Eve Siegel ("Erisa").
```

Eve has sent me a copy of this message. It started an entire active discussion at the mailing list to which it was sent.

RMS is Coming to Town

One day, when Jonathan, Taylor, and I were having a conversation in one of our school hallways, we saw Eve approaching us, carrying a piece of paper, and looking very anxious to see us.

"Hi Eve, what's up?" Jonathan said.

"Hey guys - I have very exciting news: ", she said as she approached us and then kissed Taylor briefly. "RMS is coming to town!", and she let us see her sheet.

In case you don't know, "RMS" is Richard M. Stallman [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Stallman]. He was one of the original hackers in the MIT Artificial Intelligence Laboratory. He also coined the term "Free Software" [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_software] ("Free" as in "Free Speech" or "Freedom") which describes a certain licensing model of software programs and components, that is now popular among individual developers, many large and small corporations and many other organisations. This model later also became known as "open source software", which is now likely the most popular term for that, and the one that my friends and I are using usually, especially when speaking with laymen. (Some software activists still feel there is a semantic and ideological difference between the terms "free software" and "open source", but I'm not too infatuated with that distinction.)

In any case, Stallman then went on to create the GNU project [https://www.gnu.org/], as part of which a great deal of free software packages (or "open source" ones if you may), which make up a large and integral part of many modern-day UNIX-like systems (and are even available and commonly used on some non-open-source UNIX systems and some not-so-UNIX-like systems such as Microsoft Windows). The GNU-based UNIXes include the systems now known as "Linux" systems, which run the Linux operating system kernel combined with the GNU run-time and other free software user-land components (and as such, Stallman and other GNU people insist on calling them "GNU/Linux" instead).

"Great!" Taylor said looking at the paper. "Jenn, would you like to meet him?"

"I suppose." I said, "I'd rather not miss on this opportunity. Albeit he does have a reputation for being very stubborn. How is he in real-life?"

"Well, Taylor and I met him last time he's been here." Eve said, "We also signed each other's keys. He's very nice in real-life: intelligent, funny, and a very nice hippy-like person. I'm sure you'll like him."

"Well, there's a key-signing party there too. Hmmm… it's a bit far from here. I think the four of us should borrow a car. Jonathan, are you coming, too?"

"Sure, why not? What's a key-signing party?"

Eve replied: "A key-signing is something you do with your cryptographical public-key and private key pair. You sign a person's key and thus acknowledge you have verified that the key belongs to this actual person."

"Key-signing parties are fun, but if you ask me, the chance of someone performing a man-in-the-middle attack over the Internet is god-damn small. Heck, I bet even the NSA cannot do that."

"Hmmm… " I said, "I don't have a GPG [= GNU Privacy Guard] key-pair yet. I guess I'll generate one for the occasion. Is there a howto document or something like this?"

"Yep," Taylor said, "the Key-Signing Party Howto. Using GPG is not exactly rocket science."

"Cool!" I said. And then we discussed the arrangements for picking everyone up.

The day of the meeting, I placed everything I needed in a backpack, and went to Taylor's house for the ride. Eve was already there and we waited for Jonathan, who arrived shortly afterwards. So, we all entered the car, and drove there.

The hallroom in which Stallman's presentation and get-together took place was quite crowded, which was expected. We spotted Mr. Stallman there, but decided to approach him only at the general get-together afterwards.

RMS gave a very entertaining presentation about the history of the free software movement, what it meant to him, and how we can help. He told the shop-worn story of his life at the MIT Artificial Intelligence Lab, the incident with the printer, and what he has done to remedy the situation. He also gave the standard preaching about why it was important to say "Free Software" instead of "Open-Source" and "GNU/Linux" instead of just "Linux". Throughout the talk, he told a great deal of jokes, which caused the audience to burst into laughter. It was great.

Then he gave some time for questions from the audience. They were also answered assertively and sometimes funnily. Then the key-signing party took place.

We decided that Stallman will sign keys with each and every local separately and then the locals can sign each other's keys. I stood in a long line, showed Mr. Stallman some pictorial IDs and vice versa. Eve and Taylor did not take part in it, because they had already signed his key. Instead they spent some time talking between themselves. Eventually, RMS was free, and we continued the key-signing between ourselves.

Then came time for some socialising: Dr. Stallman brought some books and other gifts which he intended to sell to gather money for the Free Software Foundation (while autographing them).

After a while, Eve approached him. "Hi Mr. Stallman!" she said, "I'm Eve Siegel. I've seen you in L.A. a couple of years ago. You may remember me as Erisa. We talked on E-mail later on - about the evils of big business, free software ideology and stuff like that."

"'Erisa', yes, I remember you. Didn't you have… ahmmm… green hair back then?"

"Yes, as a matter of fact. Since then it became purple, but now I'm au natural."

"You look nice." Stallman said.

"Thanks. You too. So what are you doing now?"

"Oh the usual, advocating free software, trying to convert the world to the free software ideology."

"Good, someone ought to do it. Are you seeing anyone by any chance?"

"No. I'm not seeing anyone at the moment".

"Oh well. In any case, please meet my friend and protégé for hacking - Jennifer Raymond. Jennifer, Mr. Stallman and vice versa.".

"Nice to meet you, Mr. Stallman." I said. "I've heard so much about you."

"Well, everything positive you've heard about me is true, but also some of the negative things."

Eve and I laughed, and RMS quickly joined us. But then some other attendee wanted to talk to Stallman, and we let them converse.

We arrived at Taylor's house, and Eve and I walked home together from there. On the way, I said to Eve, "There's something I don't get."

"What?"

"RMS is like this really funny and intelligent guy, and he's a really cute hippy, and he had his share of life achievements and stuff…"

"Right."

"And he's in his fifties now, and you know that girls dig older man. So how come when you asked him if he's seeing anyone, he said he doesn't? Why does he have a problem finding a suitable life-partner?"

"Oh, Jennifer, Jennifer… you are so naïve. Why don't I drop by your house and show you some stuff he wrote on his homepage." Eve replied.

"OK.", I said puzzled.

Richard Stallman's homepage greeted the random web-surfer with some political action items. It was hardly a pleasant way to be introduced to a web-page, and not my idea of a page I'd like to visit often. Then Eve showed me his former personal ad. It reads, and I quote:

> I'm a single atheist white man, 50, reputedly intelligent, with unusual interests in politics, science, music and dance.
>
> I'd like to meet a woman with varied interests, curious about the world, comfortable expressing her likes and dislikes (I hate struggling to guess), delighting in her ability to

fascinate a man and in being loved tenderly, who values joy, truth, beauty and justice more than "success"--so we can share bouts of intense, passionately kind awareness of each other, alternating with tolerant warmth while we're absorbed in other aspects of life.

My 19-year-old child, the Free Software Movement, occupies most of my life, leaving no room for more children, but I still have room to love a sweetheart. I spend a lot of my time traveling to give speeches, often to Europe, Asia and Latin America; it would be nice if you were free to travel with me some of the time.

"Oh, my God!" I said after I read it.

"Do you wonder why now?"

"Not any more. Any half-normal girl would be scared off by the message he's trying to give."

"Yeah, I always thought so too." Eve noted.

"But I might put him in the list of the 5 celebrities I'm allowed to have sex with [https://friends.fandom.com/wiki/The_One_With_Frank_Jr.]." I said.

Eve replied: "Hmmm… cool! He's incredibly sexy. But I can warn you that I don't think he's much of a casual sex guy. You can always ask him that on E-mail."

"Who will Take a Second Look at it, unless…"

I don't remember whose idea it was, but we ended up enrolling Eve into the Homecoming Queen contest. When Eve discovered she was on the nominees list, she was a bit upset.

"Homecoming Queen? Me? Why would I ever want to be a homecoming queen?"

"Eve, we thought you could see how beautiful you are, and how much people could like you, if they got to know you." I answered.

"Hah! Well… oh heck, I don't have a ready reply. But I'm going to get you guys for this. I really will." and she started to walk from there. "You'll see."

Eve showed up to the homecoming queen nominees roundup, wearing one of her best dresses. When her turn came, she began her speech:

"Ladies and Gentlemen. I don't know how many of you know me, but my name is Eve Siegel. I urge you to vote for me for homecoming queen, not for your sake, but for mine. I really need you to vote for me, because my entire future depends on it. Seriously."

"Take a look at my Résumé, for example. 'Experienced in computers and programming since 1994.' ; 'Experienced in Linux and UNIX technologies since 1998' ; '2000-2005 - Debian Packager', '2005-Present - Mandrake Packager', and more of this vain. Tell me, who will take a second look at this C.V. if it did not say, '2005 - Elected as a homecoming queen.'?"

"Now for what I'm going to do if I'm elected. I'm going to erect a gigantic statue of Tux the Penguin, this guy [picture showing on the screen], and also one for Beastie the BSD Daemon, [picture showing] for good measure. I'm going to fight against abusive behaviour toward nerds and geeks, for computer literacy, and… for world peace. What the heck!"

"But all these philanthropical causes are secondary to my egoistical motives of having to win this title for my own good. Thank you!"

She practically brought down the house with this speech. Even Taylor and I could not resist a maniacal laughter. She ended up being one of the five finalists. As the elections were on, Eve started her own campaign sloganed "Don't vote for Eve!" and gave away pamphlets with nothing but raves about the other four contestants. This also increased her karma considerably.

She wore the same dress during the homecoming queen ceremony, as during the pre-election. As the runner-ups were announced, she was given warm hugs from all-of-them. She ended up being the first runner-up with a margin of only 5 votes to the real winner. She ended up saying she was glad she did not take the title, but I never saw her happier than on that day.

She did not put it in her résumé.

God Works in Mysterious Ways

Taylor, Eve, Jonathan and I gathered at the living room in my house, together with our college acceptance letters, and each having his university acceptance summary. We had previously decided that we will go to the same university together, and we needed to find the most suitable one to which we were all accepted.

"OK, before we start - let me make one thing clear: I absolutely refuse to study in the East Coast." Eve said.

"Why?" I asked.

"Well, my parents moved there once when I was in the 5th grade. To Boston. I completely hated the cold, the rain, the snow, getting wet. I guess I'm a California girl."

"Very well. So we're going to pick a college in California. All for one and one for all." Taylor said, and kissed Eve on the lips.

"Besides - I did not get into M.I.T. and I guess no-one here did either." she added.

"Ahem." I said.

"Yes, Jenn?" she said as she looked at me.

"I got into M.I.T…"

"Well, I'll be damned. I guess the interviewer was flabbergasted by my then Purple hair. " Eve said, "Oh well, California colleges. I got into Berkeley! Everybody else did?".

"I got into Berkeley, too." Taylor said.

"Ahem." I said, "I was rejected from U.C. Berkeley."

"You were?" Eve said, "God Works in Mysterious Ways."

Taylor sighed, "Guess we're not going to Berkeley. All for one and one for all. How about UCLA?"

"Well, while we're setting our preferences" I said, "I'd rather not study somewhere close. I'd like to be a bit away from my parents."

"No problem." Jonathan said, "We'll be together away from our parents." and he kissed me on the lips. "OK,", he added, "I've got San-Diego University, University of Sacramento… hey, I got into Stanford!"

"Me too" Eve said.

"Likewise" Taylor added.

I checked my notes, "I got into Stanford, too. That's great - we're all going to Stanford."

"All for one and all in Stanford." Eve said. There was a long period when we were just digesting the news, and just being plain joyful about it. After a while Eve said: "OK, we said we'll all major in Computer Engineering, but have different minors. My minor is going to be Linguistics. Since I already know English, Hebrew and Spanish, I might as well get the hang of other languages."

"I'm going to minor in Ancient History and Languages of the Near East." Taylor said, "I'd like to learn more about Eve's background."

Eve smiled. Jonathan said, "I think I'll be a philosophy minor. I think I'm a philosopher at heart. At least during the times I'm not an Electrician by heart."

"Well, as for me, I'm going to minor in fine arts." I said. "Maybe I have a hidden talent for painting or something like that, and if not, at least I'll find out."

"Very well, so, we're all sending the acceptance letters to Stanford, each with his selected Minor." Taylor said. "OK, now, if you'll excuse me, I think we still have some homework to do… high school one."

"She must be a fine cat."

```
      <jennray>  OK, so I invited my friend over here (the one we ended
                 up transforming, per perlygatekeeper's advice) and she
                 should be here soon.
      <blarned>  She must be a fine cat.
           -->   erisa has joined #perl
      <jennray>  erisa: hi! Good timing, I just told the channel
                 about your arrival.
        <erisa>  jennray: Jennifer: #! I'll see if I like the company here.
             *   blarned paws at erisa
      <rindolf>  Hi erisa! Meet blarned - he's our resident cat. Kudos
                 for the Unicode, too.
        <erisa>  blarned: meow!
        <erisa>  rindolf: UTF-Love!
      <rindolf>  erisa: and ISO-Hate-Hate-Five-Nine-*.
<perlygatekeeper>  erisa: so I understand your transformation was
                 successful?
        <erisa>  perlygatekeeper: oh yes! I'm a completely different
                 person now.
        <erisa>  Hold on.
        <erisa>  http://eve-siegel.eu.org/temp-images/eve-before.jpg vs.
                 http://eve-siegel.eu.org/temp-images/eve-after.jpg .
        <erisa>  And that's just the way I look.
             *   blarned claws the 'before' and nuzzles the 'after'.
<perlygatekeeper>  erisa: yes, they are a difference of earth and heaven.
      <rindolf>  erisa: awesome. I understand you are jennray's
                 classmate?
        <erisa>  rindolf: yes, we're also good friends. And I will
                 continue to torment her during our (and our boyfriends')
                 Bachelor's in university.
      <rindolf>  erisa: sounds like a plan.
      <jennray>  erisa was initially reluctant to join IRC because she
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                      thought it was a place for chronic time wasters and
                      "script-kiddies".
          <blarned>   Perl cats like to waste time, but we are at a constant
                      war with those pesky script-kiddie critters.
            <erisa>   I'll join that Perl Cats' herd ("clowder"?). Meow!
          <rindolf>   erisa: by the way, how did you reach that conclusion about
                      IRC?
            <erisa>   rindolf: hmmm… let me think.
            <erisa>   Well, I used to enjoy chatting on IRC a bit before I became
                      a rebel, but then I recall an E-mail exchange with someone
                      whom I believed told me that the reason he was such a great
                      hacker was because he lacked any social life.
          <jennray>   A "nerd" so-to-speak?
            <erisa>   Yes, exactly.
            <erisa>   Oh my God…
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At which point, I received a phone call. It was Eve and she was crying.

"Jennifer, I think I've realised why I became the punk that I was… it was all because of that E-mail exchange. I think… I think… I was trying to emulate a nerd, because I cared a lot about hacking."

"Oh, Eve!" I told her. "Maybe I should come to your house?"

There was a pause. "Well, OK… if it's not much trouble."

"It's not, really. You're my friend after all." I told her.

I went to her house, and when I came, she was still very excited. She told me about her past, how she was not happy with what she was, and how non-sensical her past philosophy appeared to her then. She returned to her happy, joyful, state after a while and we returned to the IRC conversation taking turns to type things at the computer. I showed her some of my other favourite channels, and she ended up making new IRC friends. Eventually, Eve concluded by saying: "Wow! Wasting time can be a lot of fun. I should do it more often, I think".

I can write my own replacement for 'In Search of Lost Time'

After the summer vacation arrived, and we had some time before our Freshman year at the university, Eve said that she'd rather not work this year, and instead have a lot of "clean fun with my friends". We decided to restrict ourselves to California and vicinity in our touring.

Using our car, we drove everywhere. We went everywhere we could think of. We hiked in Yosemite, been to Disneyland, visited the San-Diego Zoo. We went to a lot of Linux-related conferences that took place in the summer, and met a great deal of fellow enthusiasts. Eve decided we should take the tour through Berkeley University, and after the tour, she went to see the rooms where BSD (= an early and pioneering version of UNIX) was developed, and where the GIMP (an image manipulation program) was developed. I think it was her idea of heaven.

When Eve wasn't driving, she spent a lot of time writing things on her PDA. She said she worked on a lot of articles, and Wikipedia entries. Eventually, at the Saturday before the last, we took a quiet day and went to a beach north of Los Angeles. As the boys went swimming again, Amanda, Eve and I sat on some chairs on the seashore. Eve sat on her chair wearing her bikini, I sat next to her with a shirt over

my bathing suit, and Amanda sat beside me with Eve's laptop. The laptop had speakers connected to it which we used to play music.

We were finishing to hear an interesting punk song that Eve was fond of, and has sort of grown up on Amanda and me. In fact, it was Amanda who picked it up this time. After the song ended, Eve said:

"Yeah, Baby, yeah! I really like the guitar-and-drums solos in this song. This guy has an excellent voice. His technique is usually not too good, but here he does it pretty well."

Amanda said: "Eve, are you sure you shouldn't become a music critique?"

"Nah," Eve said, "I'm a woman of many talents, but I need to work at what I'm likely to earn some money from."

Amanda giggled, "OK. OK." and added, "So what song would you like to hear next?" she asked.

"I'd like to hear 'I'm not a Girl, not yet a Woman' by Britney Spears" Eve said.

"Britney Spears? I thought you hated her." I said.

"Yeah," Amanda said, "I'm surprised you even have this song on your laptop."

"Oh, give the poor girl a break. Some of her songs are pretty decent." Eve said to us.

"One Britney coming up." Amanda said.

"You know," Eve said, "I think I'd like to be an Objectivist-slash-Libertarian. I mean, they rebel against the system, which works for me. But they are also pro-Capitalistic and everything, as long as it's uncontrolled Capitalism, which is also something the new and improved me, really believes in, instead of the 'Anti-Big-Business' crap."

"Eve," I said, "you'll be a wonderful Objectivist-slash-Libertarian."

"Yep." she said, "Man, I'm going to miss my punky anti-Capitalistic self…"

"No feelings of yearning here." Amanda said.

"None here either." I added.

Eve said, "Hmmm… you're right, there's nothing to miss really. Man, to think of how I wasted all this time being what I was. I can write my own replacement for *In Search of Lost Time*, and publish it, and it would be better than the original, and I will win the Pulitzer Prize for it, and be on shows like *Oprah*…"

I stopped reading my book and placed it on my lap. Then I said: "Oh Eve, come on, look at you! You're a beautiful person: you're smart, cool, talented, likable, … you look great…" Eve smiled, "and you're my best female friend, and you're dating my best male friend."

"I'm sorry, but I don't think you've wasted any time."

Eve rose up, and I quickly followed her. She approached me and before I knew it, she hugged me and I hugged her back. "I love you.", she said. "I love you, too.", I said to her. We remained hugging each other for some time and then went back to our seats.

Then the guys returned. "Hey, did we miss anything?" Taylor said.

"Yep, " Eve said as she rose and tied her hands around his neck. "I am a beautiful person…"

"I can see that." Taylor said.

"…and Jennifer and I love each other dearly. We're seriously considering dumping you guys, living together, eloping, et cetera".

"But luckily for you, we may wish to have some babies, so…"

You can always count on Eve to convey the serious things in a completely non-serious way…

Most of our Electrical Engineering graduates cannot…

"Man, this is so exciting!" Eve said as the four of us were entering the hall in which the beginning ceremony of the new Stanford scholastic year for Computer Science students took place.

"I mean," she continued, "come on, this is Stanford. Tons of great names, lots of other departments, lots of interesting classes we could take, many extra-curricular activities."

"And we're in the middle of Silicon Valley - we can attend conferences of all these companies, big and small; we can visit IBM or Google…"

"And we're studying Comp-Eng. One day, we'll be more than just creators of bit buckets, but people who can actually wire transistors and stuff like that."

"Of course, once we start having homework and we're going to have bad teachers, we'll curse this place to death, and continually bitch about it, but right now - I'm so excited."

"And the best thing about it," she said as she started kissing Taylor, "is that I'm doing it with my best friends."

"I hope I'm more than just your friend." Taylor said. "Oh, you are!" she replied and they started seriously making out.

"I could not help overhearing what you were saying." said a man in his fifties or sixties who approached Jonathan and me. "For your information, most of our Electrical Engineering Graduates, cannot even replace a light bulb."

"Hmmm… makes sense." Jonathan said.

"Yes, they are practically specialised mathematicians."

"What's up with them?" He asked, pointing at Taylor and Eve.

"Well," I said, "it's a combination of raging hormones and what we really hope is a match made in heaven."

"Wait a sec… we haven't introduced ourselves! I'm Jennifer Raymond and this is my boyfriend, Jonathan Demarco."

"Nice to meet you. I'm Professor Emeritus Don Knuth [Kanooth]."

"Knuth," Eve said as she let herself out of Taylor, "What about Knuth?"

"Nice to meet you, Miss, I'm Don Knuth." said the professor as he extended his hand.

"Oh my god," Eve got excited as she shook his hand, "Don Knuth, the TeX [Tekh] guy."

Prof. Knuth nodded an said, "Yes, TeX".

"Hi!" Eve continued, "I'm a… I'm a great, I'm a great adm… ehhhh…," and she fainted into Taylor's arms.

Hexadecimal Dollar

We were in a relatively quiet side room. Prof. Knuth was there and also the four of us, (with Eve still unconscious) and a doctor. Eventually, Eve woke up.

"Oh my God," she said, "…Taylor, Jennifer, Jonathan…" she looked around.

"Professor Knuth! Oh, I'm so sorry."

"Nah! That's OK.", he said.

"Ah, OK. Just understand that meeting you is sort of like meeting God."

"I'm not God." he said, "Hell, last time I tried, it took me two days to build the Roman Empire." Some people laughed or giggled. "Here," he continued. "I made something for you." and he gave her a check.

"2.56 dollars," she turned the check, "To my great adm." she said, "Wow! One Knuthian Hexadecimal Dollar just for me."

"Are you going to cash it in?", Jonathan asked whimsically.

"Are you kidding? This stuff sells on eBay for at least a hundred bucks…"

I burst into laughter.

"I'm just kidding." Eve said, "I'm going to cherish it.".

I admit that I did not entirely understand everything that happened right away. But when I returned to my dorm room, I spent some time browsing the web looking for answers. I still have a lot to learn, but I'm getting there. I guess I'm just a geek who's trying to make the world a better place.