/usr/bin/perl

[Foo]

Alan Joining

Working Title: You don't become a hacker, until the fat lady sings.

Abstract: Alan Summers, a new intern joins the company.

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[A Black Screen. Some Letters are written one by one to the screen in a fixed font]

```
#!/usr/bin/perl

Then a -w is added and then:

#!/usr/bin/perl -w

use strict;

# Hmmm... now what?

perl
```

Paul: Hi, can you please tell me in what language this del_temp_files.py of yours is written?

Tony: Python, I think. Why?

Paul: I am not going to maintain a Python script.

Tony: I'll maintain it for you.

Paul: No, you won't. Re-write it in Perl.

Tony: But Python has...

Paul: I'm sure Perl has that too. If you need to install a CPAN module, you know you can always do it.

Tony: OK. But in the worst case you can rewrite it from scratch.

Paul: And who will save me from the hit-men that Joel Sposlky is going to send to kill me?

Tony: Look, I read his article. It's very nice. But he was talking about a 100,000 lines + codebase, not about a 20-liner.

Paul: A little calculation. Let's suppose I want to add a flag. A fix for it would take 1 minute to write and debug. Rewriting an entire script from scratch would take half an hour. Which is better? Hmmm... hard decision.

Tony: I think sometimes it's better to start over.

Paul: Granted. But the add, clean up, add, clean up, cycle takes much less time.

[Cut]

[Michelle is standing near a brand new computer]

Michelle: Hmmm... I love the smell of a new workstation in the morning.

Michelle: Now what should I install? [Picks up a few CDs] Gentoo? Takes too long to compile everything. [Puts the CD in a different stack] Debian? Takes too long to upgrade to testing. Slackware? The package management from hell. S.u.S.e? No.

Michelle: Red Hat? Mandrake is nicer. [Shouts to the other room] Hey what should I install on the new workstation?

From the other room: RedHat! Debian! Slack!

Michelle: Mandrake it is.

[Cut. Tony is sitting in the same room, alone. Alan Enters]

Alan: Hi!

Tony: Hi! Aren't you the new intern?

Alan: Yes. Alan Summers [they shake hands].

Tony: What's your story?

Alan: I'm an English student, studied a bit programming in the university. Installed Linux at home and got hooked. Don't know much but I'm getting there.

Tony: Here's a gift for you. [gives him a copy of the Perl CD Bookshelf from a stack]

Alan: The Perl CD Bookshelf. Gee thanks.

Tony: And you can keep it even if you leave tomorrow. BTW, what's your favourite console editor?

Alan: I started with pico, but then realized it was braindead, and looked for something similar. Someone told me about joe and I got hooked.

Tony: joe? [shouting] joe? [opens his hands] Man! I love you already! [hugs him]

Alan: You use joe too?

Tony: Nah, I'm an Emacs man myself. But joe is much better than pico. You should see our Emacs vs. VI shootout in our semi-annual "Simple-Site Playing with the Elements Day".

[sits at the computer]

Tony: Now here are some URLs. Read Freshmeat a lot, and I mean a lot. Slashdot has good content, but stay away from the comments. SweetCode is a must read. To learn perl quickly and nicely, check out this perl tutorial or Perl for Perl Newbies [{shameless plug}] of those Haifa Linux Club creatures. And while we're at it don't ever miss the Haifa Linux Club site.

Alan: Why?

Tony: they give a lecture about Linux every two weeks and every one is online.

Alan: They sound like sick people to me.

Tony: they are. But my best friends are sick.

Alan: Maybe I'm just new here, but can't you prepare a page or a small site, with all of these URLs already in place?

Tony: Great idea! Tell you what, I'll work on it now.

Alan: And what should I do?

Tony: Learn Perl. Take your time. And, BTW, you can't avoid reading the man pages, but it's not the best source to _start_ learning Perl from.

Alan: OK. I'll just learn.

Tony: And write some programs. You know: the Hanoi Towers, Copy a file. Hmmm... I should prepare a list of exercises.

[Cut.]

[Michelle is sitting next to a computer. Alan Enters]

Alan: Hey. I understand you are installing Linux on my computer.

Michelle: Yep. Mandrake 8.2. Now it installs all the packages. Did you read "Back to Basics" by Joel Spolsky?

Alan: No, not yet. Albeit I read about him on Slashdot.

Michelle: Brilliant article. Do so. You see this is a 1.7 giga-hertz machine, and if something runs fine here, it does not mean it would on our extremely loaded server. Make sure your algorithms are sane.

Alan: Can I know your name before this discussion goes any further?

Michelle: Sorry. Michelle Slavsky. Prima Hackeressa here. Not necessarily the best hacker and not the CTO, but more experienced than Tanya. For now, at least.

Alan: Why?

Michelle: This kid is learning fast!

[Turns her chair]

Michelle: You're Alan right?

Alan: Yep.

[The computer beeps]

Michelle: Oooh. Time to switch a CD.

[Cut]

[Robert enters the room where Michelle and Alan sit next to a computer]

Robert: Hey Mik, and who might you be?

Alan: I'm Alan, the new intern.

Robert: Oh, now I remember. Alan. I guarantee you that I'll forget your name, so please don't mind if I ask you what it is. Again.

Alan: That's OK. I tell my name to people on the time, and I'm not unlike that either. Back in the university more people know me by name than I know theirs.

Robert: Yes, that seems to be the case for everybody. Except that it's mathematically impossible... I think.

Robert: Never mind, please come to my office later today, and I'll talk to you about the Tao of Programming.

Alan: The Tao of Programming.

Robert: That's right. How to become a good programmer. And how to become one as quickly as possible. In the One True Way.

Alan: Do you have schedules, BTW?

Robert: Of course. But they are realistic. We never force someone to stay late at work if he doesn't want to.

Alan: Why?

Robert: One thing is because tired programmers are sloppy and write bad code, and usually can't get anything done anyway. Another thing is that both me, being the CTO and the CEO are voluntarist at hearts.

Alan: And Linux is the living proof.

[Pause]

Robert: Did I mention I'm the CTO?

Michelle: Robert, you just did.

Robert: Super. Keep up the good work.

[Leaves the room]

Michelle: That was Robert - he's amazing. He used to be my guru for a while.

Alan: And who's your guru now.

Michelle: Nobody. I'm guru-less, care-less and free.

Alan: Cool. I wish I could feel that way.

Michelle: You will and when you do, you'll know that You Were Enlightened.

Alan: OK.

Michelle: One thing I'll always remember is that he did not know that grep could search through files. And I knew that by working with the Borland version of grep that I found on Windows.

Alan: Unbelievable. Every half decent manual out there shows you "grep hello *" as one of the first example.

Michelle: Yeah. OK, back to business. Now, you know how commands are parsed in bash?

Alan: More or less. I know that asterisk expands to the list of files, and that double quotes wrap stuff where I can still put variables, and single quotes are the same only with dollars and backslashes being that.

Michelle: Good boy. [Pats his head] Now, there are some more caveats, especially with bash. Back-quotes are your worst nightmare - they execute the command and return its output on the command line. Very dangerous. But they are treated like a string. $(...) is a much nicer version that puts them in a sub-shell. Won't work in System V's /bin/sh, but we don't care about them.

Alan: Why?

Michelle: I would not touch such a system voluntarily with a ten-meters pole. And meters, mind you are over three times longer than feet.

[Cut]

[Cut

Black Screen.]

Message: Later that day.

Tim: people, people gather around. [Everybody gathers around] First of all, I'd like to welcome our newest employee: Alan Summers. Alan: I wish you good luck. Work hard, and have fun hard, preferably but not necessarily both at the same time.

[Everybody laughs.]

Alan: Thanks. I already like this place.

Tim: If you need anything, let me know. We have a bookshelf of books there, and we order any books except reading books on demand. Michelle here, takes advantage of it to order a lot of pop psychology books, but they have proven to be useful.

Alan: Sounds nice, but I think I'll wait before I'll take advantage of it.

Tim: Perfectly fine with me. Now it's time for "donating something to a good cause". I talked with my accountant and we have a $1000 this week. So whose first?

Tony: I am. We work with CVS. Well, I tried BitKeeper and it kicks ass. Except for branching which is nicer on CVS. Problem is: it costs a lot of money, and Larry

McVoy is rather possessive about it. Now, this guy works on Arch, which aims to be a good BitKeeper replacement, it's usable, but isn't quite there yet. And now he asks for donation. I think we should give it to him.

Tim: Sounds nice. Does anybody agree?

Everybody: Yes. Yes. Fine by me.

Tim: Oh well. We donated to LWN last week. Meeting is adjurned.

[Cut.]

Robert: Alan, let me tell you the secret of good programming: time. You become a better one with every passing day. Three monthes after you write a piece of code, it looks like junk to you. That's why people insist on their employees to have experience.

But that's not the entire secret: some people are much better programmers after a year, than most programmers out there with ten years of experience. But that's because they are eager to learn new languages and new technologies and know that learning is a dynamic process.

Alan: So? I knew that.

Robert: Well, it's not the only thing I can tell you about becoming a good programmer.

Alan: so go on.

Robert: Why thanks! See, good code requires a good design. Without good design, you'll end up refactoring it too much. But don't over-engineer. You see, you need to have a good design, that can easily be extended.

Alan: How do I do that?

Robert: If you are good, you'll see that a project's TODO list always grows or remain constant. Think about all the features you'd like to have and think how to implement them. Don't put them in, but make sure they can all be implemented with some effort.

Alan: OK. Good.

Robert: Now, rewriting the entire codebase from scratch is something you usually should not do...

[The End]

Linus Torvalds Visiting

[Linus Torvalds Enters. Applause]

Linus: Hello.

Tony: Hi! You are Linus Torvalds, right?

Linus: Yes.

Tony: Nice to meet you. They shake hands.

[Tony gets back to sitting next to the computer]

[Pause]

Linus: [waits a little] Isn't there something you want to ask me or say to me? The patch penguin fiasco? BitKeeper? The Dave Jones Tree?

Tony: Actually, there is one. [Turns to Linus] You're disturbing me.

Tony: . . .

Linus: I met Tony. He was not excited to meet me at all.

Tim: He gets this way. You should have seen the day that Sarah Michelle Gellar came to visit.

Linus: Let me guess - you host a "Buffy" fan site.

Tim: 5th place on Google, and it's of one of our employees.

Linus: Of Which one?

Tim: [shrugs] Of Tony of course. He is addicted to the show.

[Pause]

Linus: Now I'm puzzled.

Michelle: You see: he has this idea fix of not trusting people he does not know personally or does not know people who know them personally, etc. He has some distrust of media, and writing. You should ask him about what happened to him in high school, and you'll understand where it came from.

Linus: What happened to him?

Michelle: I'm not telling you.

Luther visiting

[The Room Near the Reception. Michelle is working on one of the workstations. Tony and Alan are at the back end]

[Luther enters, carrying a box. He is black and speaks in a heavy southern excent.]

Luther: Hi all! Michelle, I could swear you are becoming prettier with every passing day.

Michelle: Luther! I am _so_ glad to see you. [They hug each other]

Michelle: So what did you bring this time?

Luther: I brought myself.

Michelle: Ohhhh!

Luther: And these chocolate chip cookies my wife prepared just for you.

Michelle: Goodie, let's put them on the counter.

[They go on talking, and meanwhile Tony and Alan are shown]

Alan: Who's he?

Tony: Luther Morrison. He's one of our biggest, and best, clients.

Alan: So he's alone is worse more than this entire company?

Tony: Something like that. Come on, I'll introduce you.

[Tony rises up. (Alan is already standing). They go]

Tony: Hey Luther! Meet Alan, a new intern here.

Alan: Nice to meet you Mr. Morrison.

Luther: Nice to meet you too, son, but call me Luther from now on.

Alan: Luther. [they shake hands]

Luther: So what do you do, Alan, besides working here?

Alan: I'm studying in UCB in the vain hope of getting a degree in English.

Luther: A degree in English is a fine degree. Not only do you talk in English, but you _think_ in English too. And thinking is much more important than talking. I think so, at least.

Luther: Where's Tim, Tanya and the rest of the gang?

Alan: Tim is in his office.

Foo

[Foo.]