

Tekst 3

De volgende tekst is afkomstig uit het eerste hoofdstuk van 'Microserfs', een roman van Douglas Coupland, die zich afspeelt bij Microsoft, het computerbedrijf opgericht door Bill Gates.

1 Microserfs

FRIDAY
Early Fall, 1993

This morning, just after 11:00, Michael locked himself in his office and he won't come out.

Bill (Bill!) sent Michael this totally wicked flame-mail from hell on the e-mail system – and he just wailed on a chunk of code Michael had written. Using the *Bloom County*-cartoons-taped-on-the-door index, Michael is certainly the most sensitive coder in Building Seven – not the type to take criticism easily. Exactly why Bill would choose Michael of all people to wail on is confusing.

We figured it must have been a random quality check to keep the troops in line. Bill's so smart.

Bill is wise.

Bill is kind.

Bill is benevolent.

Bill, Be My Friend ... *Please!*

Actually, nobody on our floor has ever been flamed by Bill personally. The episode was tinged with glamour and we were somewhat jealous. I tried to tell Michael this, but he was crushed.

Shortly before lunch he stood like a lump outside my office. His skin was pale like rising bread dough, and his Toppo's cut was dripping sweat, leaving little damp marks on the oyster-gray-with-plum highlights of the Microsoft carpeting. He handed me a printout of Bill's memo and then gallumphed into his office, where he's been burrowed ever since.

He won't answer his phone, respond to e-mail, or open his door. On his doorknob he placed a "Do Not Disturb" thingy stolen from the Boston Radisson during last year's Macworld Expo. Todd and I walked out onto the side lawn to try to peek in his window, but his venetian blinds were closed and a gardener with a leaf blower chased us away with a spray of grass clippings.

They mow the lawn every ten minutes at Microsoft. It looks like green Lego pads.

Finally, at about 2:30 A.M., Todd and I got concerned about Michael's not eating, so we drove to the 24-hour Safeway in Bellevue. We went shopping for "flat" foods to slip underneath Michael's door.

The Safeway was completely empty save for us and a few other Microsoft people just like us – hair-trigger geeks in pursuit of just the right snack. Because of all the rich nerds living around here, Redmond and Bellevue are very "on-demand" neighborhoods. Nerds get what they want when they want it, and they go psycho if it's not immediately available. Nerds overfocus. I guess that's the problem. But it's precisely this ability to narrow-focus that makes them so good at code writing: one line at a time, one line in a strand of millions.

When we returned to Building Seven at 3:00 A.M., there were still a few people grinding away. Our group is scheduled to ship product (RTM: Release to Manufacturing) in just eleven days (Top Secret: We'll never make it).

Michael's office lights were on, but once again, when we knocked, he wouldn't answer his door. We heard his keyboard chatter, so we figured he was still alive. The situation really begged a discussion of Turing logic – could we have discerned that the entity behind the door was indeed even human? We slid Kraft singles, Premium Plus crackers, Pop-Tarts, grape leather, and Freezie-Pops in to him.

Todd asked me, "Do you think any of this violates geek dietary laws?"

Just then, Karla in the office across the hall screamed and then glared out at us from her doorway. Her eyes were all red and sore behind her round glasses. She said, "You guys are only encouraging him," like we were feeding a raccoon or something. I don't think Karla ever sleeps.

She harrumphed and slammed her door closed. Doors sure are important to nerds.

Anyway, by this point Todd and I were both really tired. We drove back to the house to crash, each in our separate cars, through the Campus grounds – 22 buildings' worth of nerd-cossetting fun – cloistered by 100-foot-tall second growth timber, its streets quiet as the womb: the foundry of our culture's deepest dreams.

There was mist floating on the ground above the soccer fields outside the central buildings. I thought about the e-mail and Bill and all of that, and I had this weird feeling – of how the presence of Bill floats about the Campus, semi-visible, at all times, kind of like the dead grandfather in the *Family Circus* cartoons. Bill is a moral force, a spectral force, a force that shapes, a force that molds. A force with thick, thick glasses.

I am danielu@microsoft.com. I am a tester – a bug checker in Building Seven. I worked my way up the ladder from Product Support Services (PSS) where I spent six months in phone purgatory in 1991 helping little old ladies format their Christmas mailing lists on Microsoft Works.

I am single. I think partly this is because Microsoft is not conducive to relationships. Last year down at the Apple Worldwide Developer's Conference in San Jose, I met a girl who works not too far away, at Hewlett-Packard on Interstate 90, but it never went anywhere. Sometimes I'll sort of get something going, but then work takes over my life and I bail out of all my commitments and things fizzle.

Lately I've been unable to sleep. That's why I've begun writing this journal late at night, to try to see the patterns in my life. From this I hope to establish what my problem is – and then, hopefully, solve it. I'm trying to feel more well adjusted than I really am, which is, I guess, the human condition. My life is lived day to day, one line of bug-free code at a time.

■ Tekst 3 De volgende tekst...

- 3p 3 □ Geef van elk van de onderstaande uitspraken aan of deze in de loop van de passage juist of onjuist blijkt te zijn.
- 1 Michael heeft van zijn baas kritiek op zijn werk gekregen.
 - 2 Michael is razend over de nieuwsgierigheid van zijn collega's.
 - 3 De typische Microsoft-werknemer kan er niet tegen als hem iets tegenzit.
 - 4 Michael heeft aan de ik-persoon en Todd gevraagd om hem eten te brengen.
 - 5 De ik-persoon is zijn carrière begonnen aan de helpdesk van Microsoft.
 - 6 De ik-persoon heeft zich vanwege relatieproblemen op zijn werk gestort.
 - 7 De ik-persoon is van plan een flinke stap te gaan zetten in zijn carrière.
- Noteer het nummer van elke uitspraak, gevolgd door "juist" of "onjuist".