

The Program

Lyrics: Gary McGath, Copyright 2002

After Rudyard Kipling's "The Palace" (May be sung to Leslie Fish's tune)

When I was a geek and a hacker, a coder proven and skilled,
I drew up the specs for a program, such as a geek should build.
Then I searched for old code in the archive; presently, deep in the disk,
I came on the wreck of a program, such as a fool might risk.

There was no worth in the fashion; there was no wit in the plan;
Hither and thither with GOTO's the wild spaghetti ran;
O.O.P. brute and mishandled, but written in every file:
"After me cometh a hacker; tell him I know it's vile."

Swift to my use in the branches, where my well-planned classes grew,
I pulled out the best algorithms, and then compiled them anew.
Lines I grabbed from the headers, made them ANSI correct,
Taking and leaving at pleasure what wasn't flatly wrecked.

Yet I despised not nor gloried, yet, as I wrenched them apart,
I read in the broken framework the heart of that hacker's heart.
As he had risen and pleaded, so did I understand
The form of the dream he had followed in the face of the code he planned.

When I was a geek and a hacker, in the open noon of my pride,
They sent me a word from the VP; they whispered and called me aside.
They said, "We've run out of money." They said, "The contract's been killed.
Thy program shall stand as that other's, the spoil of a buyer to build."

I stored my code in the archive, my headers, my makefiles, and scripts.
All I had wrought I abandoned to their fate in the software crypts.
Only I wrote in the labels—only I marked in each file:
"After me cometh a hacker. Tell him it STILL is vile."