MICROSERFS By Douglas Coupland. ı Microserfs. FRIDAY Early Fall, 1993, This morning, just after 11:00, Michael locked himself in h is office and he wont come out. Bill Bill! sent Michael this totally wicked flame-mail from hell on the e-mail system - and he jus t wailed on a chunk of code Michael had written Exactly why Bill would choose Michael of all people to wail on is confusing. Bills so smart. Bill is wise. Bill is kind. Nerds overfocus. A PC or a Lego brick by itself is inert and pointless: a doorstop; litter. We pass the snacks. Monogamous? asks Susan But beyond this theres what Karla said - about being human, and the dream of humanity. She looked at the jar. Mom phoned. Dad. She glurped a milkshake. So. the time I had the sunstroke episode. Yeah? Let me put this another way I was quiet. My parents. I. The Beast. It was spooky. Evil. e. k. a. the Air Force Satellite Control Facility, at Oniz uka Air Force Base in Sunnyvale. Retch. S. Yeah. We do. He is lost. One. It means youre assembling data in your head - spooling. N ot too flattering. Actually, we all have better skin. Susan was in shock. Gone. Oh - Ethan is trying to wean himself off cel phone s. I thought about the word machine. It grows. its a long list. That I can do this. I saw germanium in the groundwater and dead ca reers. It feels really outposty. wear. no. Oh. ? ii. B. A. I am single. You can tell theyre faking it. The house is covered with d ark cedar paneling. SATURDAY. • Cats. the DMV. b. D. s. i. Random day. Well. At least he doesnt obsess on the garage anymore. Lets not get into it. S. Lewis novels. I dont miss it. a lot. I havent mentioned it at all to Ethan though - too weird. Susan was in s hock. Gone. so. ten-years-ago. Lets go. I dont know. Bugs right. C. Oohhh. I feel like Im in high school. Uncharacteristically bra sh, he yelled, Convoy! Everybody ? G. ii. B. I wonder whats up with that. He showed up at the office around two in the afternoon t o tell me. Underhill. Silence. And I dont miss it. the song. I dont know why they dont sell them. She phoned to fact-check that Fr ys indeed did not sell them. B. B. B. Mr. Thats all. No. Bug looked up. Live and love. Bye kids. Susan says its a male aesthetic. I smell nerds, said Abe. S. it. I want to be. So looks are moot. a job. Ill be. I love their insides already, Daniel. Weve already blended. It was just ridiculous. A: True. We all feel it. S. Oh. Oh. Like I said. You succeeded at memory-creation beyond all wil dest dreams. today was a day like any other day. ı Microserfs. • Trash TV of the late 70s and early 80s. • The history of Apple. • Career anxieties. • Tabloids. g. Zip. b. The prices back then. D. s. i. x 10^3, I am really terrible at remembering three-letter acronyms. Im so bad at names. Oh. No. a lot. I bought them for Mom. Its such a relief when your friends date cool people. Cest la Vie. Thats all I can say. ? G. O. S. ii. B. Mr. A. Mr. J. I. Joes, said Karla. Oh my God - me too! said Susan Hair gone, too? Yup It was so degrading. Oh good. the song. a sin. A pause. And so ask me, did I go? Did you go? asked Michael Oh yeah. where there wa s. girlfriend. Bug sighed. S. it. Correct. Offer. it. I'll be. Well, if theres one thing I know, its Michael and his unbudgeab ility. Oh God. Ethan. Odd. It was scary. Is Kraft, ummm. A focus group of one. We also did seed plants. Old, but new. Susans going to post hers on the Net. Oh. , our massage. U. • A Windows NT box. My weekends are no different than my weekdays. I sampled it us ing part of todays diary. g. b. D. s. i. Good night. Not the same. At least we had the foresight to buy it when we did. The rest g oes to Price-Costco. Money. Oh. No. Im okay. a lot. I mentioned this to Karla and she says its a CPU word. Not too flattering. Im trying to debug myself. Gone. ? G. O. ? I asked But Im not bored. a sin. you realize that it not going to be forever. the game bec omes a lot more serious. It was very TV. No. Bug sighed. I had my hand held once. Oh God, Ethan. you didnt hear that. He relaxed. Well you know what I mean. S. So alone. I want to be. out there. What. No, look. So looks are moot. But then they see me - my body - and its over. Meet BarCode. a job. Odd. Watched CNN. We had to pay. we were just the sort of people you dont want staying in th e room next to you. But the Sony party. Its a mess. This was fun. All we could come up with for multimedia was two hands going fid gety-fidgety in space. Hellooooo. S. Gag. We worked. Mr. U.   hellojed . Exactly why Bill would choose Michael of all people to wail on is confusing. Bill, Be My Friend. She srprized me. g. I thought about this. The concept of body as hard drive seemed very p lausible to me. Michael is hiring people. e. I thought so. When I was young, if I built a house out of Lego, the house had to be a ll in one color. said Bug. Yes. We were here. C. Karma. We made this rule that we had to honk every time we spotted road kill, and we nearly burned out our horns. I was quiet. Its a hive mind. Even Karla. In New York everyones writing a novel. You are gripped. Suspension of disbelief is not an issue. Evil. e. No. I think the dynamic of Mom and Karlas relationship has been set. At least t hey dont hate each other. S. these. ozone. Yeah. My ears were red. The Valley is so career-o-centric. Its science fiction here. It s next week. That I can do this. Oh, Bug. You never know. He never sleeps. Geek party night: its kind of like if we were in Hollyw ood and going to an industry party. I had to go back to my car. On people, this labeling occurs on the face. Prod, prod, rub, poke . Sometimes it can be off-putting. Gag gifts. Oohhh. and. B. He said, Youre not feeling very well, are you, son. And I said, Nnn. no. I was silent. Let me finish. ? G. ii. B. One right-side up - another upside down. Todd and Dusty seem to hav e found soulmates in each other. I mean, not to me. I think hes a keeper. I liked hearing the tangerines go thunk as they hit the cedar shingles of his lanai. That kind of stuff. A. A dive. Susan says its a male aesthetic. EAs parking lot was so odd - entirely composed of brand-new cars. No matter. S. Yes. it. I cant. So it looks as if Chyx is real. CNN really changed her world. How long have I been here? I cant tell Ethan. Coded Oop! She. He. I think the porno awards were a bad influence on them. But the Sony part y. It was like porn acting. A: False. Wait. I felt so close to her. I said, I guess its sort of futile trying to keep a backup fil e of my personal memories. I asked, And. Like I said. What is her side of the story? The password has been deleted Talk to her, Da n: tell her. We worked. We coded. Mr. Its like Im reading 1970s cocktail napkins out loud to you. Hes actually more animated than he is in conversations with us. U. U. oh look. Woo! Last week there was a jolt Last week Karla said, You have to go further, Dan, you have to hold her body. So then she could speak to us. I tried, and couldnt remember. She said it would probably take me a lot longer than Id think. The smell. Try and you cant. Hood. I said, Mom, Mom. tell me its you. Tell me something I never liked in my lunch bag at school. U. , our massage. U. like encryption. All of my messing around with words last year and now, well. its real l ife. Dan. Susan. Amy said, Mrs. U. Im worried about Mom.   hellojed . MICROSERFS By Douglas Coupland. ı Microserfs. Bills so sma rt. Bill is wise. Bill is kind. Bill is benevolent. Its a real psychic yo-yo. What stock I do own wont fully vest for another 2,5 years stock takes 4,5 years to fully vest. He slept there throughout the whole day not unusual at Microsoft, using his Jurassic Pa rk inflatable T-Rex toy as a pillow. • Cats. If putting a computer on every desktop and in every home didnt make money, we wouldnt do it. • Having technical knowledge is way up there. • I love my aquarium. • How to have millions of dollars and not let it affec t your life in any way. • Unclean laundry. Bonus detail: There are dried-out patches of sneeze spray all over Abes monitors. Youd think he could afford 24 bottles of Windex. • Jazz. g. I love to do something. God, I wish I drank. Life is stressful in Palo Alto . I send Dad $500 every month. S. Lewis novels. Gone. 3, 1993, a littie while ago. e. , King Kong will climb up and down your Empi re State Building and install the flag if you finish. Im okay. C. Karma. So. Oh. I. Oh - we have this Euroneighbor named Anatole. Hes a repository of Apple lore gossip ahoy! EVERYTHING. e. I say Ummm. so. Obsolete. A good piece of technology dreams of the day when it will be replaced by a newer piece of technology. no. We also have SPACE. ? I mean, not to me. I was always just a soul to be h arvested or a human unit. Thats how I feel with Karla, I said. Rill crunchy. I had a Raggedy Ann doll made in, like, Sierra Leone. sigh So instead I played with numbers and equations. A. T. S. E. Oh God.] I think yours was the first fax I've had in years. Fax es are like email from 1987,Thanks. More cackling. Mr. a sin. A pause. Me? I hounded him Oh fuck, what a loser I was. I made all t hese needless deposits and withdrawals at the bank. S. I cant. Ill be. Or a photocopy of you. Now, with computers, we photocopy ou r very being. They fellate the planet. Get real, pal. Or move to Florida. I thought of how in-character it was of Michael to fall for someones insides and not even know their outsides. I saw a bare arm. I saw a bar code tattoo below the vaccination bump. She l ooked both ways. She looked me in the eyes. himself. ? I am single. Its a real psychic yo-yo. Susans stock vests later this week, and shes going to have a vesting party. • Cats. • C++. • The Supra. ? I also enlarged an elegant undamaged California freeway clov erleaf from the seminal Handbook of Highway Engineering. Remember - I can crush you into cat food with my thumb and index finger a lone. Mr. Gee thanks, Mr. Valota. Its never the Mr. A. a sin. All I knew was that I couldnt take my eyes off him. Unsolicited conf ession: woah! This guy No. I will say his name. S. Or I did. • A Windows NT box. • Three baseball caps two Mariners, one As. • Abe s Battlestar Galactica trading card album. • Cats. g. I said I remembered having a life, back with Jed and being a kid, and Susan said being a kid counted as life only sort of. Dad. ? I also enlarged an elegant undamaged California freeway cloverleaf from the seminal Handbook of Highway Engineering. Its as if all those one-night stands never mattered. Because all I care about is Dusty cr ushing my body Have you ever done that Daniel. I had a Raggedy Ann doll made in, like, Sierra Leone. And all I rilly desired was a Barbie Corvette - more than life itself. And I had to pretend I wanted it because it was mathematical - so clean and solvable. Th eyre like, freaks. Dustys forearms resemble Popeyes. I really have to wonder if Todds doing steroids. I mean, hes just not physica lly normal. Were all going to have to face this. Mr. I liked hearing the tangerines go thunk as they hit the cedar shingles of his lanai. Its never the Mr. Valotas of this world whose houses burn down. I was breathing really hard as I was carrying the Rubberma id Roughneck containers to the end of the driveway. I hope nobody noticed that Im way out of shape. Michael is now Bill! Dusty sai d Ciao, and resumed tweaking her algorithms A. T.] I think yours was the first fax I've had in years. Faxes are like email from 1 987,Thanks. Todd said, I Dunno. We all said, Ooooh. I know, I know, she said preemptively, the Russians are supposed to be our fri ends now. Barbies, said Karla. More cackling. I. Oh - Dusty barfed up whole Lake Superiors of muck all morning. I wonder whats up with that. Some new diet regime, doubtless. Dads only one-third the way up the food chain in his division at Delta, and it must be really degrading for him. FRIDAY one week later Dad quit his job. He showed up at the office around two in the afternoon to tell me. Underhill. Mom was P-I-S-S-E-D off. But that, I said, is exactly what Ethan believes. Silence. Ethan shot me a self-satisfied glance, and the ex-Gang of Two went to work without much ado. Really, said Michael, I hope this here is the end of politics. Whic h shut him up. But Todds right. Its a bit much. Oh - Ethan finished his freeway. Hey, itll be great. We can listen in on cellular calls with my Radio Shack Pro-46 scanner - I altered its megahertz range with a soldering gun - or maybe listen to some crank call s I have on tape - hack a few passwords. B. B. B. I was rilly, rilly freaked out the first time I had chunks. chunks there. Grotac ious. not like chunks of liver. I wouldnt even wear them if it werent for chunks. So I always wear pads on like the second day, bu t I hate them. Its like getting a drive-by waxing. Karla suggested, If they ever made chunky-style tampons, we wouldnt need to eve r wear pads. Women lose again. No humans. S. And I realized Bug had driven all the way down from San Francisco just to find a pers on to tell this to. He got up. Im driving back up the Peninsula. Home. I just wanted to talk to somebody. I said, Good luck, Bug, and he winked at me. I have never seen two people with less chemistry. Oh, and Mistys getting really F-A-T, even though Mom has h er on a slimming diet. Rusty orange. Fuck. And I dont think a war is something that would speed up development. I dont think its t hat kind of technology. This thing wont be real until every house in the world has had a little ditch dug up in its front lawn, an d an optical fiber installed. This was the land where all you ever asked for was all you were ever going to get - so everyone aske d Big. He was getting philosophical. He twisted a cocktail napkin into a rope. Well, he said, the magic comes and goes. He chugged a Wallbanger. hiring. Oh God - dawn. A: Hi, B C: Hi B: Look, Cs here. Oh - Mistys fur was covered in burrs, and it took us fiftee n minutes to remove them. Shes been restacking her rock pile with extra vigor. And Susan said back, I dont call you a piece of mea t. I call you my fuck toy. Well, Im not sure I like that, Emmett says. Well, what do you want - to take it further? You want a r elationship? Well Stop sniveling. Blink blink blink. We were riveted. Poor Emmetts in love, and Susan doesnt want that. Or maybe s he likes this type of relationship. I went to Price-Costco. My weekly job is to purchase in-office snacks, all set up in an IKEA s helf unit in the kitchen. Mr. Real Word. If a memory isnt used enough, does it become irretrievable? Well - aside from proton dec ay and cosmic rays eliminating connections, I think memories are always there They just get. unfindable. Think of memory loss as a forest fire. Its natural. I already knew. Dad told me about it years ago. Was it fast? Worse - slow Dogs have it so easy. Thats all. Oh listen to me natter. How selfish. ?