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**SECTION:** Washington Scene; Pg. 12

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**HEADLINE:** HACK HEAVEN

**BYLINE:** Stephen Glass

### **BODY:**

Ian Restil, a 15-year-old computer hacker who looks like an even more adolescent version of Bill Gates, is throwing a tantrum. "I want more money. I want a Miata. I want a trip to Disney World. I want X-Man comic book number one. I want a lifetime subscription to Playboy, and throw in Penthouse. Show me the money! Show me the money!" Over and over again, the boy, who is wearing a frayed Cal Ripken Jr. t-shirt, is shouting his demands. Across the table, executives from a California software firm called Jukt Micronics are listening--and trying ever so delicately to oblige. "Excuse me, sir," one of the suits says, tentatively, to the pimply teenager. "Excuse me. Pardon me for interrupting you, sir. We can arrange more money for you. Then, you can buy the comic book, and then, when you're of more, say, appropriate age, you can buy the car and pornographic magazines on your own."

It's pretty amazing that a 15-year-old could get a big-time software firm to grovel like that. What's more amazing, though, is how Ian got Jukt's attention--by breaking into its databases. In March, Restil--whose nom de plume is "Big Bad Bionic Boy"--used a computer at his high school library to hack into Jukt. Once he got past the company's online security system, he posted every employee's salary on the company's website alongside more than a dozen pictures of naked women, each with the caption: "the big bad bionic boy has been here baby." After weeks of trying futilely to figure out how Ian cracked the security program, Jukt's engineers gave up. That's when the company came to Ian's Bethesda, Maryland, home--to hire him.

And Ian, clever boy that he is, had been expecting them. "The principal told us to hire a defense lawyer fast, because Ian was in deep trouble," says his mother, Jamie Restil. "Ian laughed and told us to get an agent. Our boy was definitely right." Ian says he knew that Jukt would determine it was cheaper to hire him--and pay him to fix their database--than it would be to have engineers do it. And he knew this because the same thing had happened to more than a dozen online friends.

Indeed, deals like Ian's are becoming common--so common, in fact, that hacker agents now advertise their commissions on websites. Computer Insider, a newsletter for hackers, estimates that about 900 recreational hackers were hired in the last four years by companies they once targeted. Ian's agent, whose business card is emblazoned with the slogan "super-agent to super-nerds," claims to represent nearly 300 of them, ages nine to 68. A failed basketball agent, Joe Hiert got into the industry when one of his son's friends, 21-year-old Ty Harris, broke into an Internet security firm three years ago and came to him for advice. The software maker paid Harris \$1 million, a monster truck, and promised "free agency"--meaning he can quit and work for a competitor at any time.

Of course, a cynic might say hacker schemes look an awful lot like protection rackets. That's an awfully nice computer network you got there. It'd be a shame if somebody broke into it... Law-enforcement

officials, in particular, complain that deals between companies and their online predators have made prosecution of online security breaches impossible. "We are basically paralyzed right now," explains Jim Ghort, who directs the Center for Interstate Online Investigations, a joint police project of 18 states. " We can't arrest or prosecute most hackers, because corporate victims are refusing to come forward. This is a huge problem."

In March, Nevada law-enforcement officials got so desperate they ran the following radio advertisement: "Would you hire a shoplifter to watch the cash register? Please don't deal with hackers." The state took to the airwaves shortly after a hacker broke into a regional department store's computer system and instructed it to credit his Visa card about \$500 per day. According to Nevada officials, the boy racked up more than \$32,000 in credit before he was caught--but the store wouldn't press charges. It let him keep the money, then threw in a \$1,500 shopping spree--all in exchange for showing them how to improve their security.

Little wonder, then, that 21 states are now considering versions of something called the Uniform Computer Security Act, which would effectively criminalize immunity deals between hackers and companies--while imposing stiff penalties on the corporations who make such deals. "This is just like prostitution," says Julie Farthwork of the anti-hacker Computer Security Center, which helped draft the legislation. "As a society, we don't want people making a career out of something that's simply immoral."

Not surprisingly, hackers hate the proposed legislation. They see themselves as "freelance security investigators," and they even have their own group--the National Assembly of Hackers--to lobby against the new law. " Really, hackers have to put in a lot of sunk costs before they find the one that's broken and get paid," says Frank Juliet, the group's president. "So, it's definitely a large community service that we are doing."

Less predictable, however, is the opposition of companies that have been hacked. It seems they don't like the proposed law, either, because they're worried they'll be stuck with no legal way to patch holes in their security systems. The Association of Internet-based Businesses has actually formed a task force with the National Assembly of Hackers to lobby against the law.

It remains to be seen who will win, but, until new laws are passed, hackers like Ian Restil will continue to enjoy a certain exalted status--particularly among their peers. At a conference sponsored by the National Assembly of Hackers last week, teenage hackers and graying corporate executives flocked to Ian, patting him on the back and giving him high-fives. "We're so proud of him," said Ian's mother. "He's doing such good things, and he's so smart and kind." At the formal dinner that followed, the emcee explained that Ian had just signed a contract for \$81,000 in scholarship money--and a collection of rare comic books. The audience applauded wildly. Then, Ian stood on his chair and took a bow. He announced that he had hacked into a new company and frozen their bank account temporarily. "And now they're going to show me the money," he said, swirling his hips and shaking his fists. "I want a Miata. I want a trip to Disney World...."

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## LexisNexis™ Academic

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**MARCH 31, 1997**

**SECTION:** Pg. 18

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**HEADLINE:** SPRING BREAKDOWN

**BYLINE:** Stephen Glass

**HIGHLIGHT:**

Conservative youths despair, drink, debauch.

**BODY:**

On the fourth floor of Washington's Omni Shoreham Hotel, eight young men sit facing each other on the edge of a pair of beds. They are all 20 or 21 and are enrolled in Midwestern colleges. Each is wearing a white or blue shirt with the top button unfastened, and each has his striped tie loosened. One of the young men, an Ohioan, is wearing a green and white button that reads: "Save the Males." The minibar is open and empty little bottles of booze are scattered on the carpet. On the bed, a Gideon Bible, used earlier in the night to resolve an argument, is open to Exodus. In the bathroom, the tub is filled with ice and the remnants of three cases of Coors Light. The young men pass around a joint, counterclockwise. "I'm telling you, I'm telling you, we don't know what we're doing," says Jason, a brown-haired freckled boy from Iowa, between puffs. "We've got no mission. We've got no direction. Conservatives--we're like a guy who has to pee lost in the desert, searching for a tree." The other seven young men nod and mumble in agreement.

Over the next hour, in a haze of beer and pot, and in between rantings about feminists, gays and political correctness, the young men hatch a plan. Seth, a meaty quarterback from a small college in Indiana, and two others will drive to a local bar. There, the three will choose the ugliest and loneliest woman they can find. "Get us a real heifer, the fatter the better, bad acne would be a bonus," Michael shouts. He is so drunk he doesn't know he is shouting. Seth will lure the victim, whom they call a "whale," back to the hotel room. The five who stay behind will hide under the beds. After Seth undresses the whale, the five will jump out and shout, "We're beaching! Whale spotted!" They will take a photograph of the unfortunate woman.

This is the face of young conservatism in 1997: pissed off and pissed; dejected, depressed, drunk and dumb. The eight young men were visiting Washington, D.C., in early March, as they did last year and the year before that, for the Conservative Political Action Conference (cpac), arguably the most important event of the conservative year. Over the past twenty-four years, cpac, hosted jointly by the American Conservative Union and Human Events, and sponsored by every conservative group from the Christian Coalition to Citizens for a Sound Economy, has become the greatest draw on the right-wing circuit. Last year, more than 1,000 conservatives paid about \$100 just to hear the lectures. Many coughed up another \$200 to attend the banquet and receptions. During the 1996 primaries, every major Republican presidential candidate tried to shore up their conservative credentials by speaking at cpac. As the young men on the fourth floor smoked and swilled and schemed, Jack Kemp was delivering this year's keynote address.

cpac became a rite of passage for young conservatives in the Reagan glory days. Every year, hundreds of college students and recent graduates drove to Washington from around the country. Often sleeping five to a room, they made up nearly half of the participants, and they gave cpac the abundant raw energy that made the event special. They filled the conference room to hear discourses in tax cutting (good) and feminism (bad). They gave standing ovations to Phyllis Schlafly and Pat Robertson. Every year, they believed victory was close at hand. Patience, they said, was all that was needed.

But, this year, cpac bore no resemblance to a victory party. Turnout was down 50 percent. Not just seats, but entire tables were empty during Newt Gingrich's opening address. Vendors said they sold fewer GOP buttons, stuffed animals, aprons, T-shirts, books and tea-cozies than in years past. His arms windmilling and flailing in the air, Gingrich begged the audience to be more excited. This is "one of the first times that I've ever seen where the winning team feels defeated," he screamed at the glum faces. "And people walk around with long jaws and talk about how concerned they are that the Republicans lost their way." Later in the day, when Alan Keyes, one of the right's most popular speakers, ascended the podium, the room was even emptier. Keyes often paused as if waiting for thunderous applause, but there was only silence. When he looked up, puzzled, a few individual claps could be heard from the back of the room. "For those people who have been conservatives their whole lives and are stumbling about right now asking themselves all kinds of strange questions about conservatism, I simply feel sorry for them," Keyes proclaimed. "We have the moral structure to lead us ahead." Ralph Reed, the Christian Coalition's executive director, spent much of his time at the podium, blaming the GOP funk on "muddle-headed" moderates who don't accept a socially conservative agenda.

Something quite peculiar has happened to conservatives. As they keep telling each other, they should be delighted with the way things are going. In 1996, they passed a test of historic importance in holding Congress. Although weakened, Newt Gingrich remains speaker, and the vacuum left by his political diminution has been at least partly filled by Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott. The Democratic president is in the worst trouble of his frequently troubled tenure, and these troubles will, at the least, consume the president's attention and energy for much of 1997. In recent weeks, the trouble has spread to Vice President Gore, the presumptive Democratic nominee in 2000. Conservative ideas so dominate the political agenda that the debate between the White House and Congress largely concerns questions of degree and methodology, not principle. By logic, this should be a season of GOP contentment, or at least relative satisfaction.

Yet the sound of right-wingers bitching and moaning is all over Washington. The money wing of the GOP and the Christian moralist wing are no longer on speaking terms; they snipe at each other from opposing columns on the op-ed page of The Washington Times. The Weekly Standard, which seeks to supplant National Review as conservatism's arbiter, ran a cover story exhorting the faithful to shape up and get tough. But the most telling of all these signs of conservative malaise is that, suddenly, the movement's youth look like a lost generation. The youth turnout at this year's cpac was so dismally low that the event's organizers won't release specific numbers, but veterans of the event estimated it was 75 percent less than in years past. Several College Republicans running for national chairman canceled the small parties (called, in genteel fashion, "hospitalities") that have been used for years to woo supporters. And, at a booth for recent college graduates, stacks of free blue and white "conservative and proud" bumper stickers remain untouched. Meanwhile \$1 "show us the way" stickers, bemoaning the void of leadership, sell out. For youth at cpac, idealism is out. Despair and hedonism are in.

Around 9:30 p.m., Seth, Rick and Jason drive to a popular downtown bar. They park in front of a fire hydrant. Within fifteen minutes they spot their victim. About 5'3" and stout, she is standing near the bar, alone. Her lipstick has rubbed off on her wine glass, leaving only the cherry outline. Jason says this may be the only time he has wished a woman would wear a longer skirt to hide her legs. Seth walks up to her, and they exchange smiles. Forty minutes and two gin and tonics later, he invites her back to his hotel to get stoned. He signals the other two, and they drive back to make sure everyone is hidden under the beds. Twenty minutes after that, Seth arrives with the young woman in a taxi. The two go into Seth's room. From the hallway, they can be heard through the door talking loudly. Half an hour later, the woman begins screaming. The door flies open, and she runs out. Tears, black from the mascara, stream down her

face. She is holding her shoes and gripping her crumpled blouse to her chest. Inside the room, Charlie gives Seth a high-five. He promises to get the photo developed and duplicated in the morning. The men start chanting Seth's name over and over. Shirtless Seth bows and then flexes his biceps over his head. He grunts loudly.

This repellent scene was only a little beyond the norm of the conference. A wash of despair and alcohol and brutishness hung over the whole thing. Everywhere I went, it seemed, something sad or sordid was underway, or just finished, or about to begin. Halfway through the Keyes speech, I leave to go to the men's room. Inside, a wiry mustached twentysomething is getting to second base with a svelte blonde. The woman is sitting on the sink counter, her white blouse unbuttoned and hands above her head, pressed against the mirror. His face is buried between her breasts. I ask them why they ditched Keyes.

"Get out of here. Can't you see we're busy? This is way not cool," the man snaps back.

"Since I've already interrupted you, could you please just quickly answer the question?" I ask politely.

"Get out. Get out. Look, it's just not interesting listening to all them. I was having fun here. Now get out," he yells.

The blushing woman starts buttoning up her shirt to leave. But the man pleads: "Come on, stay. Please stay. You know this is what it's about."

A hotel janitor says he discovered two college students having sex on the dais in the middle of the night. At 4 a.m., in the hotel's empty garage, three students smoke pot. They explain that the sidewalk is too public, and they don't want the professor who came with them to smell it in their rooms.

Kids at cpac have always gotten drunk and laid, but that wasn't always the primary reason they came. This year, it seems, it was. "Yes, of course we're here to have fun," explains 19-year-old Jon Segura, a Vermont student who shakes hands with everyone who walks by the College Republicans' booth. "We like to say that up in Vermont there are more cows than girls... And sometimes you can't tell which one is which. It's not the same here." Several college sophomores standing around the Christian Coalition booth say that they party so hard because partying is all that the event--all that conservatism--really offers them. "Our problem is there is no defined torchbearer," explains Jason Burgen, the treasurer for North Carolina's College Republicans. "Now there is no Reagan, no one to lead us. So, there's a cynicism and a depression that has set in."

On Friday night, forty of the young conservatives ditch Lott's speech and pack a sweaty hotel room on the second floor. On the door someone has taped a sign that reads: "The lost ones--in here." Again, the bathtub is filled with beer, and a thick cloud of marijuana smoke hangs above the crowd. A red-headed guy whose name tag only says "Greg" tries unsuccessfully to program the pay-per-view to show an X-rated movie. Almost everyone in the room says they supported Phil Gramm or Pat Buchanan in last year's election.

"Look around, you'll see we're wandering," says Chuck Reingold, a College Republican from California. "I didn't even sign up for the conference this year. What's there to learn? You see that? That's why I come now." Reingold points to the bed. A short, busty woman is standing on the foot of the bed to kiss a very tall man. One hand is wrapped around his torso, the other is holding a cigarette with an ever-extending and fragile ash. When the two come up for air, the woman tucks her cigarette-free hand into the man's front pocket. She is, it turns out, a 22-year-old Marylander, and a big fan of the Republicans' chief moralizer, Bill Bennett. "He has some good morals to impart, and I really like his book," she says. "Is that an okay answer? I'm not really sure what else to say."

As the night drags on, two people begin snorting what looks like cocaine in the bathroom. Several bottles of vodka are brought in. By 1 a.m., more than half the guests have paired up and are making out. The fog of marijuana and cigarette smoke gives the scene an unfocused, almost slow-motion quality. Two women

wearing Buchanan buttons, and swaying to a beat only in their heads, move from man to man along the windows, kissing the men and rubbing their breasts against them. One of the partygoers invites "everyone who wants to get naked" to his hotel room. Five men and four women, all college students, high and drunk, follow him to the elevator.

In the get-naked room, everyone disrobes immediately, without a hint of embarrassment. One couple fondles each other in the corner. A muscular man, apparently hallucinating, prances around the room like a ballet dancer. A woman locks herself in the bathroom, crying and shouting out the name "Samuel." No one knows who Samuel is. The rest lounge on the beds, watching television and eating pretzels. They stare glassily at the screen, and, when they speak, they sound like they are talking through Jell-O. Among the naked bodies on the bed is Cynthia, a Dole supporter who lives less than a mile from the hotel. "What would give you the idea we're having problems? Huh? Why do you think that?" she asks me. "What was I saying? Oh, yeah. This is, like, just how the movement is now. Get used to it."

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**APRIL 13, 1998**

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**HEADLINE:** MONICA SELLS

**BYLINE:** Stephen Glass

**HIGHLIGHT:**  
Washington Scene

**BODY:**

It's been said that no previous White House perfected the art of rapid political response as well as President Clinton's has, so perhaps it was not surprising to find a Democratic loyalist camped out at this year's National Memorabilia Convention, held last weekend in Rockville, Maryland. With the Monica Lewinsky scandal nearly three months old, the novelty industry is well on its way to cashing in with a variety of knickknacks ranging from the silly (a computer game where players must guide Lewinsky from the Watergate to the Oval Office) to the salacious (an inflatable "Leaves of Grass"-reciting sex doll with the word intern stenciled across its chest).

Although a few of these goods are available already, the real onslaught won't begin until early summer--peak season for novelty sales--which means there's still time for Clinton supporters to minimize the public relations impact. In February, some Democratic fundraisers got together and helped create a new organization called Patriotic Profits. Its self-proclaimed purpose: to "uphold the esteem of the office of the presidency" by encouraging manufacturers not to put out such denigrating merchandise. "There is some fear here that a new fad glorifying Lewinsky could be born and heavily marketed," said P.J. Hozell, the organization's director. "Say it becomes like the Rubik's Cube; that would be bad for us."

Maybe so, but Patriotic Profits will have a hard time holding back this merchandising bonanza. As Hozell was explaining her strategy to me, she had to shout over the throngs of merchants chortling over an item on display in the very next booth: a talking figure called "Loving Lewinsky" that looks and works like a child's doll. (Pull the string, and it says, "I'm a good intern," "All hail to the chief," "I can fetch your mail," and "Whatever you want, Mr. President.") It was one of the more than 3,000 Monica-related items either on display or promised in catalogs at the convention. According to Clay Resin, a financial analyst who studies the collectibles markets, scandal-related novelty sales could top \$80 million. "This is the biggest event ever to be sold in U.S. history," he explained to the convention-goers. If Resin is right, the Lewinsky scandal will sell more than five times the merchandise that the Gulf war did and 15 times Watergate.

Some of the wares on display were predictable, like the countless Lewinsky t-shirts and more than 70 varieties of berets (available in more than 30 colors). Some were more creative, like a "Naturally scary Linda Tripp" Halloween mask for adults and a Lewinsky microcassette recorder that attaches to any telephone. Still others came with their own add-on accessories. Users of the inflatable Monica sex toy, for example, can also purchase Lewinsky wigs (the new pageboy cut goes for \$24 while the old do with bangs runs for \$22) and different voices (it's \$13 for the "hot-talk voice" and \$15 for the "little-girl

voice"). There are greeting cards for Christmas (a Lewinsky caricature chanting "Ho-Ho-Ho") and birthdays ("I'll blow out your candle!").

Hozell realizes the scandal is a kitsch-maker's dream; she says her organization merely hopes to nudge manufacturers, ever so slightly, in a more constructive direction. "We want them to make money; we understand that, so I am offering novelty designers profitable alternatives that validate the office of the presidency," she says.

Incredibly, she's had some success. Last month, fashion newsletters reported that at least seven companies, including the Gap, had considered postponing plans to feature berets in upcoming headwear lines. It turns out that Patriotic Profits had arranged for several prominent Democratic donors to call designers and sway them toward "fashion that affirms our nation's greatness." "You won't see any more berets than normal next year," Hozell beamed. "We are successful because our callers explain the sensitive nature of how fashion and politics intersect." Indeed, although the companies won't officially comment on whether Patriotic Profits influenced fashion decisions, one designer who received a call told me his firm was nervous about getting mixed up in politics in any way and decided the wisest course of action was to simply hold off introducing the line.

But it may be easier to win over skittish fashion houses than it will be to convince the P.T. Barnum-types who manufacture gags. Take Joel Carni, whose family business, Four Aces, is one of the nation's largest political novelty manufacturers. This summer, stores will be hit with Four Aces's newest product: the Monicondom. "It's thinner--specially designed for oral sex, when people often forget" to be safe, Carni said, boasting of its public health utility. "The Centers for Disease Control would be proud of this item." The cardboard box encourages users to put it on their "slick willy" and to "turn the White House scandal into a safe-sex public service."

Hozell insists Monicondoms could be just as profitable with some "tinkering." Her suggestions: change the flavors "beret berry" and "intern ice" to "berry good" and "interesting ice," and remove the word "slick willy" from the box and change the name to "My condoms." "None of these changes alters the meaning of the product, which is to prevent HIV transmission, something the White House is for," she earnestly explained. "But what they do is respect the presidency."

But Carni rejected those suggestions. "She doesn't get it. The whole point of a novelty is a gag," he added, clearly annoyed by the proximity of Patriotic Profits's booth to his. "The Star Spangled Banner' is not funny. The Pledge of Allegiance is not funny... The president with an intern under the Oval Office desk. That's funny. We sell funny."

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