One Last Compile...

Leading from the back

My boss had a quiet month last month, so he decided to introduce some new management structures (I think it's quite sweet, the little things bosses find to keep themselves busy). As a programmer, new management structures usually have about the same level of interest for me as a by-election in Uzbekistan or a three-mile tailback on the Bulawayo bypass. Besides which, by the time I've figured it out they'll have invented a new one anyway.

This one, however, was to make my already extremely average existence about a billion times worse.

"We're going to make you a team leader," said my boss, beaming happily. "Congratulations."

From a neighbouring cubicle I could hear Ted sniggering. I couldn't see what was so funny, but Ted's a Visual Basic programmer. He laughs at bumper stickers.

"Oh no," I said. "That's great, very flattering, but I don't really think I'm the best person for the job. Ted: he's your man. He's a good people person."

Ted's sniggering was replaced by an appalled silence.

"No, no, you're definitely the one we want," said my boss. "We think you have some untapped leadership qualities."

There was a relieved guffaw from next door.

I tried to look on the bright side. "So, my new team," I said. "Are there any, you know, *girls* in it?"

My boss looked at me strangely and hurried away. He's a funny guy sometimes.

My team arrived the following morning. If I had been asked to summarise its good and bad points, it would have run something like:

Good: There's only one person in it.

Bad: That person is a bright-eyed, over-enthusiastic, new recruit called Dylan.

Good: Dylan knows Delphi very well, so I don't have to teach him anything.

Really Very Bad Indeed: Dylan knows Delphi better than me, and makes me look dumb.

Dylan's been programming in Delphi since he was born. Actually, I don't think he was born. I think somebody grew him in a Petri dish in some kind of weird science experiment that went wrong, and then he escaped from the lab. I can't tell you how infuriating it is working with somebody like him. He comments everything. He never uses meaningless variable names. All his code is properly indented. Every object he creates is neatly destroyed. It's like running a burger bar and having Mrs Beeton as your second-in-command.

On the second morning I arrived to find him busily fussing over my PC. "Those components you've written," he said cheerfully. "I've re-done them. They weren't really very good, were they?"

I made a sort of strangled noise. It was the most upset I'd been since Jane the temp told me she thought Tolkien was an over-rated writer.

He mistook it as a cry of joy. "That's okay," he said. "It's a pleasure. And I've re-designed those input screens you did yesterday. I think they're quite a lot better."

Sometimes, the Gods are kind. In this instance they smiled on Dylan, because just before I garotted him with my mouse cord my boss sailed by.

"Ah, Dylan," he said. "Sorry to move you around at such short notice, but we're a bit short-handed on our VB project now that the deadline's been brought forward. You'll be switching over to work with Ted."

There was a loud thunk from the next cubicle. I like to think it was Ted's head hitting his desk.

I've re-installed my old components and gone back to using my own unique Hungarian-with-a-touch-of-Scots naming convention. Dylan was a bit upset about moving at first, but he cheered up once he found out how many more job opportunities there are for VB programmers.

Ted has a kind of hunted look in his eyes these days, and he jumps if you make a loud noise. As a bonus, I now have 'Team Leader' on my CV, which sounds kinda cool, don't you think?