

brian's ramblings /7/ **tapping the biggest computer is the best policy**

I put a little piece of **sheet metal in** the place where the thing was bent. I screwed it back together. "Try it now," I said. It **worked**.

"You're a genius," said Callie.

"You're **the one** who knows the computer **stuff**," I said. "I'm only a repair man." I wasn't just **flattering** her. It's **amazing** what Callie can do with a computer.

Callie still didn't want to go outside. She wanted to show me how her new modem **worked**.

"It's **kind of stuffy in here**," I said. "Can't we at least open the window?" Callie was so **involved in hooking up** the modem that she **didn't seem to hear** me. I opened the window and she didn't **even** notice.

"Now," she said. "**All I have to do is** dial a certain number and put the telephone receiver down in these holes. You **can** see that they're **designed to fit** a telephone."

I probably knew **as much** about the equipment as she did. But I **let her explain** everything. She seemed to **enjoy showing off** her **knowledge**.

"My own computer isn't very **powerful**. But I can **tap** the power of the biggest computers in the country."

"You have to pay **to use** the big computers, **don't you?**"

"Sure," said Callie. "**Unless** you know how to **get around it**."

"**What do you mean?**"

"If you're **good enough at** programming, you can **trick** the computer **into letting** you use it **for nothing**."

"You're not doing that now, are you? That doesn't seem **honest**."

"I never said I **would** do it. I only said that it's possible to do it. I get an **allowance**. I can afford to pay." Callie **was acting** defensive. I think she **would have said** something **different** if I **had acted impressed instead of suspicious**. I **had a feeling** she **did** know how to steal time from the big computer.