

First Hit and Last hit

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“Life is good” thought Alex. “Just like Robin Hood, exactly like him“. He was very pleased with the last filter he wrote - filtering people according to their estimated wealth. He actually didn't have that much to write, the reasoning was simple. A person with many implants was rich - you have to be rich enough to pay for them. A person also had to want to live if he had so many implant.

Implants - such an amazing invention. They started getting fashionable about a year ago, and already at least a third of the adult population had them. Some had simple, older implants, such as pacemakers. Some had newer implants, such as an eye, a lung strengthner or blood filters. The possibilities were endless. Lately rumors of head implants started to spread, but those will not be in the market for at least another five years. They had to pass all kinds of strange tests and approvals.

What an exciting time to live in! ”And me,“ thought Alex, ”Just like a modern age Robin Hood“. His idea was simple - just like Robin Hood in his time - threaten the rich, blackmail them, and give the money to the poor. And to himself as well.

The things he could do with all that money he'll get! But first he had to finish writing the worm. The main thing that allowed the worm to work was the fact that most of the implants were connected to some control center in the body of the host. In turn, this center was usually connected to the internet. Many implants already were using this connection: eyes that could read slashdot, a hand that along with the automatic updates learned new origami folds... Again, the possibilities were endless.

Alex's idea was simple - many implants communicated via SNMP, and that was the control protocol for the control center. Once he took over this center, everything was open to him. At first he'll cause the user to feel some pain, and he'll send an email - if he won't deposit this much money in some bank account - his implants will kill him. The message then explained where the money went.

Alex thought that to be an effective threat, some people had to get hurt, otherwise no one would believe the worm is going to kill him. So he made sure that each following day the user gets a message, and along with the message, a slightly larger dose of pain.

His worm was smart enough to handle all the details - creating bank accounts, and passing the money by strange routes. Afterwards it spread the money around in accounts not directly related to him.

After another month of work, the worm was done, and it was time to test it. Alex set up a virtual lab, and let the worm run there. After just one week, his simulated bank accounts already had tens of thousands of dollars. Then, he had another idea: if he's already forcing people to send him money, why not force them to spread the worm? He'll also tell them that someone is reading their email, and this way they won't write anything unwanted. People really

get scared when you mess with their life. The new simulation had his bank accounts filled with half a million dollars just within a few days.

Now, he was ready. He sent the worm to the world. After a few months of skipping lectures in the university, and living on pizza and cola, it was time for a change. Just another week, and everything will be different.

The week passed, and his worm made it to the news. Thousands of people got hurt, at least two died, but everyone sent him the money eventually. More importantly, no organizations, especially not the police, could find out where the money was going, or who was behind the worm.

"They probably never will" though Alex. The code was just too well written for some sodden investigator to find out what's going on there.

After a short while, the spreading was stopped. The implants' control centers were protected, new versions were released, and his income from the worm went down. From time to time another deposit would come in, but that didn't change much already. His first million, or rather 10 million, were already made. He got his freedom.

The five dead people from the first few weeks didn't bother him that much anymore. He tried not to think about them. It was for a good cause after all - he'd use his money for good purposes.

After a few years, Alex woke up one morning, and just like any morning, began to read his email in bed. Unlike other mornings, he felt a strange pain in the back of his head. He went on reading email, lying on his bed with his eyes closed.

The pain went away, and after five minutes he received an email telling him to deposit a few million dollars in some bank account. If he won't - he'll keep on feeling the pain he just felt. Alex smiled - this looked familiar. His old worm even updated the money required according to current monetary values, and the estimated wealth of the host. He remembered writing the code for that.

Suddenly fear gripped him. He didn't have that much money available right now. How come it want so much money? It should estimate wealth according to the total value of the implants. "Today's implants are not the same. It's a wonder the worm still manages to run". He couldn't help smiling. Stupid programmers always make the same mistakes.

His line of thought was interrupted by another wave of pain in his head, stronger than the last. After a minute he felt another email coming in, and he closed his eyes to read it. This was the second blackmail email, but it's only been five minutes! What's going on?

Cold sweat covered his body. He started to login to all his bank accounts, borrow money, but loans required at least one real day to go through. He sold all his shares, and still he didn't have enough money.

The third wave arrived, and another message with it. He didn't bother reading it. He shut his eyes and collected money. As Fast as possible. As much liquid money as possible. More assests, more programs were sold, but not everything could be sold on such short notice. In any case, he sent an email to a few friends, asking for help.

The fourth wave arrived, and he passed out. He woke up and discovered that his implant was not working anymore. He stared at the ceiling, the first time after many years, and waited for the implant to reboot. He got used to the implant, and it felt strange to be without it, without the constant buzzing feeling it generated in the head. His room suddenly seemed very quiet, very serene. The implant probably couldn't handle all the current required to generate the pain wave.

In two more minutes the implant will finish rebooting, and he'll have enough money. The implant woke up, and he was glad. He just had to deposit the money, and he would be done with it. The implant finished the boot process, and along with the welcome screen came the last wave of pain. His worm gave him his last hit.