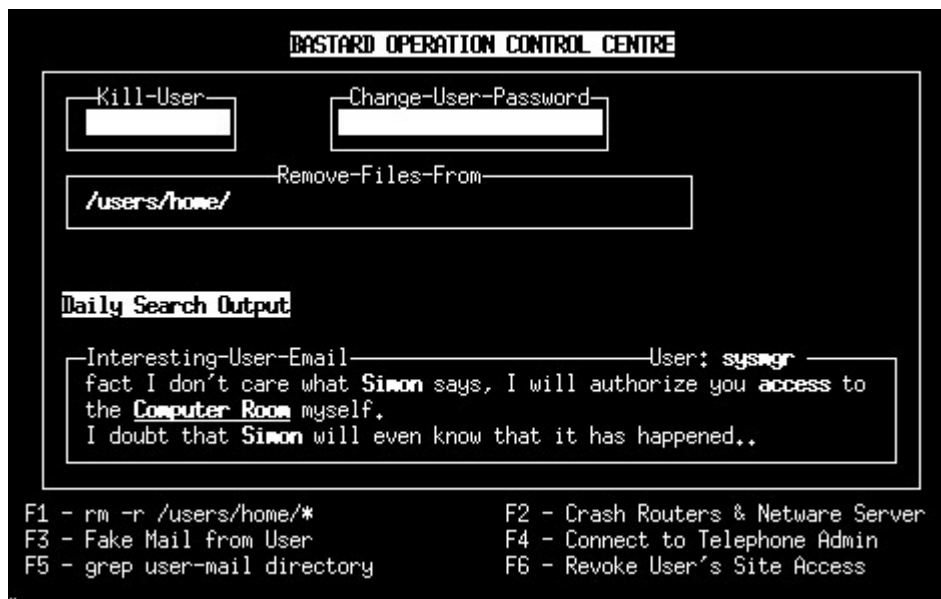

BOFH Rides Again

The Bastard Operator from Hell #14



Don't ask how I got back, I just did. Suffice to say that work frowns upon management material that uses electrodes to gain client information. Especially when you do it to the boss's in-laws. That's HIS entertainment.

So I'm back in the saddle. Unfortunately, that means there's a surplus of operators in the computer room. One slam of the tape safe door later, the problem is solved. The knocking dies down in a couple of hours, so I guess the safes really *are* airtight.

To welcome myself back, I send a message out saying there's a shutdown in 10 minutes. 5 minutes later I shut the system down. I love doing that. I see the hard-disk activity lights flicker as the "disk recovery" phase of startup run through, globally deleting journal files. Funny how we always start up with lots of free disk..

I just get Wolfenstein started and the phone rings. What the hell, I almost missed it while I was away, so I answer it.

"Computer Room" I say

"THAT WASN'T TEN MINUTES!!!!" the voice at the other end screams

"What wasn't 10 minutes?" I ask in a pleasant manner. I can see that things have deteriorated in my absence. Spare the rod and spoil the rm -r, that's what I always say.

"THAT! You said it was going to be te... >pause<... Um, who is this?"

"This is the Operator; who did you expect it to be?"

"Darren? Is that Darren?"

"Uh, No. Darren.. Darren is... unavailable... at the moment."

"Oh. Do you know when he'll be back in the control room?"

"Probably around the time of our next backup - the year 2007 or sometime thereabouts I should imagine"

He's toying with asking me if he can recover their files or not. I let him dangle for a few moments.

"Was that all?", I say, nice as pie

"Well.... NO, it doesn't matter"

"Of course it doesn't. Would you like me to check if your files are ok?" I prompt

"Would you? I'm a bit new to this system and I'm not too sure what to do"

"Sure. What was your username?"

Everything inside him is screaming at him not to say it - People beside him are screaming at him not to say it.

He says it.

You just can't tell some people.

"Ok. Well, it looks ok to me, all your files are in perfect condition!" I say

"THEY ARE!! GREAT!!"

The relief in his voice is overwhelming

>clickety< >clickety<

"Yep. Both your x-defaults and AND your newsrc file are ok"

"But.. But what about my site monitoring data?"

"Sorry?"

"There were about 10 files in my research subdirectory, data I'd collected over the past year."

"Oh. Well, I can't see anything. Perhaps you backed them up somewhere?"

"I put a copy in my girlfriend's account.."

"What was her username?"

"Uh.... >pause< ... "

Is he going to do it? Is he?

He does.

Like running down a snail with a steamroller...

>clickety clickety<

"Nope, nothing there either. OH! Hang on, there looks like some form of journal file in your account, it's quite large... I think maybe you should login there and try to recover with it..."

I cat about 100 man files together and slop them in his girlfriends account under then name "rsrch.j"

"How do I do that?"

"Ok; can you login yet?"

"Yeah, I think so..... Ok, I'm logged in"

"Ok, You need to run the file thru the mailer to clear the eighth bit, other- wise the journal recovery will probably choke with an instruction error"

>DUMMY MODE ON<

"Oh... How do I do that?"

"Well, you have to type in `mail root < rsrch.j'"

"Ok!"

"HANG ON! You have to type it with your nose."

"WH..? WHY?"

I flip the excuse card till something appropriate pops up. "HARDWARE STRESS FRACTURES"

"Well, it's got to do with hardware stress fractures. You probably type too hard with your fingers which upsets the internals of the keyboard. It's got to do with dry joints and electromagnetic inductance"

>DUMMY MODE IRREVOCABLY ON<

"Oh. Ok"

"Now, you've got to type it in 20 times"

"Sure, ok"

He hangs up.

I ring campus security

"Hey, we've got another crazy in the lab. Apparently he's typing with his nose. He might be armed..."

3 minutes later I hear the shots. I close his account, he won't be needing it any more..

The phone rings. It's my Mum.

"Hi Ma, what can I do for you?"

"Simon, I've got a problem at work, the floppy disk with all my personal stuff on it is failing I think"

"Oh. Ok. Well, have you got any nail polish remover and some cotton wool buds?"

"Yes"

"Ok, take your disk out, and clean that brown stuff off the inside of the disk. That's what gets the heads dirty. You should just have a nice clean plastic disk when you've cleaned it completely"

"Oh, Ok Simon, Thanks"

"You're welcome. Oh; remember that time you wouldn't let me go over to Graeme's

place to watch videos when I was 11?"

"Yeah, why?"

"Oh, No reason.."