

THE Bastard Operator from Hell #15

It's a warm afternoon in the computer room. I dunno, maybe I should turn the chillers back on, but what the hell, I've got a cold and I need to keep warm.

I flip today's excuse card. Magnetic Interference from Money/Credit Cards. Hmmm, vague enough to be plausible. The phone rings

"Hello, Computer Room" I say "Hi!" the caller says "I want to fit some RAM to my machine to upgrade the memory. I just bought some 8 meg chips off a guy in town and wanted to know if you guys would fit it."

"Well," I say "normally we would, but today the technicians are busy trying to gas axe open our tape safe to see why it smells - You could probably fit it yourself though.."

"Really? I thought that was dangerous?" she says

"Nah nah, it's safe as houses, just remember to get the chips out of those stupid plastic bags before they stuff them up altogether"

"Really?! How do they do that?"

"Well, you've heard of static RAM right?"

"Yes..."

"Well, Why pack static RAM in an antistatic bag? Sounds really suspect if you ask me!!! Yours might even be stuffed already, so you'd better remove them.."

>D.M. ON<

"Oh >crinkle crinkle< Ok. Now what do I do?"

"Ok, you'll need to get rid of the charge those bags have probably given your RAM, after all, you don't want to blow up your computer, do you? Get rid of any woolens that you're wearing and switch to nylon. Run round some cheap carpet, then comb your hair a couple of dozen times and then plug the chips into the comb to keep them steady. Turn your machine on, then plug the memory in and out about 10 times to get the slots warmed up. Then slop them back in, flick the power switch half a dozen times and that should do it!"

"Hey thanks!"

"Don't mention a thing, all part of the service"

I leave for lunch - after all I have been here for 10 minutes solid - and walk past the student labs. I hear a mass of beeping and look round to see a user's screen full of garbage. They've either typed an image file or fingered my account and got the core file I renamed as .plan. By the time he gets his terminal sorted out, his allocation of connect time will be all used up. A tragic shame.

I get back from lunch early a couple of hours later and slip into the Usenet news directory tree, slide on down to alt.binaries.pictures.erotica, then start deleting parts 3 or 4 of the really long gifs. (After taking a copies myself and overwriting them to the last user backup tape, of course).

Then I get ready to watch the videos I got out from the video shop by taking the printers offline and disconnecting the phone, and I notice that the frame-grabber video player is gone from the office. Someone has obviously moved it while I was away...

I make some discrete enquiries under the threat of rm -r, and find out that the secretary now has possession of it. So I mosey on down and ask to take it away. Only I can't because I've got to sign *THE BOOK*, saying when it will be back, how many minutes of tape I'm going to put thru it, if I'm going to be watching PAL or NTSC etc. Then it's all fed into her *personal* computer (which I'm not allowed to touch because it doesn't belong to us) so she can produce full colour plots about who's not working in the department.

I mention that it's not coming back - as I was the person that put the hammer through the frame grabber in the first place, I should be the one to hold the video. She then tells me that that's not acceptable, and I will have to find some other video to use, she needs access to get to the video 24 hours a day, in case someone needs it. And because she takes her PC home at night, I needn't think that I can fake any borrowing records. All this I see for what it really is - a thinly disguised attempt to gain access to the seat of power (The Operators Room) by the Bastard Secretary from Hell.

I decide to let it slide for once, after all she does get the snail mail into the correct distribution slots about 20% of the time, so that can't be so bad.

Next morning, I get in about 2pm and find that I have three departmental memos about the status of other stuff that is in the Computer Room that has been "incorrectly inventorised" as "Awaiting Repair" (The shithead technician has been leaking privileged information in an effort to score the secretary again - A tragic shame, I used to quite like him..) with a note from the Big Boss authorizing the secretary to investigate. Attached to all that is a note from the secretary herself stating that to action this she requires a 24 hour access key to the Computer Room.

ONCE AGAIN I realise that letting things slide never pays off. I look up the secretary's RS232, Ethernet, Appletalk and Phone port numbers and yank them from the comms rack. What the hell, I kick the circuit breakers to her power points and lighting too while I'm at it. Then I strip off some mains cable & plug it in..

The phone rings a couple of minutes later.

"WHAT'S HAPPENED TO MY ROOM?!" the secretary screeches at me.

"Your room?" I say, in a pleasant and innocent manner, using caller ID to track down the room she's in. Ah! Just down the corridor

"Yes, MY ROOM! The power's gone off and everything is dead"

"Oh dear. What were you doing when the power went off? Perhaps you did something stupid?"

"I did NOT! I was working on *my* PC!"

The way she says "*my*" is really getting to annoy me.

"You were working on *your* PC?" I say, reflectively.

"Yes!" She snarls

"Not your *own* *very personal* computer?"

"Yes.." She doesn't know what I'm getting at yet.

And now I exercise the basic law of Bastard Operating which roughly says, Bastard Operators don't just win. Anyone can win. Bastard Operators win and totally DEMORALISE. That's **real** winning.

"I hope you switched your machine off before you called"

"Why?" she barks, a little uncertain.

"Well, it's just that personal property isn't covered by the site insurance policy. Why, if there was a power surge, heaven knows WHAT could happen to an expensive peice of delicate **personal** machinery like..."

I hear her place the receiver down **very** quietly and sprint on tippy toe to the door. As I repeatedly toggle her circuit breaker I start thinking about what I'll be watching on video this afternoon... Still on the phone, I hear a bang way in the background which probably means her pc has shit itself...

10 minutes later the phone in the control room. It's the secretary, and she sounds a little stressed. I manage to translater her sporadic outbursts into a request that her lines be connected to her terminal. I tell her they are, and has she got the technician to look at it. She hangs up.

No sense of humour.

10 minutes later still, the technician rings up and tells me all the secretaries lines are dead. I tell him I'll check them out, then plug her ethernet, phone and Appletalk back in. Which leaves RS232...

Another 10 minutes later I'm startled out of my snooze by the phone. It's the technician still greasing the secretary by being super-efficient. He tells me the RS232 still isn't working. I make some excuse about dry joints on the plug etc, and ask him to put a new plug on the cable. I hear the >snip!< as he clips the old plug off, and the receiver rattle as he starts to strip the wire in a manly way with his teeth. Then I connect the mains cable to my end of the RS232.

As soon I hear the ">ERRRRRREEEEERRKKK!<" coming down the receiver at me, I know that the "incorrect inventory" problem won't be repeated.

Another problem solved by the Bastard Operator from Hell

It's a dirty, filthy, stinking dog-kill-dog job, but someone's got to enjoy it