

# The LAST Bastard Operator from Hell!

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I get back from Britian and return to my old stomping grounds to take up a post as an Analyst/Programmer... As an A/P I'm expected to work weird hours so I start putting in some 9 to 5 shifts to see what it's like.

It's weird all right. I don't like it.

I go to the computer room to check out my machine, only I'm not the Operator any more, so I've got no access. I call the Operator. He answers.

Bad sign.

"Can I get access to the Computer Room?" I ask, respectfully

"Well..." he pauses "... what do you want to do?"

Indecisive. It gets worse! He should've come straight out and said that the day a user gets access to HIS computer room is the day he'll be crated up and freighted to the big Computer Room in the sky to meet the Chief Operator!

"Just look at my machines" I say..

"Um, well, we're not supposed to let programmers in here unless it's an emergency" he blubs.

Dear oh dear. It's almost as if he's apologising! I can't take any more of it so I just wander off. He calls after me in apology and it turns my stomach. Watching something you've carefully built up with neglect and mindless acts of violence just crumble away in front of your eyes!

I can't let it end this way! There must be something I can do...

I go back to my room and open the sealed envelope that I was saving for my retirement nest-egg.

I shuffle through the signed bits of paper, photographs and dictaphone tapes till I find what I want. The photo's a bit faded and blurred, but the people in the picture can still be made out. I get on the phone.

"HELLO?". The Big Boss himself answers

"Hi there, Simon from the Computer Centre. I think I found something of yours"

"WHAT?"

"A photo. One in a series of 24"

"WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT! I'M A BUSY MAN - DON'T WASTE MY TIME!"

"Well, it's a photo of you, a couple of female friends, and something that looks like it has some agricultural purpose"

"oh..." ... \_\_\_\_ ... "...yes, I was wondering where that got to. If you could just drop in in an envelope and send it to me personally..."

"\*I\* \*think\* \*not\*..."

"Well, it's obviously a fake. Where would you get such a thing?"

"Your office. You left the door open one night"

"That's ridiculous, my door's electronically locked every night"

"By computer?.."

"Oh! .... What do you want?"

"The New Operators"

"Ok, I'll have them fired.."

"NO! Then you'll get some more and they'll be just as bad!"

"Then what do you want?"

"TO TRAIN THEM!"

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A couple of days later the training session begins. Unfortunately, I only get one operator to train as the other one resigned when he heard I wanted to talk to him. Still one's better than none.

We start from the very beginning..

"Ok, let's just go into this. How do you feel about users?"

"They're ok, I suppose" he answers

"OK?"

"Well, they can be a pain at times"

"at times?"

"Well, a lot of the time?"

"A lot?"

"OK, ALL THE TIME! I HATE THEM, I HATE THEM! ALWAYS RINGING ME UP WANTING TO GET MORE DISK OR CONNECT TIME, WHINING AT ME IN THEIR PATHETIC VOICES, COMPLAINING ABOUT RESPONSE TIME. I HATE THEM!"

"Right. There. You see, you did know the answer after all. Second question, What do we do for users?"

"What they want?"

"No"

"What we think they want?"

"No"

"What WE want?"

"No"

"I DON'T KNOW!"

"I see. Well, the answer is, we do nothing \*FOR\* users. We do things \*TO\* users. It's



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It's a stinking hot day in my non-air conditioned office and I'm annoyed. The sort of annoyed that's described, mistakenly, as red hot. The correct colour choice, is, of course white.

I login to my account and there's three helpdesk mail requests, all ticking away to expiration, then escalation, then further escalation, then followup mail message, then even further escalation, then 2nd followup mail message and casual phone call, then still further escalation, then non-casual phone call, then threats, then, ultimately, and sadly, violence. But not so sadly that I won't resort to it. And they know I will too...

Because I used to be...

## **T H E B A S T A R D O P E R A T O R F R O M H E L L ! ! !**

...and sometimes, late at night I get these twitches. Like dead people get. (Or, as I prefer to call them, perfect computer users)

In the mornings I get them too. Like when the phone rings. And when I get email. And when people talk to me. AND when people are hogging the espresso machine to make fluffy milk. But apart from that I'm cured. A new man.

I smile at the thought and look, in reminiscence, at some reminders of my past. A couple of backup 8mm tapes with cartoons on them. The thank-you cards for my attendance at 23 separate funerals of computer center staff. The mains plug with the thinwire ethernet plug at the end. I didn't ever get round to trying that one either, so I don't even know what it would've done.

I'm bored.

That's it alright. I am *\*absolutely\**, *\*stinking\**, *\*UNCONTROLLABLY\** bored. I get up and slip a fingerprint free magnet on top of the reed switch that the Boss had installed in my display cabinet while I was on holiday, then pry the glass door open with a screwdriver. As far as I can figure, the switch is supposed to ring an alarm if the door is opened.

If I've said it once, I've said it a thousand times - "Inexpensive means Inefficient".

I open the door to the clamour of... silence. Well, silence and John Lee Hooker's "Mr Lucky" from my CD. I grab my aforementioned etherkiller and wander down the hallway to the switchboard, applying another magnet and opening that to silence as well.

That's what's missing in society today - trust.

I pull the 15 amp breaker for the meeting room, then wander on round and plug the etherkiller into a cheap 24hour timer set to 5 minutes from now. On the way back to the the switchboard I hear the first few murmurs about excessive collisions. I plug in my unpatented nail "fuse" (estimated fault current 200-300 amps) with a set of heavily insulated pliers and wander off to the tea-room to start my espresso brew. Halfway through the make, the machine stops. Now *\*THAT'S\** what I call a collision.

I look around in a bewildered manner as panic erupts on all sides, half-made espresso in my hand. I step out into the hallway and behold pandemonium. Two programmers are fighting over a CO2 fire extinguisher in an effort to put their terminals out. I

wander down to my room just as my X terminal, the unreliable peice of excretia it is, flames it's last and lapses into a dull smoulder.

"My cabinet!" I cry in 'horror' and hear the extinguisher struggle end abruptly. In a flash the two programmers concerned are behind me staring into my room. Shortly thereafter the boss runs up as well.

"What's this magnet for?" I ask, picking it up and hearing a bell start chiming in the distance.

"You bastard!" one of the programmers utters

"I'm sorry?" I ask, turning.

"YOU did it didn't you?"

"What? Break into my own cabinet? But I've got a key.."

That's the terrible burden of proof really - in this day and age, you need some to make an accusation.

The late-breaking news comes in that one of the consultants had a set of head- phones plugged into a CDRom drive hanging off their networked PC. But not anymore. Now there's an unexpected vacany in the department. I blame the Ethernet Isolation specs. 3KV my backside!

Quicker than you can say "Help us with our enquiries" I'm "helping the police with their enquiries".

"What is this, can you tell me?" a burly officer asks, right up in my face. He holds up a magnet.

"It's a magnet. There was one on my cabinet!" I cry

"Yes. And where did you get them?" he asks, seizing control..

..and losing it. "On my cabinet! I just said!"

"No not this one. The others. Where did you get them?"

"Others? What others? You mean there were more on my cabinet! Why?!?" (I can play the "stupid game" forever, having had years of education at the hands of computer lusers.) He tries a different tack.

"What would you say this was off?" he asks

"My cabinet! It was on my cabinet, I told you! I pulled it off... and I think I heard a bell ringing"...

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A couple of hours later I'm back at my desk with Mr Lucky, no charges pressed. I close my cabinet, satisfaction mine for the first time in a long while.

Then the phone rings...

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## **The BASTARD IS BACK!**

Programming is dull at the moment since the only "bug" in my software is now

repaired. (The swipe-card door-access machine had some logic "glitch" that unfortunately no-one knew about until a particularly annoying Sales Consultant got accidentally locked in the secure area over the holiday weekend. The poor guy was a drooling wreck when they found him - apparently the sirens and sprinklers were playing up in there too, every 10 minutes. It all goes to show that you can't be too careful when stealing an ex-operators car park.

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