

## AN ALIEN INVASION

### I

It was so early in the morning when I woke up, **just like** everyday in my boring life. No hope, no love, just a hollow man owning a soul which, probably, shouldn't be mine, after all. I left my home at 06:50 or so; it was dark, I could not see the sun shining in the sky, maybe because it seemed there was not sky to look at.

Now I realize: that day I was in no mood to do **anything**; I was so exhausted, **was** so tired, and I asked myself about the possibility **of avoiding** all my duties, getting lost somewhere, somewhere inside myself, 'cause I didn't know any place where I could go, in order to be safe, to feel completely safe from all: friends, workmates, relatives... **Human beings**, in fact. Well, as far as I can remember now, it was **a** really awful day. It's so funny that now, just while I'm writing down this composition, I'm getting used to understanding what happened.

As soon as I arrived at the office, all seemed completely normal: the same workmates talking down to me and saying to me: *Good Morning, **how was your weekend?*** Ah, my Lord, how I hate people patronizing me! It's something really annoying, something I **can** barely stand. But, at the time, I was really in need of keeping in touch with all those people, all of the unlight, for me, because they were strangers in my own land; or maybe I was the stranger and I was trying to live in their own **bizarre** and unknown land. It was a matter of life and ... death, maybe? I was not so sure; it could be, after all. So, I came in to my office, **turned** on my computer, took a seat just in front of it, regretful **and** disappointed for all the past days and the days that will be coming to me in a near and dark future, I started reading my email.

At first I was not paying too much attention to what was written down in the emails. I needed to open up my eyes, to open them wide I mean, because I was so tired and the night **before** I couldn't get **any** sleep; only nightmares were coming to me, rightly from somewhere inside my head, from far away. Suddenly, I saw it: **a** strange email with the subject: *They're coming...* Could it be Spam? Why not? It seemed so. Well, I was using GNU/Linux as Operating System and I was not directly affected by viruses or Trojans so ... what the hell!!! I decided to read it immediately. Its contents were excessively **unusual**:

*They're coming. They're coming for you...  
They're so close, they've come to possess us...  
Never sleep again.  
Just run, run to the hills, run for your life, don't be silly: it's real.  
Run !  
Now, go !*

Astonished as I was after reading it, I was thinking about who would send such **a** stupid joke like this. Some friend of mine, maybe? Which one? So strange, so foolish ... Such an email should mean something, but I **could** hardly realize what.

When the first sun rays were entering through my window, and all the shadows were gone, one of the teachers working at the Department appeared, knocking at my door with his left hand.

*"Hi, Toni, I've got a problem. Could you help me, please?"*

*"Course I could, what's wrong?"*

He was tall and extremely fat, at the same time. Two curious physical attributes, I guessed. Strangely, he looked so pale, and, **I must say**, so scared. Scared of what? Of me? Oh, I just got up and I went to his office, in order to help him as always before. That was my job, that was the job of mine, for what I was born, for what I had studied **for many** years, for what I was taught, the main and only reason for my existence.

Right inside his office, I realized something went wrong. First of all, his computer was running Windows instead of Linux. What in the world ... ?

*"Eh, what on earth are you doin' with this awful Operating System?"* I asked him.

He looked at me, expressionless. I couldn't understand what the hell was going on, but I

knew that there was something malevolent in there, something which was new, something putting me into danger.

Finally, he said to me:

*“It's a new age, the age of Ages, it's time to possess you...”*

*“What the fuck are you talkin' about? You're completely out of your mind!”*

And, then, it started. His body was not his body anymore, it was just like the cover of an empty book, like a marvellous gown really worn, for an incredible nightly ball, by an ugly woman who was trying to conceal that ugliness of hers... What could be found just in front of me no longer seemed like a human being. *It* – it, not he – was something composed of too many body parts, some of them based, more or less, on human limbs, and the rest of them belonging to an unknown species, probably not human, not from our world. It was so hard to put into words, it is still so hard to put into words now. How could I describe that horrendous creature, that monster? I don't know.

Scared, I ran. Ran as quickly as I could, trying to get myself out of there.

## II

Now, it's time to rest. It's time to hide from the outside world, 'cause they are everywhere, waiting for me, chasing me, I know. I'm the last man using GNU/Linux standing; nobody cares, nobody cares 'cause the word 'nobody' can't be applied to them anymore, whoever or whatever they are. They are all aliens, they are not humans, they are things, they are like automates, going from computer to computer, installing Windows and formatting the hard disks, destroying any presence of the GNU/Linux Operating System.

When the night comes down, I can hear their screams, so close, calling me by my name. I wonder how much time I will be able to hide in this place.

Somewhere, in the dusk, I know the answer.

Then, I shiver.

## III

It was as if something was beating my soul down to the ground. As far as I can remember, I know I was extremely reluctant to accept what was happening. At first I knew there was absolutely nothing I could do about those events: perhaps the Death, who was trying to detach my soul from this world would be my comrade as long as I accepted what it offered to me; that is: an unbreakable long sleep 'till the End Of Time. Oh, my God, it seemed too easy to figure out how people dying in the surroundings were suffering; all those slaughtered corpses and their horrible odour spreading throughout the entire city; a city which can't be considered as a city anymore, no as long as those creatures were breeding that chaos day by day, during the long and never-ending nights of suffering, death and shivers.

So, right after getting out of there, I walked down all the way home completely alone and, of course, with a really disgusting feeling concerning loneliness. It was late at night when I realized that ill-luck of mine. Maybe, somewhere, I could find more people as scared as I was, and if we had more time we could fight them, defeat them, in the end. Thinking back on it, it's curious that I was nihilist and I was trying to conceal every time from all those could be called human beings... but not then. Along those days of pain I was looking for people like me, people not denying that necessary will-power. Moreover, I knew I belonged to them, despite the fact I regretted joining, although for a short period of time, that hateful race crowding the Earth.

I arrived at home five minutes before midnight. I supposed there was no danger in there; above all I thought it could be a good idea to hide right inside my flat. *The very idea*, I said to myself, not so confident. Well, at first it seemed so: no screams, no sounds... Excessively peaceful, maybe. It was giving me the creeps, undoubtedly. But I was wrong; as soon as I came in, I saw all of my computers going crazy, displaying some sort of blue screen – it reminds me the so-called

BOF, Blue Screen Of Death in that awful world concerning Windows and Microsoft Operating Systems -, blinking every five seconds or so. *God damn!*, I screamed, hurrying ~~up~~ in order to check them out and determining how bad the damage was.

The keyboards were not working, so I was in need of using my notebook to establish a connection with all my computers. I picked it up right from my back, turned it on, hopeful. For the best part of a minute, it seemed as if it didn't work anymore, but at last the grateful session manager screen, named GDM, appeared. *Thank God!*, I barked. That happiness of mine was not for so long, 'cause in a flash I realized all my computers had been hacked. So deeply hacked, I guessed, and it was too late to recover them. I knew it, those circumstances were extremely aggressive and dangerous, so I couldn't waste my time. But of course I could image one of them in order to, if I got the chance, analyse it to determine how the attack had taken place. Back in time, I had watched a film where some characters I couldn't remember were taking some clues, saving them carefully; samples which would be analysed in a laboratory, allowing them to solve what the heck was threatening them in the film, which, in turn, I could hardly remember ~~what it was~~. I was like those characters; only one thing was for certain: I had to take it easy, or I would end up like the others: killed, dead, slaughtered, with my head cut off, right out there, with my body completely rotten, splattered into pieces, bleeding for so long, surrounded by pain, feeding those monsters... Until there was no more food to eat, there was no more blood to spill on the ground. Then, all concerning me would disappear, nothing would remain, maybe only my flat, my belongings, nothing more.

Luckily, I had still got my notebook and my flat yet, so I could get some rest lying down in my sofa, closing down my eyes, trying to sleep, putting away all my nightmares, wishing to build some powerful barrier to avoid entering them in my dreams.

*Let the night pass..., I thought, tomorrow will be another day, maybe a little bit better than this, so don't panic, don't be silly, calm down, take it easy, don't lose your head, and the best option ~~to do so~~ is gettin' some sleep, thus: just sleep ... sleep...*

Amidst an alien invasion, I passed out.

## IV

“Ey, are you in there?”

Some voice, calling me from far away...Could it be a new kind of dream? Slowly, I opened up my eyes, realizing how heavy my eyelids seemed. There was someone outside, knocking at the door, impatiently. That voice...

“Who is it?”, I asked to the newcomer, getting up from my sofa and going towards the door.

“It's me!”, answered that scared voice. “Please, open the door!”

“I don't know you!”

“Course you do! Please, they're so close, open this door right now!”. No doubt; that voice was a scared one. What should I do? Well, it belonged to a human being, I thought. Could it be some of those monsters cheating me? Certainly, it could be...So, I decided to ask the newcomer some more questions in order to get more clues about his intentions.

“Answer me some questions, first”, I said to him.

“Are you completely insane? There's no time, open this door, open this fuckin' door right now. Shit!”

Suddenly, I could hear some kind of bizarre noise coming from the corridor, just behind the door. Footsteps, a lot of them, walking quickly and coming towards me. The guy outside started to scream, knocking at my door violently:

“Oh, Jesus Christ, open up please, open this damned door!”

I did so. Just in front of me, I saw him: a young one covered in blood, holding a laptop with his left hand, barefoot and trembling.

“Oh, God! What the fuck ...!”

The newcomer came in to my flat and, doing so, I could see a crowd running towards us just behind him, expressionless, some of them screaming in an unknown kind of language. I closed the door, trying to think what could be done in order to escape from there, 'cause that people will be entering, in less than a minute, inside. I thought my flat was a peaceful sanctuary...What a fool I

had been!

“Thanks for opening up the door”, the young one said to me.

“Who are you?”

“A debugger”

“A debugger? What do you mean?”

“There's no time! We must get out of here immediately! They're all out there!”

“You're right, you're right. We can use that window, **did** you get hurt?”

“No, I **didn't**. That blood isn't mine, don't worry about it.”

Out there, that creepy crowd were hitting my door, trying to smash it in. The door wouldn't be capable of resisting those terrible smashes for so long, so we came out through the window I had pointed out to him.

Fortunately, I **lived** in the first floor, so it was extremely easy to jump with no danger from our location to the street, safe from all those creatures who, by then, would be coming in, looking for us, right inside my flat. What a pity, it couldn't be considered **as** a safe place anymore. It was over, finally. *Good bye, friend of mine*, I said **to-it**, all my thoughts going away, 'cause there **would be** no more opportunities **to come** back there: all my belongings and memories were gone, and I had to admit to myself that invariable reality.. I was becoming a new kind of person, with no future, or maybe with no past, 'cause all about me was right in there and I could hear how those monstrosities were destroying all **of** which had been mine, some time ago.

“Motherfuckers!”, I grunted, taking a look at my flat, for the last time in my life, while we were in a terrible hurry. In a while, we were far enough **away**, at some park, so we stopped and sat down in the grass, trying to breath. It had been a hard hurry, and we were exhausted.

“So, could you explain to me what the devil you were doing knocking at my door?”, I asked him.

“Not much, I was trying to find some help.”

“Okay, then, how is it supposed I will be capable of helping you in this matter?”

The guy cooked his head and answered:

“You know what's happening, don't you?”

“You bet.”

“Well, I'm a debugger and you're a developer, right?”

“How do you know what I am or what I do?”

“You're famous, man!”

“Are you serious?”

“Sure!”

That was so strange. Famous? Me? That was stupid, no doubt. A joke, probably.

“Don't mock me!”

“Never; what I said to you it's completely true. It's the truth, I can assure you of that.”

“Well, in this particular case, how could I help you?”

“I've discovered that those creatures are using a **slightly** different version of Windows Operating System that the version all of us are used to using.”

“That's so funny, you guy. I've never used this fuckin' system, you know!”

“Me, neither. But It doesn't matter, in fact.” Was that young one smiling? *Bastard!*, “This version has a back-door, and we can use it in order to gain access to all of the computers infected by that virus.”

“How did you discover such a back-door like that?”

“I'm a debugger, remember?”

“Course you must be...”

Curiously, the guy had a question for me:

“What about the aliens? I mean, how can they be defeated? They all seem so powerful!”

I didn't know much about that security hole he was talking about, but I was so clever: obviously, there was something joining **all these matters-concepts**.

“I'm not so sure, but I think there's some relationship we must find out between them and that Operating System infecting all the computers over the world.”

“You're right, I suppose.”

“So, it seems we can work together in order to fight them, doesn't it?”

The young one looked at me, hopeful. For the first time in my life, I was happy to belong to the Human Being race.

“Okay,” I said to him, “;move out, let's go!”

And so it started; a new hope for mankind was born.

## V

Where am I? I have no fuckin' idea. Darkness all around me, no matter whether the sun is shining in the sky or not. I mean, my memories seem so buried away, and despite the fact I know a lot of what's going on, I can't understand where I'm going to or when I will be there, wherever. That debugger is dead; so are my whole family, friends and relatives. But I survive against the odds.

What can I do about it?

I would like to pray for us, for all mankind, but, unluckily, there's no mankind to pray for. All of which remains is those outsiders, those aliens, those creatures. Suddenly, a flashback comes to me: I see myself **as** a child, at home, reading a book whose title cannot be read, sat down right inside that room which belonged to my childhood; its door locked and showing an enormous **warning sign** to whom were trying to get in: *Be aware of the child*. That child is me but is not me, like another part of myself, a child who belongs to a previous incarnation, as if I had never lived that sort of life before, as if I had never felt that marvellous peace which one can aspire **to**, no matter how many years gone by.

For a while, I'm really in need of going backwards, to be that child once again. But that's not possible. I know that, no one can come back to the past. The past comes to me but there's only **a** one-way ticket: as soon as you discover that, all **lasting hope** just **vanishes**. All I can do is accept what's happening to me so as to skip that mental-illness, that insanity. To keep some coherence inside my head, to avoid becoming completely out of my mind, allowing those creatures to scream vigorously: *gotcha!* What's wrong with this world? The world we have created, so easy to seize, so easy to **overthrow**, like **a** hallucination; it remains wounded, scarcely poisoned, mysteriously defeated by those indescribable automates chasing me all the time, restless, while I sit right here, thinking about foolish things I can't control or explain. All that I mean to say is: *I would like to disappear, but I mustn't*. Then, what? Sooner or later I will die, there's no doubt about it; every now and again I can feel it, it's so close, that inertia possessing me, avoiding me to get my ass out of here, impeding me to find another place where I can hide. Not to be safe, not to feel safe, not to survive that alien invasion. At last 'til the day I die.

*To hell with all of them!* I whisper. I can see them: they are here, and in a bit, they are all over there; how can they walk so fast? Unsurprisingly, it's something I have no answer for. Too many questions and no answers can be found in order to answer them. Now, that inertia is complete, taking all my hopes away, putting all my cheerful thoughts so far away, in some place where I cannot go, no matter how much time I will try to spend on **it**. That's all bullshit. I wish that debugger was alive, at least I could talk to him so as to kill some time.

The night comes down, finally. The inertia is pulling me somewhere. All I would like to do is **to get** some sleep with no dreams, 'cause I know that, at first, they are all dreams but rapidly they become nightmares which **scarcely anyone can tolerate**.

In a bit, who can be **seen** right here is not me anymore. It's that child, **dreamed-from the dream**, who was living inside myself in that previous incarnation, so **long** ago. He's scared, he's aware of the future, he has no hope, he has no things to do, not now.

*So, let the darkness embrace you, feel it, love it, and, finally, die...*, I said to myself.

There's only silence in here.

A deep one.

## VI

We were in a hut. There was a fireplace in a corner spreading its warmth. We were so cold

when we got there. As far as our eyes could see, there were no monsters in the surroundings, so we could relax. The debugger, Raoul, was really in need of a pair of shoes 'cause he had been running for so long completely barefoot, and the first wounds on his feet had appeared. Right after taking a **relaxing** shower, he felt better. As far as I was concerned, that hut could be our refuge to avoid being chased by those aliens. It seemed they were so far away from where we were.

At last, getting away from the city had been a very good idea, we realized. *So far, so good*, I thought.

*"It's time to analyse that security hole of yours"*, I said to him, impatiently.

*"There's no hurry. By now, "*, he answered in a low voice, *"I think we are not in danger in this place"*, he added, so confident.

*"Could be..."*, I had to admit to him. Of course, sometimes what was going on was so different than what we **could** realize ~~what was happening...~~**as says** Murphy's law...or some variant.

*"C'mon, man... Slow down!"*, he said.

I don't know exactly when, it started raining. We could see the rain looking through the window. It was raining cats and dogs.

*"We are lucky, aren't we?"*, Asked **me** Raoul.

*"Sorry?"*

*"Oh, obviously we are in here while, outside, it's raining hard."*, he started to explain to me, staring at some point out there, *"As a conclusion, I think we are so lucky. Don't you think so?"*

*"I suppose"*.

*"We are living bad times, my friend. So, I would like to think we are safe for a while. It could be helpful, not to mention hopeful."*

It made sense, no doubt.

*"Raoul, would you like to know what happened to your family?"*, I asked him.

The young one stared at me, looking so pale. Clearly, that question made him vulnerable and a single tear appeared, rolling down his cheek. Then, he nodded.

*"Sure. At least, I would like to know if they are still alive or not."*, he admitted.

*"Same here"*.

*"Living with no fuckin' idea...It must be so hard to stand."*

*"You're right."*

*"Well, maybe it's time to study that backdoor right now."*, he said, sadly. *"Take a seat over there"*, he pointed a chair out to me.

I did so. He took a seat beside me. In front of us there was an old wooden brown table. Raoul put his laptop on it, and turned it on.

*"We know that those creatures are not humans, right?"*, he started asking me. It was a rhetorical question, so I didn't respond. *"Well, they are more or less like a robots, you know that...So, as you told me before, it seems there's a relationship between them and this fuckin' version of Windows ..."*

The LCD display was showing the GDM login window. The young one typed quickly using the integrated keyboard, pressing each key slightly. In a jiffy, the GNOME desktop appeared, loading four terminals. Raoul type some command in one of them and, instantly, a fake cloned version of Windows started to boot up, inside a virtual machine.

*"Here we have it!"*, he said eagerly, *"I could clone one of those awful computers at the University before getting myself out of there as quickly as I could!"*

*"Do you work there?"*

*"Do? No, my friend, you should ask me starting with did, instead. So, yes, I did."*

Windows was right there, in front of us. Curiously, there was no fuckin' welcome screen, just a clean desktop with no icons – what the ...? -, and a blue background.

*"Ey, ", I screamed, " where's the explorer process in there?"*

Raoul looked at me, laughing.

*"There isn't one!"*

*"What the fuck are you trying to say? All Windows have that horrible explorer process running all the time, also when it crashes! Everyone knows that!"*

*"Calm down... There's no explorer 'cause this is the actual Windows Operating System. Got*

it?”

Oh, shit!. At the time I was shocked by such a revelation like that. For so long, all people studying Informatics were enforced to develop programs, install them and to fix technical problems involving Windows Operating Systems. And, for so long too, all these Windows versions had been shown as a perfect piece of art. A black box – not an orange one like in the planes -, which can do a lot of useful and helpful things, no matter the level of knowledge of its users. Bullshit! But, despite the fact that only a few ~~group of~~ people decided to skip that awful world, joining a small one belonging to a new lifestyle well-known as GNU, all those remained there and trapped, were condemned to live in agony, to fool their brains, and, eventually, to earn less than a scrap of bread.

“Forget all you know, man”, said Raoul, “You will be taught for the first time *in your own life what Windows really is, and what, undoubtedly, its purpose is.*”

“I was thinking Windows is all wind and no fart.”

“No,”, Raoul smiled, “it's worse.”

'Course it was; that Windows was all fart and no wind, that was the reason for its nasty odour; it *stank*.

## VII

Look at them.

They're becoming something much worse, something I'll never be able to defeat. They are all so powerful now, they seem indestructible, invulnerable, although I suppose there must be some sort of trick, something I can get profit from; I try all the time to think about it. It's quite difficult to be in mood while all those creatures are growing up so quickly, seizing my own world with ease, with no enemies facing them, because there's no one lasting. It's only me. What can I do about it? What can I think about it? What can I try to do about it? Oh, good heavens, I have no idea. No *fuckin'* clues. Now, I'm surrounded by my hatred inertia, detaching myself from mankind, explicitly. I know life is all in vain, from only ashes will remain.

*Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! It's all bullshit! These bloody pissing outsiders ...*

Look at them.

They are all aliens, but they are all *zombies*, too. They seem so; they seem so *to me*. What can be said about *zombies*? Oh, I need to think back to those unnatural creatures, characters overplayed for so long in a lot of foolish films I can barely remember right now. But, as a matter of fact, I know it could be that trick I'm looking for. Despite the fact I have no hope and I'm in low spirits, something hit the back of my head insistently, as if someone was trying to tell me what it is supposed I *have to* do about those strangers. Could they be *zombies*? Sure. You bet. How can we kill a *zombie*? Hitting its head hard, I think. Cutting its head off, probably. Oh, too many techniques, all of them based on stupid films I didn't use to watch in the past. Like killing a vampire, I suddenly realize. Insane. Oh, but, look all around you and tell me: aren't they insane creatures? Of course they are. So as to kill' em all, I presume it is time to start thinking about insanity: what does it mean, really? There's a thin line between sanity and insanity here; at a glance, one knows insanity is all around oneself: aliens controlled by awful operating systems so-called Windows; all mankind slaughtered, laying on the ground and letting their corpses get rotten day by day, until some kind of animal take care of them - well, basically, eat them hungrily-; emptiness here, there and everywhere, not to mention their horrible appearance: like a strange animal and human mixture. What the devil really are those creatures? Not completely human, at least not right now, but they were. What kind of unknown mutation transformed all of them in what they are now?

*Windows.*

That's *what*. We knew it, Raoul and me. Along those days belonging to the past, we were trusting each other, so confident about a lot of things: we were in good spirits, we were sure about how the method in order to destroy them all, completely, undoubtedly; we were thinking about there could be hope for mankind and a real future, in a so-close future. The main idea was trying to hack them all, getting illegal access to their Windows Operating Systems' core trough that security hole discovered by Raoul. We were sure how to control them all in case of getting access over that buggy code. Raoul had an idea, a good one I suppose: brainwashing them, as Windows did, using

our own GNU/Linux kernel version.

Unluckily, it was a waste of time.

Those creatures were growing up extremely quickly, and we were incapable of advancing much in that kernel code of ours. It was a matter of time and death, not life. So, now, I'm alone and lonely, and I know *it's fate I'm gonna die. Die, die, die!* Zombies all around me, inertia possessing me, Raoul died so long ago, I have no more books to read, no more films to watch, no more friends to make, no more tales to tell, no more days to live, no more hope to share, no more willpower to use, no more love to spread. No, there's only death and I'm panicking because I'm a coward, and I know I'm so *cowardly* so as to commit suicide. I'm afraid of death, but at the same time I would like to meet it now. I know *there* will be pain during my dying days, no doubt. Damned monsters! *Fuck you, bloody bastards!*

Unexpectedly, I hear a voice, so far away, calling me by my name. A female one, some voice I can recognize in spite of the distance. Could it be my imagination? Reality escapes me all the time, so it could be ...

That voice is approaching me.

“OO's there?”, I ask.

My name, again, comes to me aided by the wind, like in a whisper.

“Who goes *there*?”, I ask, once again, in a low and scared voice.

Suddenly, I see her.

She is in a hurry; behind her I can see a lot of *those* awful aliens, extremely close to her, trying to grasp her shoulders. She runs, runs to me, runs for her life. She is scared.

“Come this way!”, I shout at her, waving my hand.

In a flash, all those creatures just behind her get down. She continues running, not even trying to take a look at them, staring at me and starting to smile slightly.

“What now?”, I ask myself., “Hurry up, over here!”, I scream.

As soon as she *gets* where I am, all the aliens pass away.

“What?!!”

Yes, yes, what. *What?* Ah, but not now, not right now. She is in front of me, staring at me, with her eyes open wide, a hopeful expression impressed on her beautiful face, and all *what* I am planning to do right now is to embrace her, to kiss her, to take care of her and never let her go.

She breaks into tears.

“I know, I know, it's been a long time ...”, I whisper.

She looks at me, crying and smiling, all at once.

“I missed you...”, she mutters.

“So did I”.

And here we are, both of us possessed by some new kind of hope, the hope which is fuelled by love and friendship, some old *feeling* I was sure I would never find during those upcoming days of my dreadful existence.

## VIII

Where were we? Ah, of course, I was talking about what was being planned during those days when Raoul was alive. We were in a hut, do you remember? In a hut, in the middle of an enormous woodland, relatively far from the aliens. It took us two weeks to disassemble all that hocus pocus so-called *code*; there were a lot of some strange *call stacks*, and despite the fact Raoul seemed *such a* clever debugger, that code was an absolute mess, as far as we were concerned.

“Look at this!”, shouted Raoul.

“What's the matter?”

“It does not make sense!”, he mumbled.

“Sorry?”, I asked him.

He was staring at his laptop display, peeping inside Windows's core. It seemed so fascinating to him or at least that *is what I guessed*.

“Oh,”, he said, “I've discovered something really bizarre inside this horrendous code ...”

“What is it?”

“Right here”, he responded, pointing at some routine to me.

“What's that?”

All **what** I could see was an absolute and complete mess, a lot of code lines involving CPU dependant syntax I can hardly understand. I was – well, I *am*, in fact -, a C developer, and all what I knew – I *know*-, about mnemonics and assembler programming language was – *is* - ... nothing!

“I'll try to explain...”, he seemed so worried about my poor knowledge concerning low level development code. “I was looking for that security hole through the disassembled code...”

“So?”

“So, here we have it; right in front of us; here!”

“Cut short, It's not my kettle of fish!”, I urged him,

“Okay, okay ... Just look at this! There are a pile of *nop* instructions inside a loop! Nonsense, isn't it?”

“It seems so”, I said. Of course, I could perfectly understand what was “a *nop* instruction inside a loop”. It means a waste of time, from processor's point of view.

“I think all this code is a fake...”, he explained.

“So, is it not a security hole, after all?”

“No, it isn't, I fear.”, he admitted, regretful.

“Shit!”, I exclaimed.

“But... Well, I'm not so sure by now but ... what the hell! Maybe I could be right ...”

“Tell me”

Raoul smiled. Moving the pointer right inside the code's viewer, he showed me some different part of the Window's core low level design. This time, there were some function names and variables I could understand, more or less. Some of them seemed mysteriously so close to the basic idea of software updates and security fixes.

“What do you see?”, he asked me.

“The **so** dreadful Windows Update program, I presume ...”

“Ey, you really hit the bull's eye!”

“It was a piece of cake.”

“So, as far as we can conclude, all what we can read right here is directly related to how Windows manages its updates, do you agree?”

“You bet.”

“Go on, then.”, he seemed so excited. “Reading this code carefully, one can realize there's some sort of counter, stored on some dependant CPU register – obviously, that register will be chosen depending on the system architecture where Windows is installed -, acting as a countdown.”

“What? A countdown? What do you mean?”

“It's clear, isn't it?”

“I cannot ...”

“Well, let me explain ...”, he paused for a while. Then, he said: “Each time a new update is available and installed, this counter decreases by one.”

“And then ...”

“This way, what can be said about it? It seems so clear to me, my friend: at some moment, as soon as this counter reaches the zero value, there will be no more software updates to apply.”

“For God's sake!”, I said in **such a** loud voice. “You're a genius!”

“No, I'm not, but now that you mention it, it must be said that our job is as important as yours, clearly!”, at that point, he was laughing.

“Which is your current value?”

“6.666”

“God damn! We're fucked!”

It seemed so. **Such a** big integer value. At the time, we were not sure about how the updates were being applied to all Windows over the world. In fact, we were not sure about anything involving the outside world: what was happening out there? Will be there some survivors? What about my **loved** ones? And what about *her*? *Her*. My beloved. My wife-to-be. So, it was quite difficult to figure out how those software updates were running, after all. Maybe, all was in vain

and all ~~what~~ we could do was to scream: *To hell!*

"*Cheer up!*", said Raoul. "*It's not over, I can assure you of that.*"

"*I'm sorry, but I miss her.*"

"*Who are you talking about?*"

"*It does not matter, forget it.*"

For the best part of a minute, there was silence in there. Raoul was as sad as me, no doubt. He looked so pale, and I was sure he was getting sick.

"*There's no time, we are in a bloody pissing hurry. Got it?*"

"*Yep.*"

"*There's no time to cry. We must be as hard as a rock. Understood?*"

"*Understood.*"

He was right. We could not allow that sadness entering our hut; we had to fight it, defeat it, so as to avoid our own downfall. We had no choice; it was a matter of life and death.

"So, where were we?", I asked him, reinforced by that spurious necessity of hope, putting my memories away, far enough so that I could concentrate **on** what we were planning to do.

There would be a pile of **jobs** to be done.

And no time to waste.

## IX

Now, devastation all around us. We are looking at that mess which, some time ago, had been called Barcelona, right down there. Over a mountain, we can feel some sort of fresh air caressing our faces. A good feeling after all, if I may say so. She looks so pretty, so beautiful. Despite death, suffering and all of what she had to stand during those awful past days, she seems cheerful. Now, I realize how stronger she is! I know she is my only reason to live.

"Look out there", I say to her, pointing at all that mess called Barcelona, "What do you see?"

"I ... I see ... Well, I see destruction and desolation all over there."

"No, you *don't*"

"What? What do you mean?"

It seems she cannot understand what I'm thinking about. She has to be taught, I suppose.

"Okay, honey. Look, again. Listen! Can you see it, can you hear it, can you simply *feel it*?"

"I ... I cannot ..."

'Course she can't. She is not a nihilist, like me. She loves people, she enjoys being mixed in the mob, playing their roles as perfectly as she can, no matter what kind of people can be found here, there, everywhere, wherever. She is human. She belongs to human being. It's not my case; I'm not human anymore. She is astonished because of my words; I see her eyes trying to peer inside my soul, or at least that's what it seems to me.

"That's right, sweetheart.", I say, skipping her gaze: "Now, it's only us. We are the last humans standing. Do you realize what it means?"

"No, I don't."

"It means we can live enjoying each other, with no worries about *the others*, you know. The whole planet is our. There's no one out there; only silence. The aliens are dying, so I really think we can hide amidst these mountains, awaiting their complete extinction."

It is true. They are getting sick day by day, thousands of those creepy outsiders are dying by themselves. I understand what's the reason: too many bugs inside that code concerning Windows. That's what Raoul and me were thinking in the past. Now, it seems the time has come to exterminate them all, all across the world they die.

"But, what about mankind?", she asks me.

"Mankind? Ha! Mankind has got what mankind just deserves: its own inevitable self destruction."

"I can't believe what you are saying to me!", she shouts.

"No one can, I presume."

"Why? Why are you so nihilist? What mankind did to you?"

I turn my back on her. Staring down there, I can feel the fresh air whispering some sort of foolish sounds in my ears; I hardly realize if they are voices, after all. All the same, she awaits my response:

“That's not the point.”, I say to her, finally.

“Oh, Brother! Well, so, what's the point, then?”

“Mankind makes me sick.”

“Why?”

“I hate getting around human being cities; I hate looking at some faces I can't recognize; I hate belonging to this decrepit society; I hate being considered as a human, as many others; I hate all related to mankind, more or less, and I was waiting for a miracle which would destroy all of what mankind represents. It seems the time has come, finally, to fulfil all my needs.”

“And now? What's next?”

“Nothing; look out there! They're all dead, and the aliens so soon will be! Isn't that marvellous?”

“You're crazy!”

“No, I'm not. Think better of it: what we have right here is hope. We can live until the day we die in harmony, not in agony. We need love and we have a tone of it.”

She puts a hand on my shoulder and says:

“You're out of your mind but I love you.”

“I love you too.”

She kisses me, slightly. I can smell her odour. I can feel her breath. She gives me all what I need so as to survive.

“Thus, I realize there will be no mankind ... in the end.”, she mutters, staring at me.

“You're right,”, I admit, “there will be no mankind, anymore.”

“Do you know *when*?”

'Course I know! I know it perfectly, I think I know it all my whole life.

“The day we die, mankind will disappear from this world. Completely.”

Sadly, she says to me:

“Then, so be it.”

## X

It seems I'm dreaming.

In my dream, nothing seems real; I can feel my own breath but it seems no longer my breath; I can see what it is happening in front of me, however, I cannot perceive all those events as real ones; all I can sense is like being possessed by some sort of external force, not from this world, maybe from the outer ones. Who knows?

In my dream, she comes to me, naked, covered in blood, trembling and crying, trying to find some kind of calm staring at me. She is in no luck; I'm not real, I'm a mere hallucination, nothing more than that. So, she cannot touch me, she cannot talk to me, and she crawls in my dream completely lost and sorrowful. She gets lost, somewhere in that unknown world which belongs to me for a short period of time, as long as the sun is not shining in the sky, as long as darkness is surrounding me, as long as I'm still dreaming. *Fuck!* I love her. But I don't know where I can find her but in my dreams. In them, she seems so close to me, and I would like to say: “*Ey, dear, come closer.*” That's what I'm explaining to Raoul now; that's what I'm trying to understand, that's what I'm trying to skip so that I can rest, finally. I fear she is dead; I fear I won't be able to see her, again. Never. She is dead, she *must* be dead. How is it possible? All this bullshit! Love, death, hope ... What do they mean? What's the reason to live? What's the reason to die? To live, to die, all the same, we are all dead, in the end. That's for sure. Raoul understands me perfectly. At least, that's what I think. My dreams are covered in sadness and nihilism, moreover decay and death. She appears as an angel amidst all this shit, and I realize I need her, I need her love, I need her naked body, I need her breasts, I need her lips, I need her soul...Oh God! Save me! Save us! Look at us; we are dying, we are starving for love, not food. Why? You, O Lord, tell me! Why? I want you to

respond immediately! What's all this chaos about? What's the meaning of this? Tell me! Answer me! Please, please, don't leave me now! I need to know... I'm getting crazy!

*Damn it!*

Silence. There's only silence, as usual. He does not want to talk to me, it is quite obvious. Where are His worshipers now? Dying as the others; there will be no salvation, no matter which religion they worship. They will be all dead, that's for certain. Or they will be becoming some sort of creatures, like those aliens around us.

I've lost my faith in this world.

Maybe it's time to admit we have to die. We must be purged; too many years of pain, carrying our own pathetic apologies; two thousand years of decadence should be enough. It's sad, but it's the fucking truth. Could they be some sort of saviours? Saviours blasting off from some outer world, like a man in a mission, in order to kill us all. Could it be? Why not? After all, mankind deserves to die, am I right? But not she; she has to survive this horror. I know it. She is different, she is better than all of us, she is the perfect mixture of any good feeling inside us. Above all, she is my love. She deserves to live for so long. What about me? What about Raoul? What about our make-or-break project to destroy those aliens definitively? What about God? Is He real? Those creatures could be His army. In that case, are we done to defeat them? And, in case of being able to do so, should we? I'm not sure. That question could be so hard to answer.

I'm not a Christian, but I fear it does not matter.

## XI

“I see his rotten corpse, laying in the ground. It seems he is looking at me: Raoul's eyes wide open, as if he was trying to beg me for something. It's the worst sight I've ever seen: I knew this man, I was accompanying him in that darkest hour of destruction, and now, his slaughtered corpse is right here, beside me, forgotten... *Shit!*”

She is surveying me. She wants to know what happened in my past days so as to understand my believes, entering inside that bizarre mind of mine. She looks so beautiful, as usual. It was late at night when I met her for the first time in my life. The most beautiful woman I've ever met before, no doubt. At the time, mankind was in peace, apparently. There were sunny days, and romantic nights. We were attending a conference focussing on GNU/Linux Kernels and that sort of computing science things. I was there so as to conduct a talk concerning the File Descriptor Table mechanism and how to alter it non-destructively. I was so nervous; it was the first time that I will be in front of a lot of people, at most two hundred attendants, listening to me carefully. As soon as it was my turn, I saw her: she sat down in the first row, taking a look at the paper, my paper, the first one I had written. She seemed truly concentrated in what she was reading. I took a deep breath; then, I started to talk.

“There was nothing I could do about that, so I got out of the hut, leaving him to the worms.”

When I finished my talk, she asked me some questions. She was interested in altering my project so that we can record a history of system calls perpetuated by a given process. This way, my project could plot an histogram concerning system calls, times per *syscall* ... It was a great idea, I thought. She was so clever, also. I suppose I fell in love with her.

“Do you understand what I just said to you, dear? I left him to the worms!”

We went for a walk, enjoying that precious night. She was talking about a lot of things involving Linux, and, suddenly, she came to a halt. She stared at me. Her eyes seemed being shackled by some brutal and unknown force. “*I like you*”, she whispered. “*I like you so much.*”

“As soon as I close my eyes, I see him getting rotten day by day, forever and ever, his corpse chasing me in all my dreams, screaming because of the pain, extending his arms while some grave worms roll down his chest.”

We gazed at each other. She kissed me. I can remember that perfectly, as well as other things occurring at the time. The past, the present and the future are mixing in my head, I'm getting used to differencing them in spite of all this chaotic remembrances which belong to me in some way. Now I'm explaining to her how Raoul died; now I'm recalling how I met her; *flip, flop, flip, flop* ... *Here I am, there I was; here she is, there she was* ...

“You are not the one to blame”, she says, *here*.

“Why not?”, I ask her, *here*.

The aliens found us, at last. *Bastards!* The hut was not the perfect place to be, it seemed. After a pile of jobs well done, they came to us in order to kill us. I was faster than Raoul. He shouted: “*Get the fuck out of here! Don't worry about me, just run!*”. I did so. They killed him, and when I thought there was no danger, I came back to the hut in order to find out what happened to Raoul. It was a waste of time, of course, due to the fact that I knew he was dead, certainly. I was fucking right. I found his corpse amidst all the destruction those creatures left behind them. In the middle of that chaos, his laptop seemed strangely untouched. I took it.

“They were harmful.”, she points out.

What is it supposed I have to do now? Here, there, does it matter? She cannot understand, I fear. She is trying to pick me up. All I need is to rest, to lay down right *here* and, in order to do so, I need to forget *there*. *There* means fear, death, decay, anxiety, war, misery, pain, suffering ... *Here* means just the contrary, although I am a nihilist, yet. Oh, *fuck!* It is quite complex! Why me? I should have been the one who died in that bloody hut, not him! *Those scum-sucking dogs!* To hell with all of them, *fuck!*

“Calm down, my dear.”, she mutters: “I know you perfectly, it's OKAY...”

No; it is not. There's nothing all right: I can feel it. Despite the fact those creatures are all dying and so soon there will be no more aliens in this world, something stinks. Could it be my own soul? Is it corrupted, after all? Is that possible? To corrupt a nihilist soul, I mean. Could that be fucking possible? Oh, brother, apart from us, there's no one who can respond this fucking question. I am fucked.

“Do you remember what you said to me?”, she inquires.

“Yes, I do.”, I respond automatically.

“You said all we need is just in front of each other: you will be my love, my hope, my protector, and so I'll become yours.”

“But my dreams ...”

“Forget them! Look at me.”

What is wrong with me? Such a nihilist being in doubt! What happened to all my thoughts concerning self-destruction and devastation, eradication of all lasting good instincts in that awful race so-called human being? *Fuck!*

“I love you, no matter what you think, no matter if you are in doubt, no matter if your dreams are coming so as to destroy your faith; here I am. Beside you. I'll be here. I'll always be. I promise.”

I know I love her. That's for certain. I love her now, *here*, and I loved her then, *there*. I can figure out what life means. Now, surrounded by destruction, she still seems the most beautiful woman I've ever met. She's right. I'm getting used to enjoying my own life with her, no matter what I think about mankind, about the only way to save us, about those monsters who punish us to the ground. Now, *here*: she embraces me, she kisses me, she whispers something in my ears; “*Give me some pleasure*”, she mutters. Then, *there*: she embraced me, she kissed me, she whispered something in my ears: “*I think I'm in love, I think I love you...*”, and I took her to my flat, and *there* we made love, and she opened her eyes and gazing at me, she said: “*Don't let this moment pass...*”

## XII

I wrote some lines of code, merely a trojan which would attach itself inside the Windows Update system. Raoul was so worried about my code; it had to be as small as possible, and so as to do that I had chosen PE compression. Quite old, but still useful. He told me we had to be extremely careful: the only way to inject my malicious code would be just in the last update patch, when that counter reaches the zero value, not before.

“Where's the wrapper?”, he asked me.

“Here it is!”, I answered, pointing at an executable icon file placed in the Desktop.

“Well, I think it could work...”

So do I.

That was our definitive plan: in the last Windows Update process, we would inject my trojan code inside all Windows Operating Systems running worldwide. This code would call an external routine, downloading from our laptop a Debian installer program compiled as a PE executable. This installer would set up a full Debian GNU/Linux operating system in all those computers, destroying all data previously.

It seemed to us it could work, because we were so confident about the facts which could explain that mental possession and that awful transformation of all humans around us.

“What about those stand alone computers?”, I asked Raoul.

“They won't be a problem.”

“What?”

“Look: those creatures are getting around with no laptops at all, am I right?”

“Sure.”

“Well, I think their laptops or computers must be somewhere, unprotected ... “

“I got it!”

“Course you did!”, Raoul smiled.

It was a piece of cake. In some cases, where my trojan cannot work due to the fact some computers were not connected to the Internet directly, Raoul and me would be capable of installing Debian or the update in person, right in front of those machines, avoiding their owners, of course.

“Do you realize what it is happening?”, he inquires.

“I'm not sure ... “

“Try to figure out what could happen in case of our project success...”

As a matter of fact, only one thing was for certain: we will be considered as mankind saviours. I know I had some problems thinking about it; but Raoul was pulling me all the time in the opposite direction, trying to detach me from my darkest desires, putting all my hatred away, at least during those days of developing.

“Are you all right?”, Raoul asked me.

I nodded.

At the time, the only reason to fight was more or less related to her. I liked Raoul, also, and he seemed so clever and hopeful. I was changing my mind in some aspects of my life and what it meant; was I a fool? Probably. What about myself, now, *here*, not *there*? She is beside me, looking at the sky. Today, the sun is shining brightly. There are some birds flying over our heads, and there are no presence of clouds. I know all was in vain, 'cause those creatures are dying by themselves, too many fucking bugs in that code so-called Windows. In fact, my trojan was never injected at all. Raoul died, and I was in no mood so as to continue our fight against those outsiders. I was in an absolute mess. I think now I make up my mind, finally. All I need is to look at her. There's love, again, amidst all this devastation; we can live together. Maybe I still have some doubts concerning mankind, nihilism, death and what we deserve, really. But, what the hell! She loves me and I love her, and that must be sufficient to survive this horror.

Everything has to come to an end.

But this is not an end, it is just a beginning ...

“Look!”, she screams, pointing at the sky.

“What is it?”

“Didn't you see that?”

I peer at the sky. I cannot see anything up there.

“No; I didn't. What was it?”

She seems excited.

“Forget it.”, it is all she says.

Why not? Whatever it was, it does not concern us.

Not now, not yet.

*Toni Castillo Girona,  
July, the 5<sup>th</sup>, 4:43pm.*