

Security in a Immutable Web3 World

Breaching Smart Contracts

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ROMHACK





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osservatorionessuno.org



@Th3Zer0



- ▶ Introduction
- ▶ Web3 from a Web2 developer PoV
- ▶ Web3 from a Web2 security researcher PoV
- ▶ Root Cause Analysis of some of the best web3 vulnerabilities
- ▶ Closing remarks



- ▶ No **buzz-word** talk
- ▶ Understand the concepts behind web3 and smart contracts
- ▶ Learn new offensive and defensive concepts



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- ▶ Understand the concepts behind web3 and smart contracts
- ▶ Learn new offensive and defensive concepts

PS: **don't use** in production the code you will see in this talk.



Introduction



Nowadays, everyone knows what a **blockchain** is:

A public distributed immutable database.



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Ethereum-like cryptocurrencies introduced the concept of **Smart Contracts**.

Digital contracts where no third party is involved (ex. no public notary).



A **Smart Contract** is a collection of code (functions) and data (state) residing at a specific address on the blockchain.

Its code  enforces a set of programmed rules .



A **Smart Contract** is like a blockchain account (entity):

- Can hold and send money 💰
- Cannot be deleted, cannot be altered
- Interactions (function calls) are irreversible



What is a Smart Contract?

Introduction

```
1 pragma solidity 0.6.0;
2
3 contract Greeter {
4     string greet;
5
6     constructor(string memory _greet) public {
7         greet = _greet;
8     }
9
10    function greetings(string memory name) public view returns (string memory) {
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12    }
13 }
```



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What is a Smart Contract?

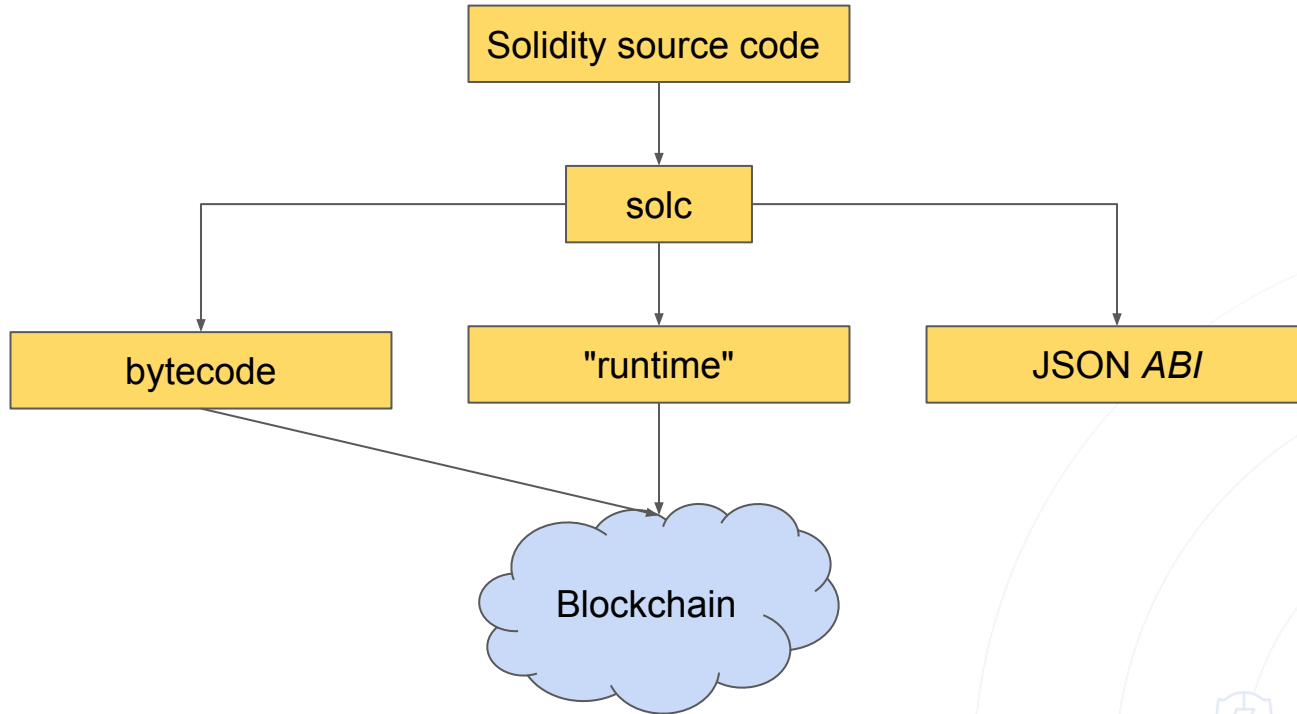
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Introduction



The **EVM** is the execution environment for Smart Contracts.



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Distributed computing infrastructure.



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World state stored on the Ethereum blockchain.



The **EVM** is the execution environment for Smart Contracts.

Distributed computing infrastructure.

World state stored on the Ethereum blockchain.

RISC instruction set.



Every participant of the network can **broadcast** a request for an **arbitrary computation**.

This execution causes a **state change** which is committed and propagated inside a blockchain **transaction**.

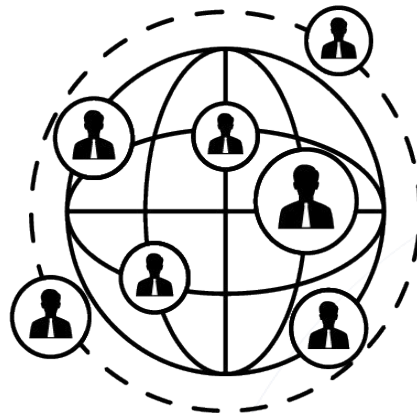


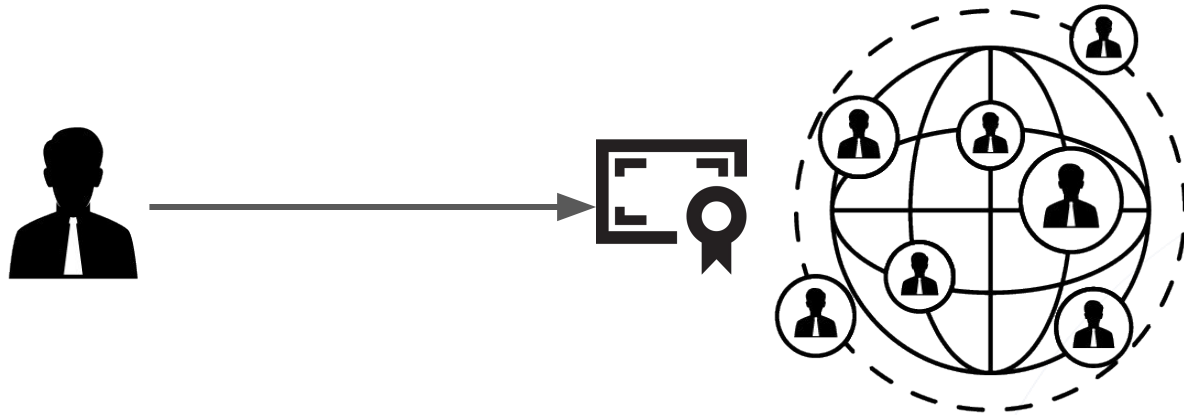
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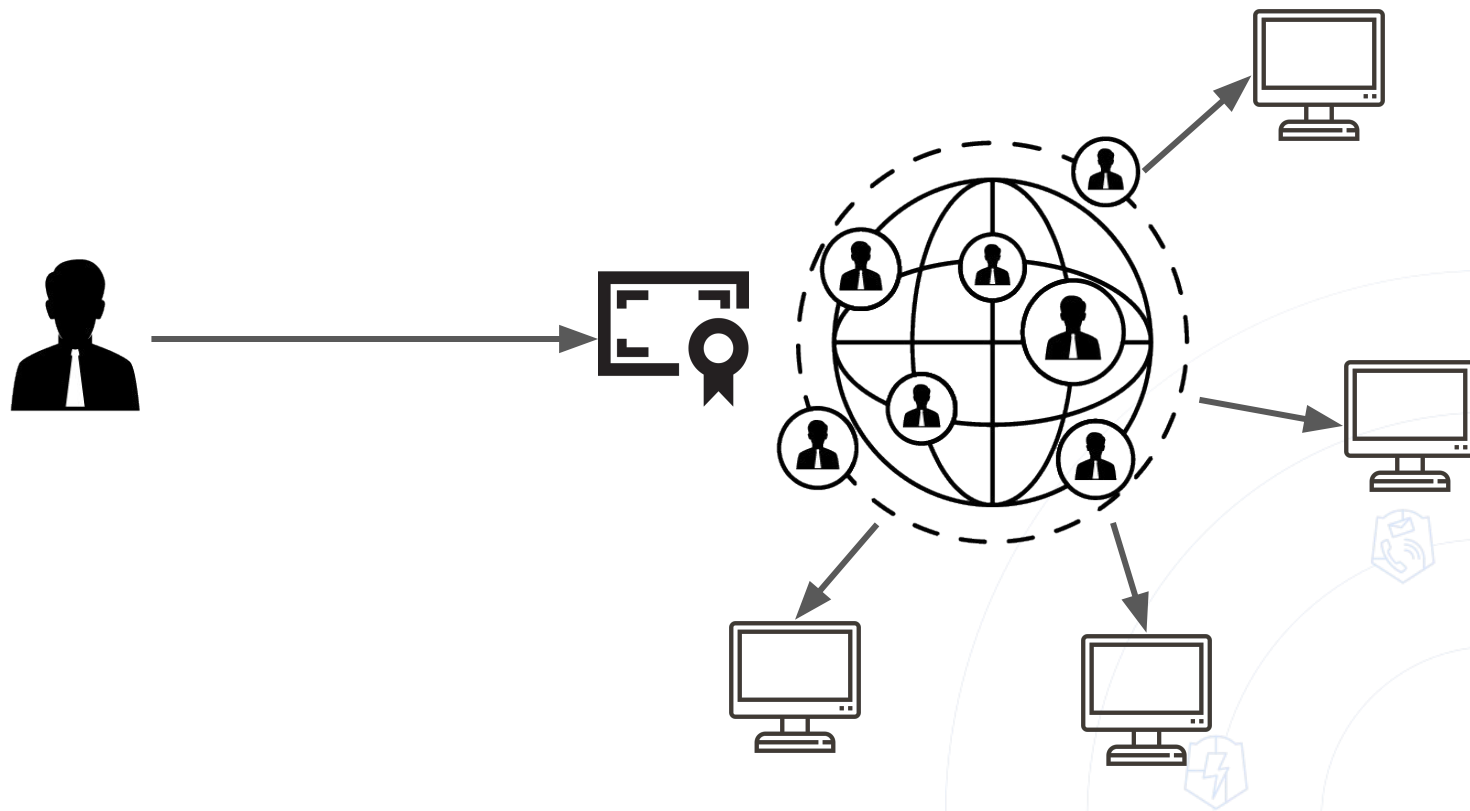
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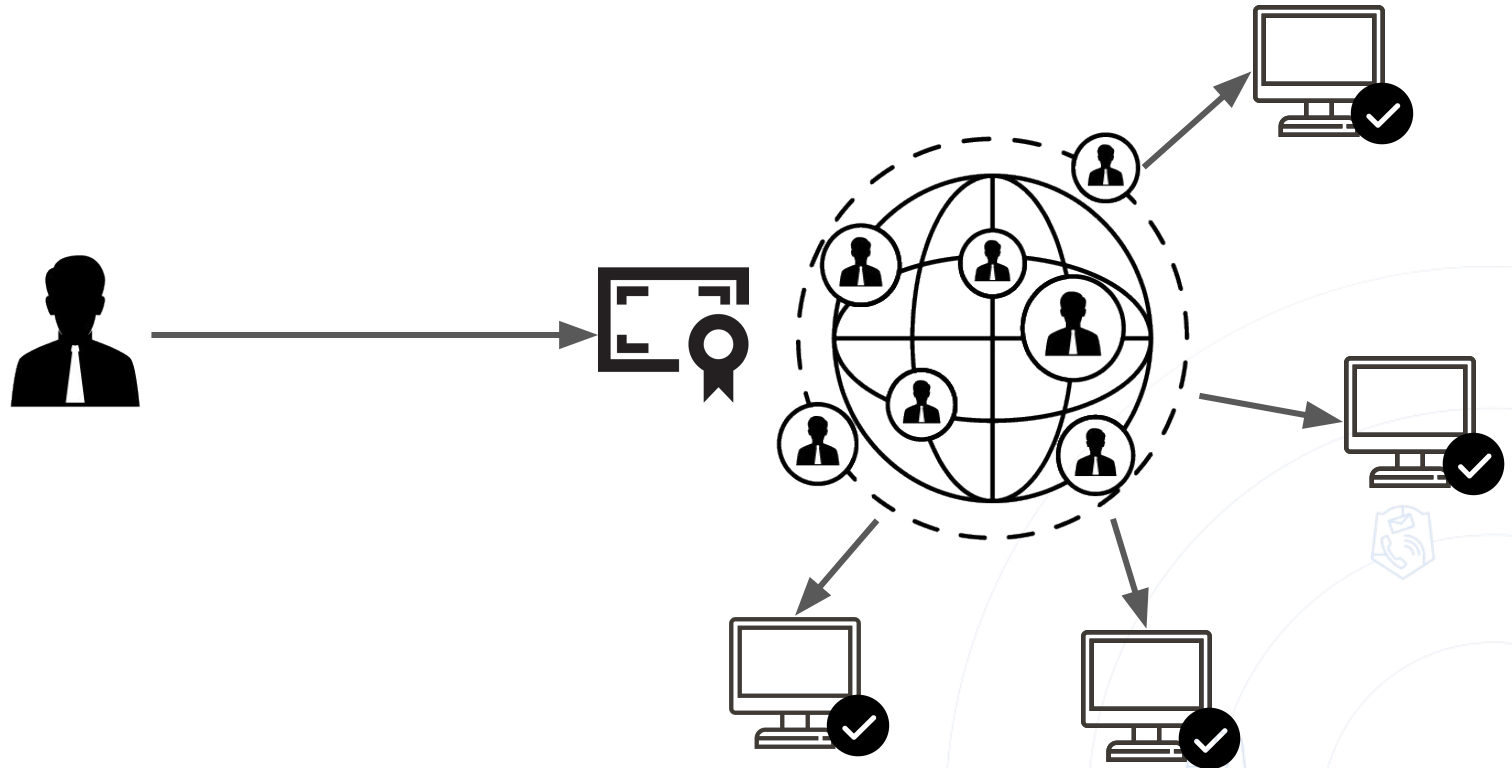
This results in ✨ Distributed execution ✨.











How can we prevent the flooding of the network with execution requests?



How can we prevent the flooding of the network with execution requests?

Through **Gas: Weight** computational effort and state changes (CPU cycles and storage space).

The user pays to execute accordingly.



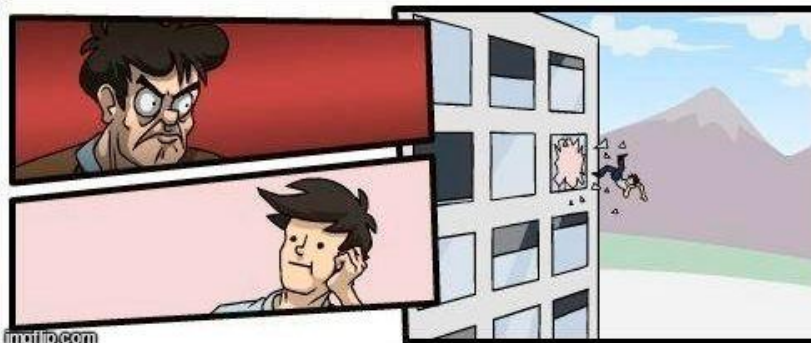
Gas makes the EVM a **quasi-Turing complete** machine.

There is no **halting problem**. Smart contracts' execution is (and must be) **deterministic**.



Web3 from a Web2 developer PoV





Everybody can 👁️ the smart contract's **state** and **bytecode**.

Smart contract bytecode should be treated as "client" code.



Everybody can 👁️ the smart contract's **state** and **bytecode**.

Smart contract bytecode should be treated as "client" code.

You wouldn't check an admin password inside the browser.



Once your code is deployed on the blockchain it will be available **forever**... until the **selfdestruct** opcode is called.



How can you prevent pushing vulnerable code on the blockchain forever?



How can you prevent pushing vulnerable code on the blockchain forever?

Test before deploy.

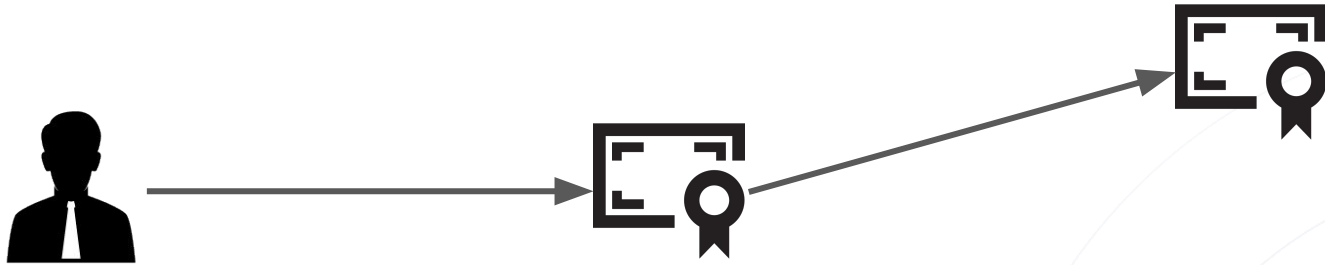
Use development tools, testnet/offline/fork blockchain, etc.



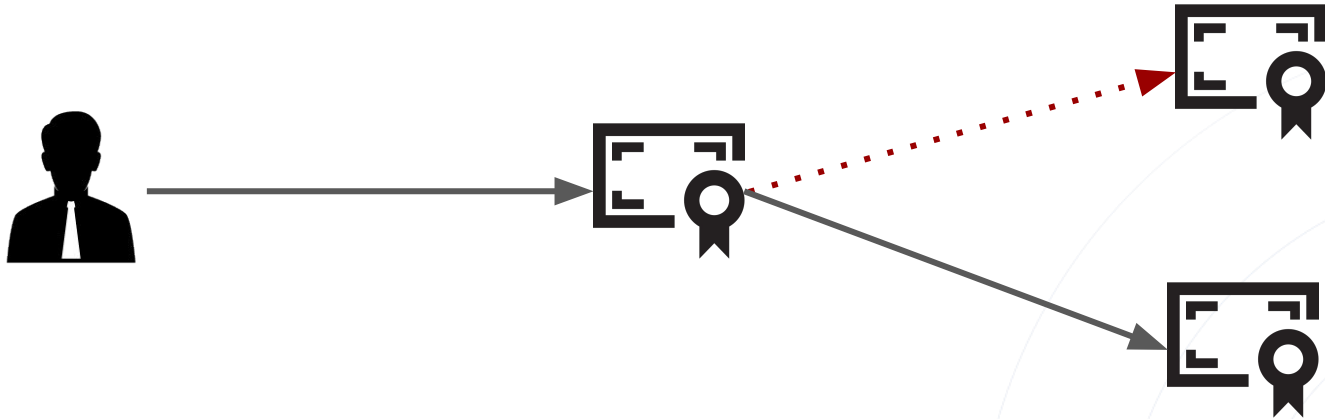
"Updates" can be done with "proxy" contracts.



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"Updates" can be done with "proxy" contracts.



Forget updates

Web3 from a Dev PoV

"Updates



```
1  pragma solidity ^0.5.0;
2
3  contract Proxy {
4
5      address public proxyOwner;
6      address public implementation;
7
8      constructor(address imp) public {
9          proxyOwner = msg.sender;
10         implementation = imp;
11     }
12
13     modifier onlyProxyOwner() {
14         require(msg.sender == proxyOwner);
15         _;
16     }
17
18     function upgrade(address imp) external onlyProxyOwner {
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20     }
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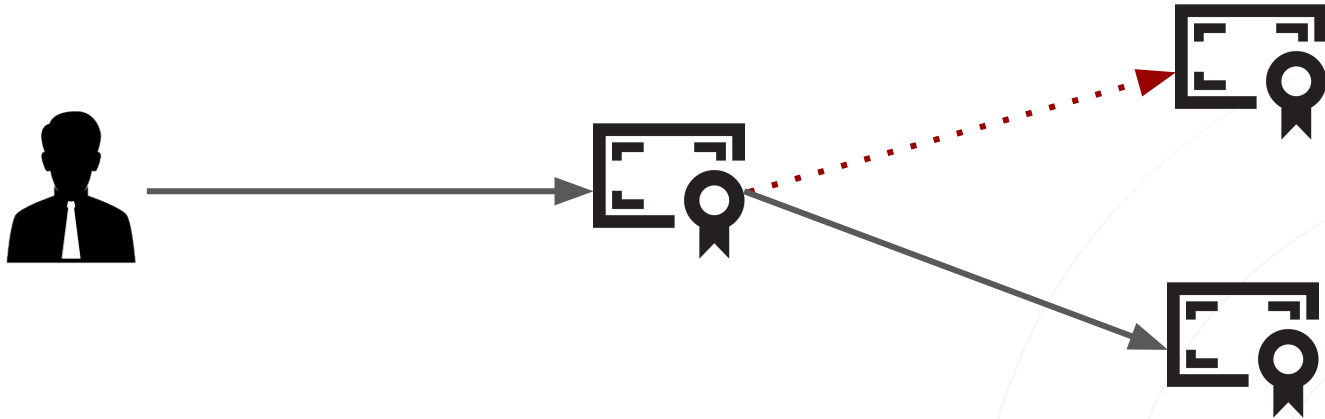
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"Updates" can be done with "proxy" contracts.



the "proxy" contract **bytecode** is immutable.



The lower  the code size,
the higher  a program's readability and efficiency.

Smart Contracts are usually small.



Solidity: "JavaScript" but worse... much worse.

*Solidity's type system is not safe ...
contract interfaces are **not consulted at compile-time**, and this
makes the execution raise an exception and...*



Solidity: "JavaScript" but worse... much worse.

*Solidity's type system is not safe ...
contract interfaces are **not consulted at compile-time**, and this
makes the execution raise an exception and **the user wastes money**.*





Ryan Stortz

@withzombies

There are contracts on the blockchain that calculate 1 with exponentiation. This actually costs people money...

```
JUMPI(#0x200, %13),  
]>  
<SSA:BasicBlock ofs:0x24c insns:[  
  %14 = SLOAD(#0x3),  
  %15 = EXP(#0x100, #0x0),  
  %16 = DIV(%14, %15),  
  %17 = EXP(#0x2, #0xA0),  
  %18 = SUB(%17, #0x1),
```



WAT



WAT

Wat

A lightning talk by Gary Bernhardt from CodeMash 2012

<https://www.destroyallsoftware.com/talks/wat>



Unlike CPUs (🤔) the EVM/compiler can evolve at speed.

Kill vulnerability classes with breaking changes in the VM or in the Solidity compiler.



Fast evolving architecture

Web3 from a Dev PoV

```
1  pragma solidity ^0.4.21;
2
3  contract TokenSaleChallenge {
4      mapping(address => uint256) public balanceOf;
5      uint256 constant PRICE_PER_TOKEN = 1 ether;
6
7      function TokenSaleChallenge(address _player) public payable {
8          require(msg.value == 1 ether);
9      }
10
11     function isComplete() public view returns (bool) {
12         return address(this).balance < 1 ether;
13     }
14
15     function buy(uint256 numTokens) public payable {
16         require(msg.value == numTokens * PRICE_PER_TOKEN);
17
18         balanceOf[msg.sender] += numTokens;
19     }
20
21     function sell(uint256 numTokens) public {
22         require(balanceOf[msg.sender] >= numTokens);
23
24         balanceOf[msg.sender] -= numTokens;
25         msg.sender.transfer(numTokens * PRICE_PER_TOKEN);
26     }
27 }
```



How many coins
we are sending

How many
tokens we want

```
14  
15     function buy(uint256 numTokens) public payable {  
16         require(msg.value == numTokens * PRICE_PER_TOKEN);  
17  
18         balanceOf[msg.sender] += numTokens;  
19     }  
20
```

Ask for a huge number of token,
multiplication will **wrap around (overflow)** to a low value,
then send just a few coins.



SOL-2018-4: Cleanup of Exponent in Exponentiation

```
1  contract c0 {  
2      function f2() public returns (uint8) {  
3          uint8 exp = uint8(2) ** uint8(8);  
4          return uint8(0) ** exp;  
5      }  
6  }
```



SOL-2018-4: Cleanup of Exponent in Exponentiation

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```

$$2^8 = 256$$

uint8 can store up to 255

exp will wrap around and become 0



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so we are doing 0^0 , right?

Remember:

0 to the power of something is 0

0 to the power of 0 is an indeterminate form defined to be 1



SOL-2018-4: Cleanup of Exponent in Exponentiation

$\text{solc} < 0.4$
outputs 0



SOL-2018-4: Cleanup of Exponent in Exponentiation

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$\text{solc} > 0.4.25$
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SOL-2018-4: Cleanup of Exponent in Exponentiation

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$\text{solc} > 0.4.25$
outputs 1

$\text{solc} > 0.8.x$
revert execution



How solc 0.8.x reverts execution on overflows?

Adds bytecode at **compile-time** to *guard*.



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Adds bytecode at **compile-time** to *guard*. More gas-expensive.



How solc 0.8.x reverts execution on overflows?

Adds bytecode at **compile-time** to *guard*. More gas-expensive.
Use of **unchecked** to disable checks and save gas. 🧐



It is important to **minimize gas requirements**:

- Minimize executed instructions (code).
- Minimize storage usage (data).
- Etc.



```
1  contract c1 {
2      function dumb_function(uint[] memory arr) public returns (uint[] memory) {
3          assert(arr.length < 256);
4          for (uint8 i = 0; i < arr.length; i++) {
5              arr[i] = i;
6          }
7          return arr;
8      }
9  }
10
11 contract c2 {
12     function dumb_function(uint[] memory arr) public returns (uint[] memory) {
13         for (uint8 i = 0; i < arr.length; i++) {
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Gas optimization

Web3 from a Dev PoV

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```

PUSH2 0100	3
DUP3	3
MLOAD	3*
LT	3
PUSH2 014b	3
JUMPI	10
INVALID	NaN

c1.dumb_function: (with assert)

c2.dumb_function:



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c1.dumb_function: (with assert)

input: [1,2,3,4,5]
gas used: 23,961

c2.dumb_function:

input: [1,2,3,4,5]
gas used: **23,935**



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gas used: **23,935**

26 gas units gained




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c1.dumb_function: (with assert)

input: [1,2,3,...256]
gas used: **67,208**

c2.dumb_function:

input: [1,2,3,...256]
gas used: **3,000,000***



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gas used: **3,000,000***

user lose money



A bug could cost Millions

Web3 from a Dev PoV

Try to explain to your boss that
a guy on the internet just deleted all your money.



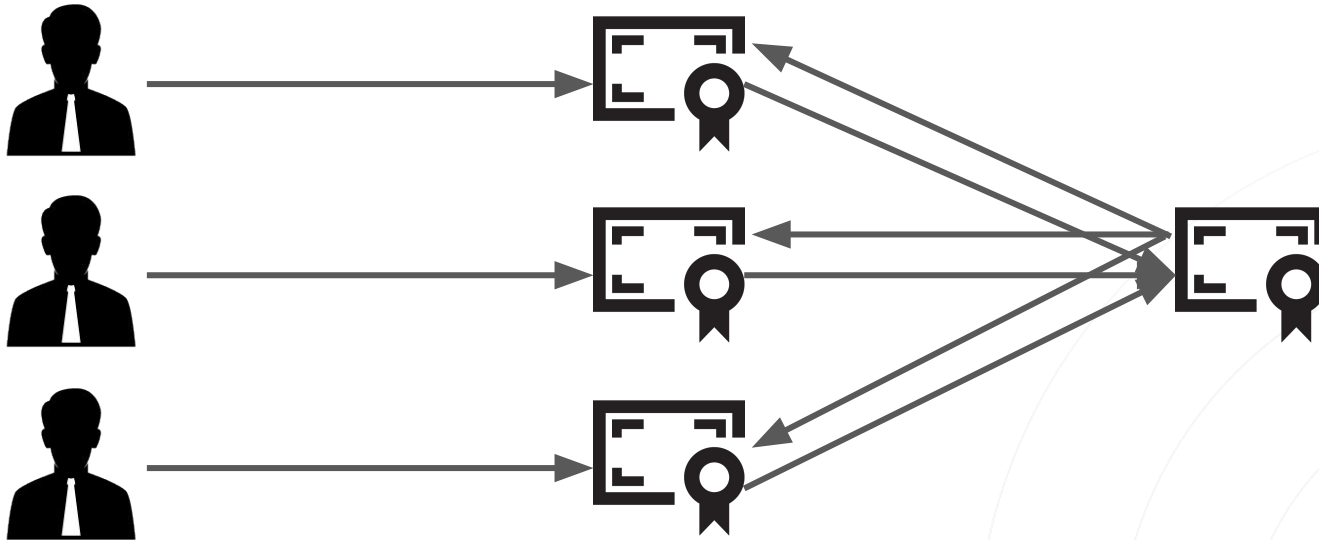
Smart Contracts can be used as a "library" to minimize costs.



A bug could cost Millions

Web3 from a Dev PoV

Smart Contracts can be used as a "library" to minimize costs.



A bug could cost Millions

Web3 from a Dev PoV

1. Initialize the contract as owner
2. Kill it
3. ...
4. ~~Profit~~

	0x47f7cff7a5e67188462...	Kill	4501969	2017-11-06 15:25:21	0xae7168deb525862f4f...	IN	 Parity Bug: Trigger
	0x05f71e1b2cb4f03e547...	Init Wallet	4501736	2017-11-06 14:33:47	0xae7168deb525862f4f...	IN	 Parity Bug: Trigger
	0x348ec4b5a396c95b4a...	0x60606040	4049249	2017-07-20 16:39:46	0x00caa64684700d2825...	IN	 Create: WalletLibrary



A bug could cost Millions

Web3 from a Dev PoV



Contract 0x863DF6BFa4469f3ead0bE8f9F2AAE51c91A907b4



Parity Bug ⓘ

The address that triggered the [Parity bug](#). The event was reported on this [Github ticket](#).

Overview

Parity Bug: Trigger

Balance:

0.003624159265358979 Ether

Ether Value:

\$5.75 (@ \$1,587.76/ETH)

Token:

\$0.00 5

More Info

My Name Tag:

Contract Creator:

Transactions

Internal Txns

Erc20 Token Txns

Contract Self Destruct

Analytics

Comments



Contract Self Destruct called at Txn Hash 0x47f7cff7a5e671884629c93b368cb18f58a993f4b19c2a53a8662e3f1482f690



Web3 from a Web2 security researcher PoV



I'VE FINALLY FOUND
IT... AFTER 15 YEARS

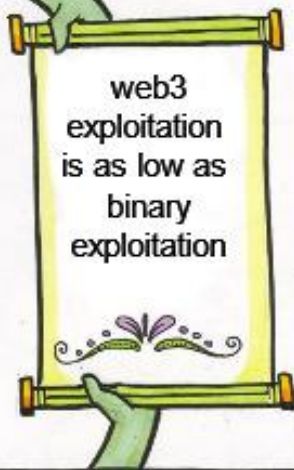


Robotatertotcomics

THE SCROLL OF
TRUTH!



web3
exploitation
is as low as
binary
exploitation



NYEH



EVM is a RISC Harvard-architecture stack machine.

~140 defined opcodes.

Put values on stack then perform operations.



Simple architecture → easy to prototype, emulate, etc.

Symbolic execution & Formal verification is the norm.



Simple architecture → easy to prototype, emulate, etc.

Symbolic execution & Formal verification is the norm.

Manticore, KEVM, hevm, Mythril, Pakala, **Qiling**, Echidna, ... much more.



Finding low hanging fruits is easy.

Symbolic execution can provide **exact input** to exploit vuln.

Scan new blocks and exploit at scale. 



Developers kill low hanging fruits before production.

Most of live bugs are either logical or financial.

Time to learn something new... 



Shorting: selling an asset without owning it and buying it back later at a lower price.

Stablecoin: a crypto currency with value pegged / tied to that of another currency, typically USD.



In order to short BTC → attack the **Terra(LUNA)** Stablecoin.

1. Loan some BTC.



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2. Buy a lot of Terra with BTC.



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4. People will go panic mode, crashing the market.



Many logical and financial bugs

Web3 from a Sec PoV

AMBCrypto_TA published on TradingView.com, May 11, 2022 17:59 UTC+5:30

Luna / TetherUS, 1D, BINANCE O17.46 H19.66 L1.13 C1.19 -16.27 (-93.19%)

Vol 455.249M

MA (200, close, 0, SMA, 5) 71.31

MA (50, close, 0, SMA, 5) 87.30



TV TradingView



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5. Terra Foundation sell **big** BTC to increase Terra price.



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5. Terra Foundation sell **big** BTC to increase Terra price.
6. **Buy back BTC at lower price.**



- Bugs in SOLC or in the EVM
- Bugs in other VMs (OptimismVM attack by saurik)
- Cross-chain interactions bugs
- Flash Loans
- Cross-chain Flash Loans
- ...?



Root Cause Analysis of some of the best web3 vulnerabilities



What is a DAO? Decentralized Autonomous Organization.

A Smart Contract where:

- **Funds raised** from the investors.
- Holders can **submit proposals** to the consensus.
- Profits from proposals **return** to holders.



If a minority objected a proposal that is going to be funded, the DAO splits and allow them to retrieve their funds.



DAO Hack

Web3 from a Sec PoV

```
1  contract dumbDAO {
2      mapping (address => uint) public balances;
3
4      function buyTokens(){
5          balances[msg.sender] += msg.value;
6      }
7
8      function transferTokens(address _to, uint _amount){
9          if (balances[msg.sender] < _amount)
10             throw;
11             balances[_to]=_amount;
12             balances[msg.sender]-=_amount;
13         }
14
15         function withdraw(address _recipient) returns (bool) {
16             if (balances[msg.sender] > 0){
17                 if (_recipient.call.value(balances[msg.sender])) {
18                     balances[msg.sender] = 0;
19                     return true;
20                 }
21             }
22             throw;
23         }
24     }
```



DAO Hack

Web3 from a Sec PoV

Sending coins
add "pot" balance

Fund a "proposal"

Retrieve coins

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19                     return true;  
20                 }  
21             }  
22             throw;  
23         }  
24     }
```



DAO Hack

Web3 from a Sec PoV

Sending coins
add "pot" balance

Fund a "proposal"

Retrieve coins

Transfer coins
before updating
balance

```
1  contract dumbDAO {
2      mapping (address => uint) public balances;
3
4      function buyTokens(){
5          balances[msg.sender] += msg.value;
6      }
7
8      function transferTokens(address _to, uint _amount){
9          if (balances[msg.sender] < _amount)
10             throw;
11          balances[_to]=_amount;
12          balances[msg.sender]-=_amount;
13      }
14
15      function withdraw(address _recipient) returns (bool) {
16          if (balances[msg.sender] > 0){
17              if (_recipient.call.value(balances[msg.sender])) {
18                  balances[msg.sender] = 0;
19                  return true;
20              }
21          }
22          throw;
23      }
24  }
```



_recipient can contain the address of a Contract.

```
15  function withdraw(address _recipient) returns (bool) {  
16      if (balances[msg.sender] > 0){  
17          if (_recipient.call.value(balances[msg.sender])) {  
18              balances[msg.sender] = 0;  
19              return true;  
20          }  
21      }  
22      throw;  
23  }
```



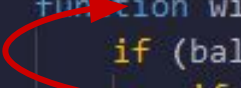
call will transfer coins and execution flow to
_recipient fallback function.

```
15  function withdraw(address _recipient) returns (bool) {  
16      if (balances[msg.sender] > 0){  
17          if (_recipient.call.value(balances[msg.sender])) {  
18              balances[msg.sender] = 0;  
19              return true;  
20          }  
21      }  
22      throw;  
23  }
```



_recipient fallback function can call
withdraw recursively.

```
15  function withdraw(address _recipient) returns (bool) {  
16      if (balances[msg.sender] > 0){  
17          if (_recipient.call.value(balances[msg.sender])) {  
18              balances[msg.sender] = 0;  
19              return true;  
20          }  
21      }  
22      throw;  
23  }
```

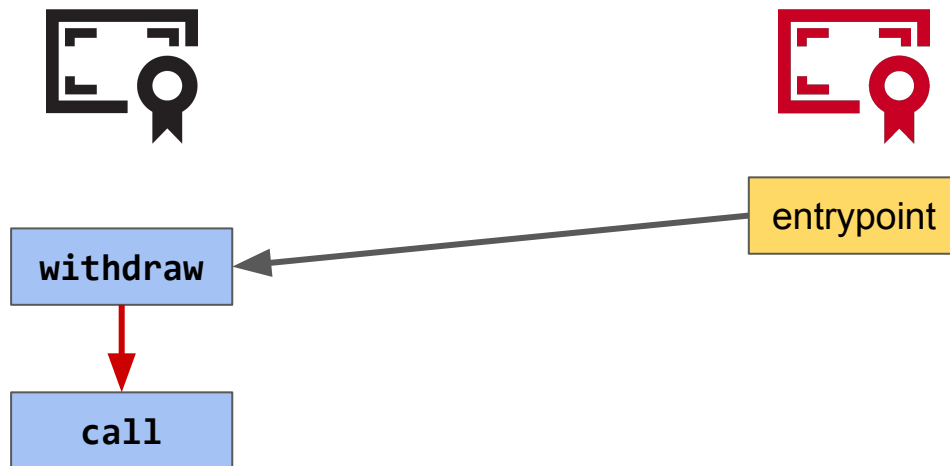


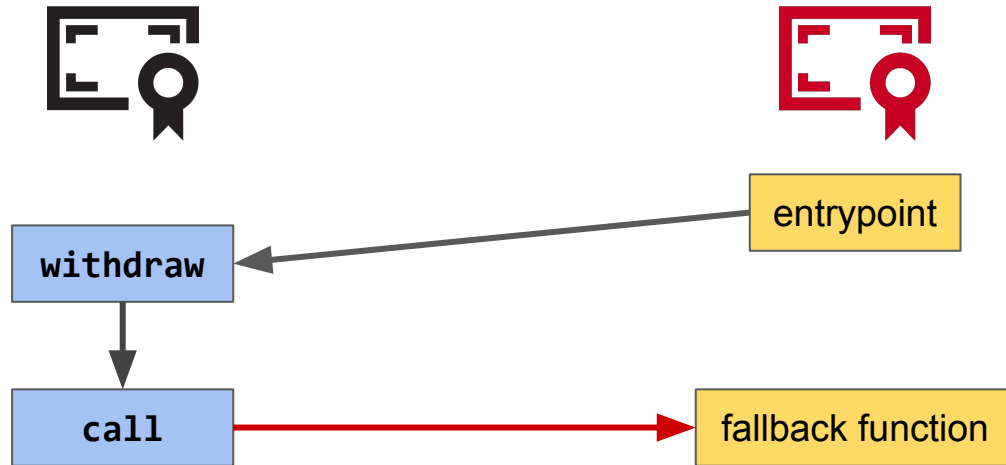
balances will never be updated.

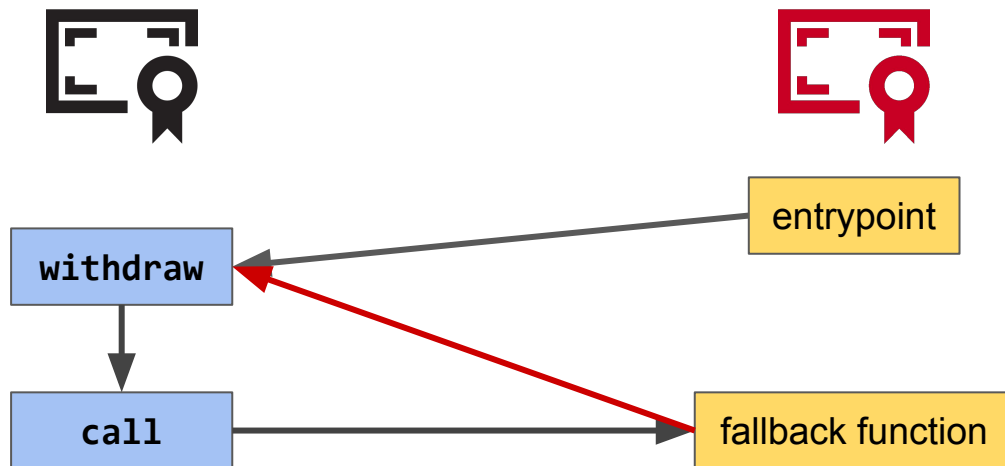
```
15  function withdraw(address _recipient) returns (bool) {  
16      if (balances[msg.sender] > 0){  
17          if (_recipient.call.value(balances[msg.sender])) {  
18              balances[msg.sender] = 0;  
19              return true;  
20          }  
21      }  
22      throw;  
23  }
```

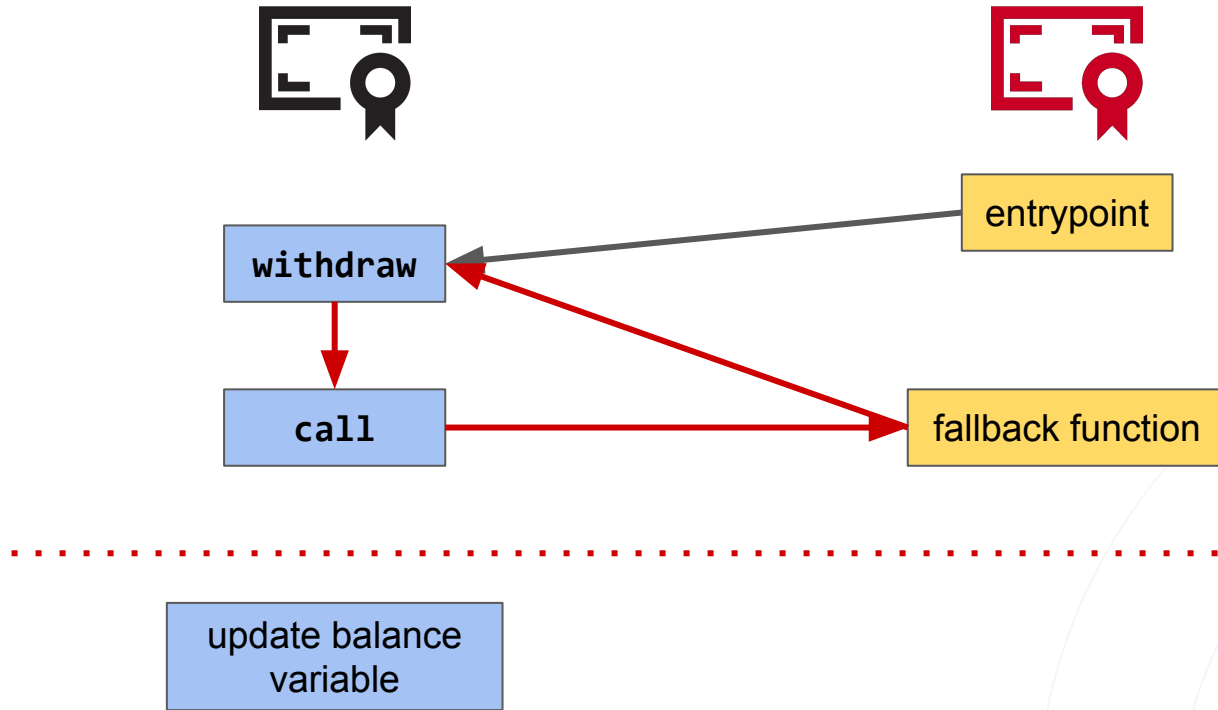






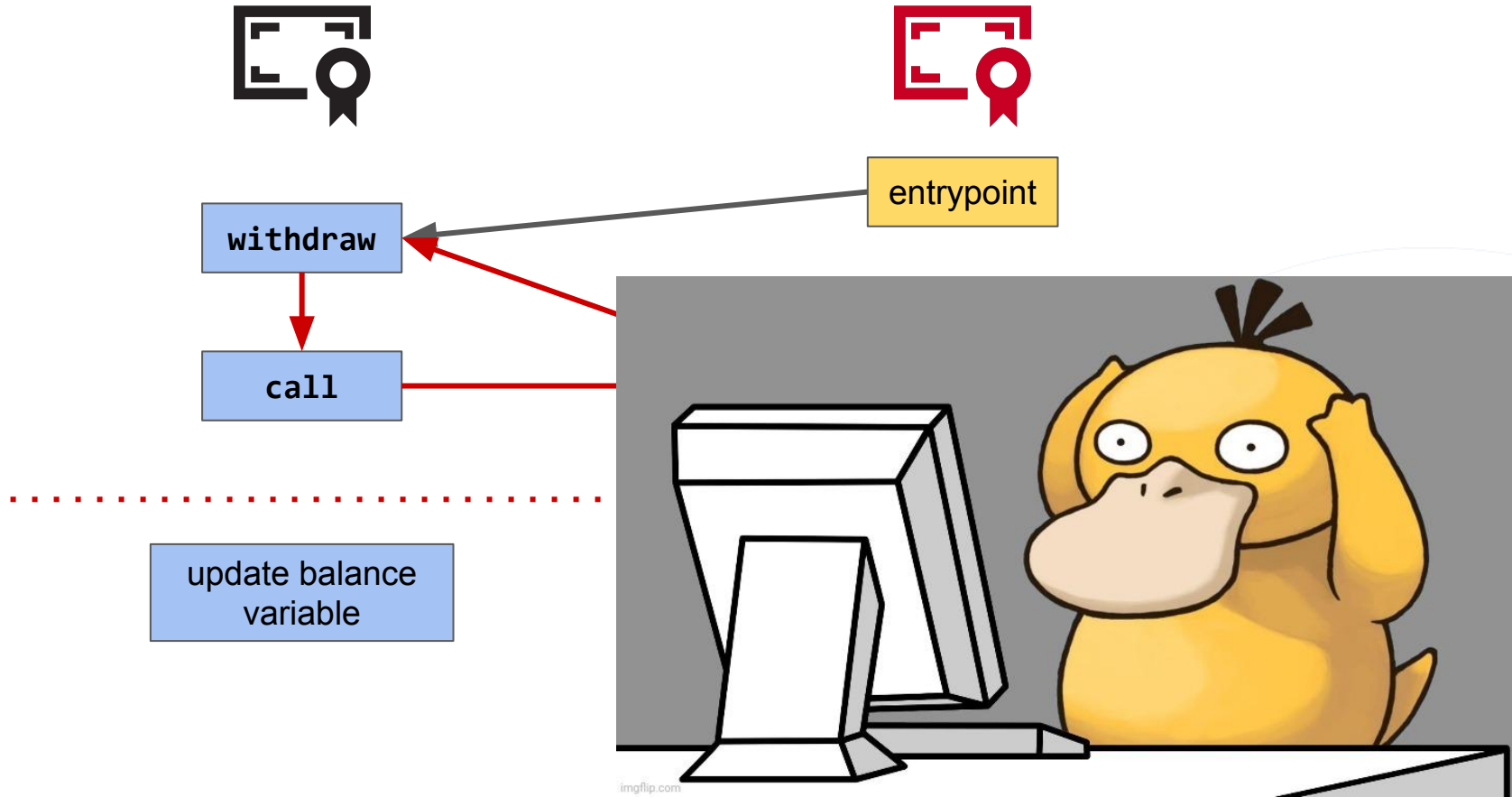






DAO Hack

Root Cause Analysis



"The DAO Hack - A \$55 million heist that split Ethereum in two"

Controversial **hard-fork** reverted the hacker's transaction.



Fomo3D is a **gambling game** where players buy keys from a contract and their money goes into a pot.



Fomo3D is a **gambling game** where players buy keys from a contract and their money goes into a pot.

- A **time counter** is initiated, counting back from 24 hours.
- Buying a key **adds 30 seconds** to the counter.
- Key price increases every time a key is bought.
- When the **counter hits 0**, the last player wins the majority of the pot.



Find a way to "delay" other's transactions.
Block stuffing vulnerability!



Find a way to "delay" other's transactions.
Block stuffing vulnerability!

Submit transactions until the block gas limit is reached
(~8,000,000 units).
Miners will happily prioritize your transactions.



Block	Date Time (UTC)	Txn	Uncles	Fee Recipient	Gas Used
6191909	2018-08-22 6:51:17	166	0	BitClubPool	7,971,592 (99.79%, +100%)
6191908	2018-08-22 6:50:57	5	0	PandaMiner	7,991,000 (99.94%, +100%)
6191907	2018-08-22 6:50:51	4	0	BitClubPool	7,979,000 (99.83%, +100%)
6191906	2018-08-22 6:50:45	3	0	Nanopool	8,000,000 (100.00%, +100%)
6191905	2018-08-22 6:50:36	7	0	MiningPoolHub: Old Add...	7,984,000 (99.80%, +100%)
6191904	2018-08-22 6:49:57	3	0	Nanopool	8,000,000 (100.00%, +100%)
6191903	2018-08-22 6:49:33	6	0	Ethermine	7,984,000 (99.80%, +100%)
6191902	2018-08-22 6:49:24	46	0	Ethermine	7,978,342 (99.83%, +100%)
6191901	2018-08-22 6:49:16	15	0	Spark Pool	7,979,663 (99.94%, +100%)
6191900	2018-08-22 6:49:07	10	0	Nanopool	7,979,192 (99.84%, +100%)
6191899	2018-08-22 6:48:58	34	0	0xd9580260be45c3c0c2...	7,975,461 (99.89%, +100%)
6191898	2018-08-22 6:48:43	25	0	Spark Pool	7,980,081 (99.99%, +100%)
6191897	2018-08-22 6:48:28	103	0	Bw Pool	3,648,328 (45.67%, -9%)



Was it worth it?

The attacker spent more than 80k units of gas worth of money.



Was it worth it?

The attacker spent more than 80k units of gas worth of money.
But gained much, much more Ether.



Closing Remarks



Closing Remarks

Closing Remarks

Dev

Sec



Dev

Sec

Avoid rapid prototyping



Dev

Sec

Avoid rapid prototyping
Careful design



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Careful design
Testing before deploy!!!



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Jump on the web3 🚂!



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Find million \$ bugs and 🍺

