Snapchat Assassin

A 3-chapter sci-fi novel
by Daniel Chin

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The First Kind of Data Bomb

The first kind of Data Bomb is the Zip Bomb. A Zip Bomb is basically a .zip file intended to incapacitate the antivirus software.

There are multiple ways a Zip Bomb may enter a computer system. It could be downloaded from the Internet or copied from a flash drive. Once the antivirus on the target system sees the new .zip file, it will attempt to scan the file for threats. The problem is, scanning a Zip Bomb will never come to an end. Sounds magical? The trick is rather simple. You need only one line of instruction in your Zip Bomb to make it problematic: "This .zip file contains two exact copies of itself."

A virus scan can't be performed unless the .zip file is fully unzipped, so the first step of scanning a .zip file is always unzipping it. ("Fully" means to unzip every contained .zip file.) As our victim antivirus tries to do that, its RAM consumption is doubled every millisecond. The CPU of the target system devotes its full power to unzipping the file, incapable of processing any other task. In merely a couple of seconds, the system's RAM will be thoroughly drained by the Zip Bomb.

A Data Bomb doesn't need to execute itself. Once the antivirus perceives the Data Bomb, it's doomed.

Let's take the concept of "perception = destruction" to the next level.

The Second Kind of Data Bomb

This is a story about an interstellar battle that happened long before the Earth is born.

"Our starships outnumber theirs," the General broadcasts, "We will win this battle. Commence attack!"

Strategy Advisor broadcasts: "Attention, all ships: connect to the central AI Commander."

AI Commander broadcasts: "All starships are online. We are ready to march."

The AI Commander is a highly conscious Artificial Intelligence trained to specialize in tactic commanding. It is able to assess situation, calculate strategies, and give commands to the ships at a nanosecond-level interval.

"Incoming ultra-long-range missiles!" broadcasts a scout ship.

Receiving a command from the AI Commander, all interceptor ships switch to the missile interception mode in one nanosecond.

This is unexpected, the General thinks to himself. Why would the enemy expose their missile information when the two fleets haven't even met? The General feels some kind of uneasiness climbing onto her back as the missiles get closer and closer to the interception radius.

Seconds later, AI Commander notices another unsettling fact: the missiles are slowing down. According to its simulation, the missiles will stop right outside the interception radius.

The General asks: "When will we have a visual?"

"Now." AI Commander broadcasts the image it just collected.

They are cubes.

The missiles are cubes. Silver Cubes.

"Internal propeller," the General murmurs, "is that all you've got?"

Just as predicted, the cubes stop their movement right near the interception range.

"They are changing formation." broadcasts AI Commander, "I don't know what the potato they are up to."

The cubes start to slowly change their relevant position. A strange formation is gradually formed.

"What a strange formation!" the General says, "Has any similar formation been recorded before? "

"No." AI Commander responds.

"Can you work out its meaning?"

"No, I can't."

"What is the strategic advantage of this formation?"

"There is no strategic advantage. According to my calculations, the enemy missiles' formation is lame."

"What's the point of it then?"

"There is no point. I'd rather believe the enemy AI has developed a fault," broadcasts AI Commander.

The General responds: "Stop making jokes and focus on the battle, AI."

"No offense, but I don't need to 'focus'. A battle of this scale, my CPU power is sufficient to handle 33. Simultaneously."

Hearing what AI Commander just broadcast, Strategy Advisor freezes.

A terrible idea flashes across her mind.

"Oh no..." She broadcasts with fear, "This can't be..."

The General asks: "What?"

AI Commander: "Advisor, please explain."

Strategy Advisor responds: "It is just a supposition, but what if..."

The General becomes impatient: "Speak!"

All of a sudden, the strange formation of missiles starts accelerating towards the fleet. They travel in the weirdest curves one could possibly imagine. The strangeness is beyond description.

"I'm afraid we have already lost." Broadcasts Strategy Advisor in despair.

The General is confused: "What are you talking about?"

Silence.

"They are just missiles, aren't they?"

Silence.

It suddenly occurs to her that AI Commander hasn't broadcast anything for a while. "Why haven't we initiated interception?" she asks AI Commander.

"..." AI Commander gives no response.

"AI? Respond!"

"..."

"AI, report your status!"

"..."

Strategy Advisor broadcasts: "General, it's no use. AI has crashed."

"Crashed? What's that supposed to mean?"

"It's a concept from the last century - prior to the Intelligence Revolution. When a program runs out of its memory or encounters a fatal error, we say it crashes."

The General is apparently unfamiliar with the history of technology.

"Data Bomb, General." Strategic Advisor looks to the incoming missiles through the diamond shields, "I should have known. The enemy used a Data Bomb."

Without the central AI, the fleet can only evade the missiles

manually - which, in the high-pace space battle, is far from competent against the enemy AI.

The entire fleet is destroyed in a couple of seconds.

...

An AI is a black-box model, not even the programmers know what goes on in it. Almost certainly, somewhere in the complex network, there're loopholes. If some exterior stimulation manages to exploit a loophole and trigger the AI into a dead loop, the AI is incapacitated. Both CPU and RAM will be drained. Such is what a Data Bomb does to an AI.

The tracks of those cubic missiles are carefully designed to trigger AI Commander into a dead loop. The enemy doesn't need to upload a virus to the AI's servers, and the deed is done.

A Data Bomb doesn't need to execute itself. Once a consciousness perceives the Data Bomb, it's doomed.

Snapchat Assassin

Chat 1: a hater and the Snapchat Assassin

| I heard about you through my colleague

| Well?

| Explain your service

| We offer to assassinate whoever you specify, as long as you have added them on Snapchat.

| How do we proceed

| Simple. Give me your Snapchat ID and password, and transfer half of the payment, and we will do our job.

| My Snapchat account? Are you fucking kidding me? I kinda wanna remain anonymous when I murder someone

| Your anonymity is guaranteed. All messages we send via your account will be deleted. That's what's so good about Snapchat. We promise we won't do anything else with your account.

| But how do you assassinate people with Snapchat accounts anyway?

| That is none of your business. All you need to know is: your target will be dead and no evidence will be left. 30k bucks per kill. Take your time to decide.

[five minutes passed]

| ID: retro0

| PW: jttqzh_8

| Your Snapchat credential has been verified. We will assassinate the target once we receive half the payment.

| How do I pay

| Bitcoin. Transfer 15k To this account: --------omitted in this novel----------

| OK. There you go

[thirty minutes passed]

Your payment is verified. Now specify who to kill.

Mike

No problem. You will be logged off from your Snapchat account one minute later. Please do not log in for the next 24 hours.

Chat 2: 2 officers at the Investigation Agency

The cause of death is never seen before.

Nasty. Looks like "fry your brains" is not a metaphor after all.

Can we trace the payment?

Tracing Bitcoin? I welcome you to try.

Well... There has to be some kind of evidence left. Can we access his chat history?

Chat history? Why?

I have a feeling this has something to do with the victim's cell phone. Just look at his death stance.

Mike only uses Snapchat. But Snapchat deletes its chat history right away.

The company must be keeping a back up of their users' chat history on their internal servers.

Good point. We shall pressure Snapchat until they give us the victim's chat history.

Chat 3: 2 managers at Snapchat

The Investigation Agency keeps giving me pressure! Why haven't you retrieved the chat history?

I'm sorry, boss. I sent 2 people to do it on Wednesday but neither of them has replied.

It's the national holiday week. None of the IT guys are in office, so I granted their personal laptops the access to our server. But they just don't reply. Guess they're enjoying the holiday.

Then go fetch it yourself.

I'm not an IT guy! Plus, what do we say about micromanaging?

This is nothing micro. Don't be mistaken. You will be fired if you don't give me what's in Mike's chat history in five minutes.

Right away, boss.

[10 minutes passed]

Have you got it yet?

You there?

Fine. I'll fire you once I get the chat history myself.

Chat 4: the Snapchat Assassin and a victim

Hi Jack

Hi Zab

[an image, abducted from this novel]

Jack?

Are you there?

Please reply, Jack!

Nice.

Chat 5: 2 members of the Snapchat Assassin

Bro, I fucked up

I think I leaked the image out

Don't be kidding.

I got a screenshot notice while processing a target.

Alex! Do you have any idea how serious this is?

I'm sorry... If it goes public...

Then everyone will die.

Chat 6: 2 persons working for Giga News Agency

I have a theory.

"A theory"? Who do you think you are? A graduate?

I'm double-majoring in Journalism and Computer Science at NYUSH and if you don't wanna hear me out, I'll just talk directly to the editor.

I know what you're thinking. You are thinking "human mind Data Bomb". Dude, that thing only exists in sci-fi novels. If you think that's what happening, do whatever you want. Forgive me, but I'll do nothing more than the death toll report.

Fine. I shall do it on my own.

Honestly, what plan have you got anyway?

I'm gonna place an assassination order on myself.

...

Have fun

THE END

Daniel Chin
6/20/2019