

***Caught you  
-  
reveal and exploit IPC logic  
bugs inside Apple***

*Zhipeng Huo, Yuebin Sun, Chuanda Ding  
of  
Tencent Security Xuanwu Lab*

# Who are We?

- Zhipeng Huo (@R3dF09)
  - Senior security researcher
  - Member of EcoSec Team at Tencent Security Xuanwu Lab
  - macOS, iOS and Windows platform security
  - Speaker of Black Hat Europe 2018, DEF CON 28



腾讯安全玄武实验室  
TENCENT SECURITY XUANWU LAB

# Who are We?

- Yuebin Sun (@yuebinsun2020)
  - Senior security researcher
  - Member of EcoSec Team at Tencent Security Xuanwu Lab
  - macOS, iOS platform security



腾讯安全玄武实验室  
TENCENT SECURITY XUANWU LAB

# Who are We?

- Chuanda Ding (@FlowerCode\_)
  - Senior security researcher
  - Leads EcoSec Team at Tencent Security Xuanwu Lab
  - Windows platform security
  - Speaker of Black Hat Europe 2018, DEF CON China 2018, DEF CON 28



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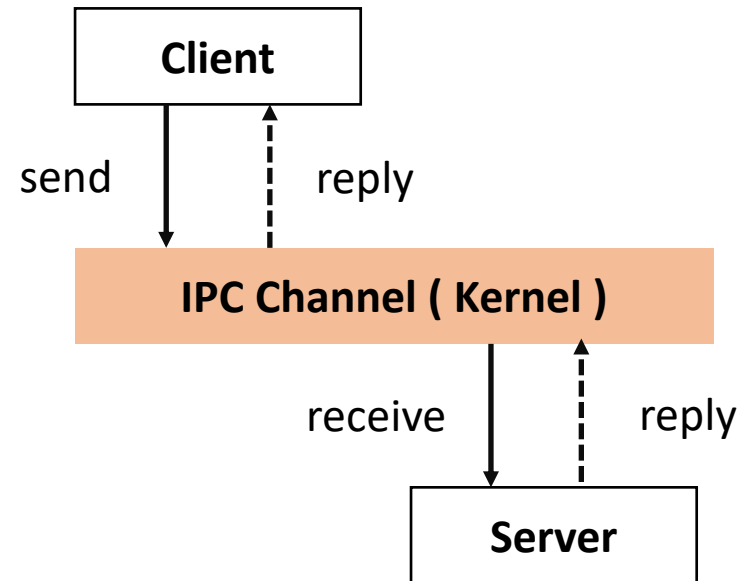
# Agenda

- Introduction
- IPC on Apple Platforms
- IPC Logic Vulnerabilities
  - Preferences
  - App Store
- Conclusion

# Introduction

# Inter-Process Communication

- Inter-Process Communication (IPC) is the set of techniques provided by the operating system to allow processes to communicate with each other
- Roles - Client/Server
  - Client requests Server
  - Server responds to Client if needed
- IPC Channel

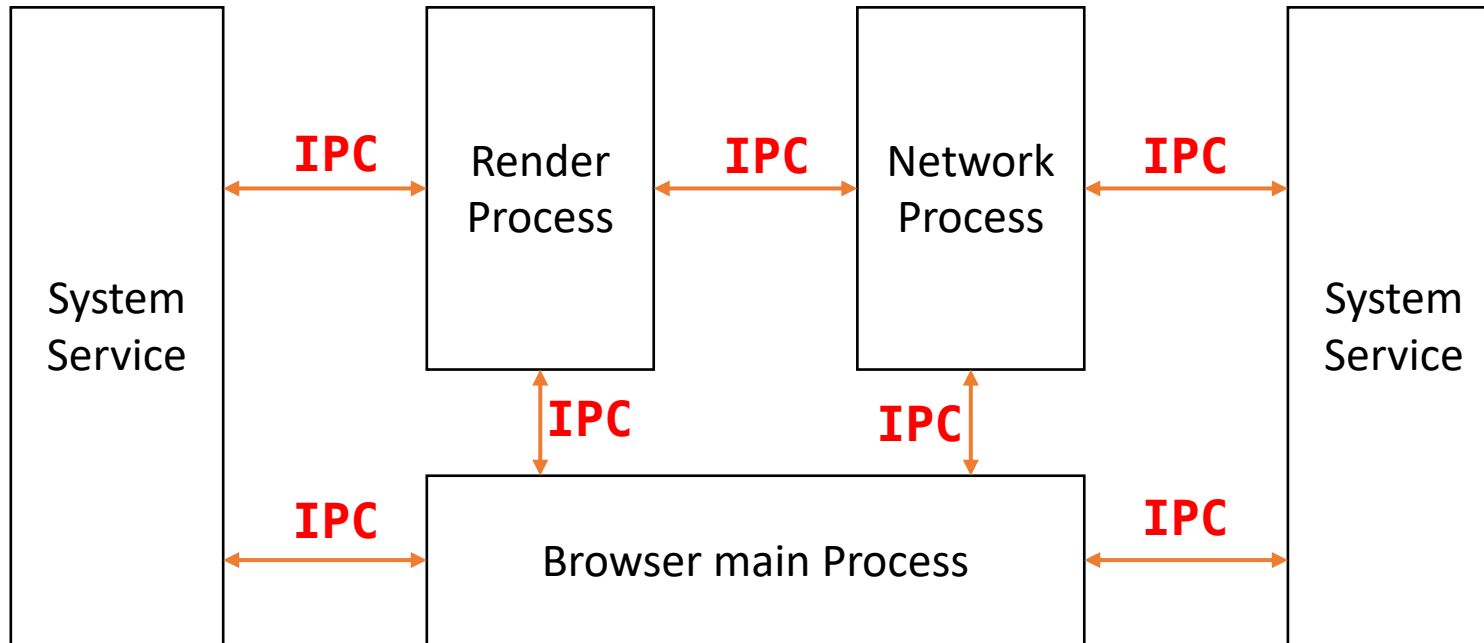


# Why Needs IPC ?

- Modularity
  - Divide complex system to separated modules
  - Don't Repeat Yourself
- Stability
  - Module crash would not crash entire system
- Privilege separation
  - Isolate sensitive operations into separated processes
  - Principle of Least Privilege
  - Module attacked would not compromise entire system

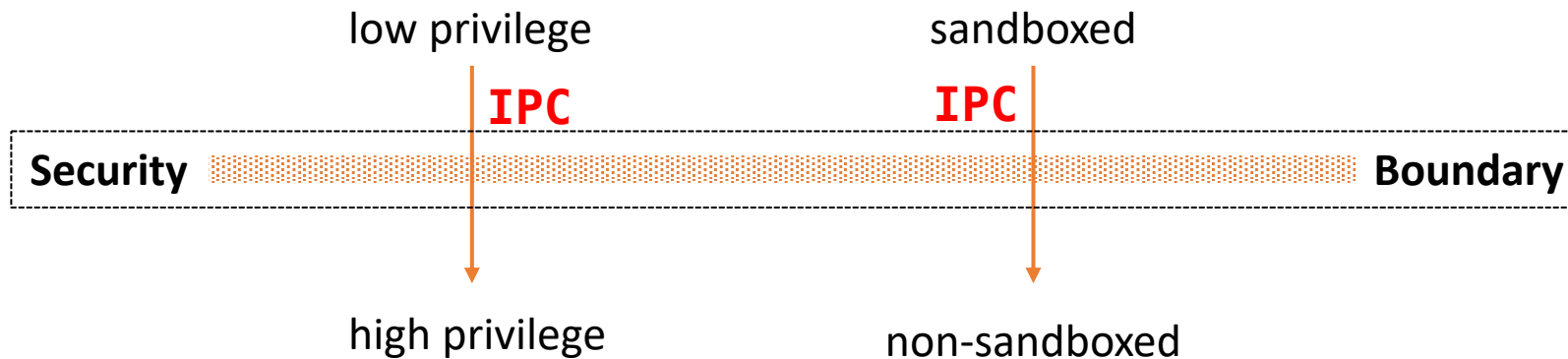


# An IPC Example: Browser Architecture



# IPC Breaks Security Boundary

- Different process, different privilege
- IPC is the “Window” between different privilege
  - IPC vulnerability is “Key” to the high privilege



# Logic Vulnerability

- Not memory corruption vulnerabilities
  - Boring for us
- Kinds of logic flaws
  - Design flaw
  - Implementation flaw
- Combine “features” to compromise system

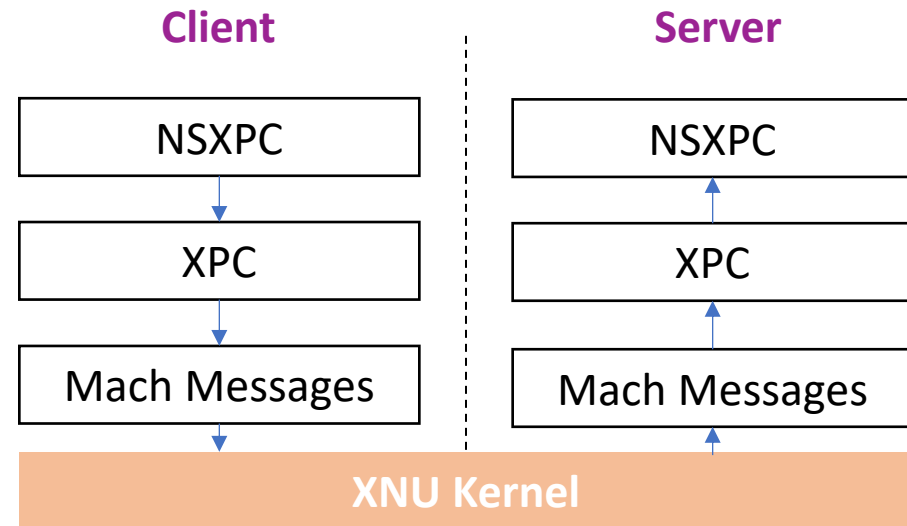
# New Challenge - Apple M1

- New Chip, New Security Features
  - System Integrity
  - Data Protection
  - **Pointer Authentication Code (PAC)**
- Hardware-level security mechanism against memory bug
  - Memory game became harder!
- So, spring of logic vulnerability is coming ?

# IPC on Apple Platforms

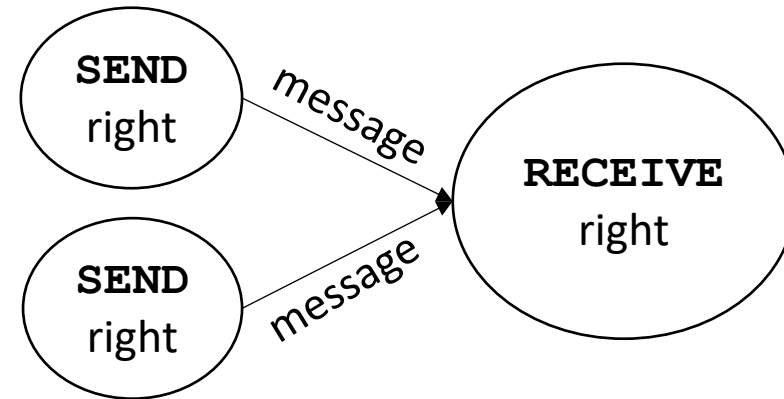
# Apple IPC Methods

- Shared File
- Shared Memory
- Sockets
- Apple Events
- Distributed Notifications
- Pasteboard
- **Mach messages**
- **XPC**
- **NSXPC**
- ...



# Mach Port

- An endpoint of a unidirectional **communication channel**
  - Messages can be sent to or received from
- Port Rights
  - **RECEIVE** right – Receive message
  - **SEND** right – Send message



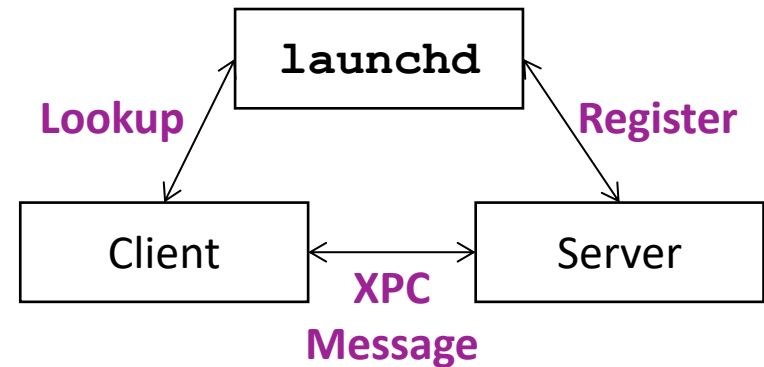
# Mach Messages

- Message send and receive through system call
  - `mach_msg`
  - `mach_msg_overwrite`
- Message structure
  - Header
  - Complex data (optional)
    - Port rights or OOL data
  - Message Buffer
- Pros and Cons
  - Low-level, fundamental, powerful
  - Ancient, poorly documented, hard to use directly



# XPC

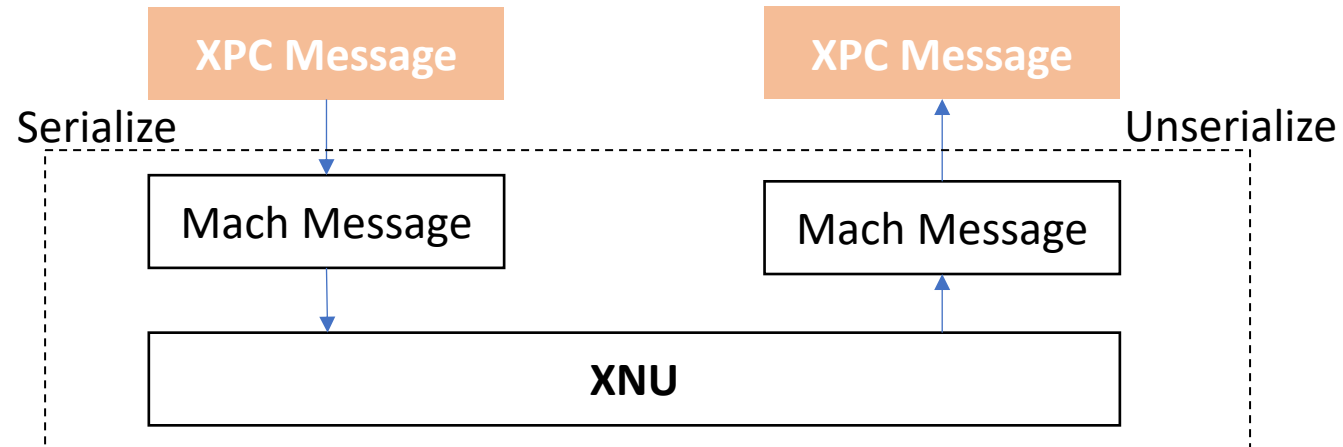
- Latest IPC mechanism on top of Mach messages
- Managed by **launchd**
  - Naming server
  - On-demand launch, monitor, terminate server
    - Transparent
- XPC Message
  - Dictionary object
  - Don't need to play with Mach message structure directly



# XPC Message

- `xpc_dictionary_set_*`
- `xpc_dictionary_get_*`
- ...

```
{  
    "CFPreferencesUser": "kCFPreferencesCurrentUser",  
    "CFPreferencesOperation": 1 ,  
    "CFPreferencesShouldWriteSynchronously": true ,  
    "CFPreferencesCurrentApplicationDomain": true ,  
    "CFPreferencesDomain": "/tmp/xlab.txt" ,  
}
```



# XPC API

- **xpc\_connection\_create\_mach\_service**
  - Creates a new connection object that represents a Mach service
  - A peer connection will be returned
  - if **XPC\_CONNECTION\_MACH\_SERVICE\_LISTENER** flag is set, a listener connection returned
- **xpc\_connection\_set\_event\_handler**
  - Sets the event handler block for the connection
- **xpc\_connection\_send\_message**
  - Sends a message over the connection to the destination service

# NSXPC

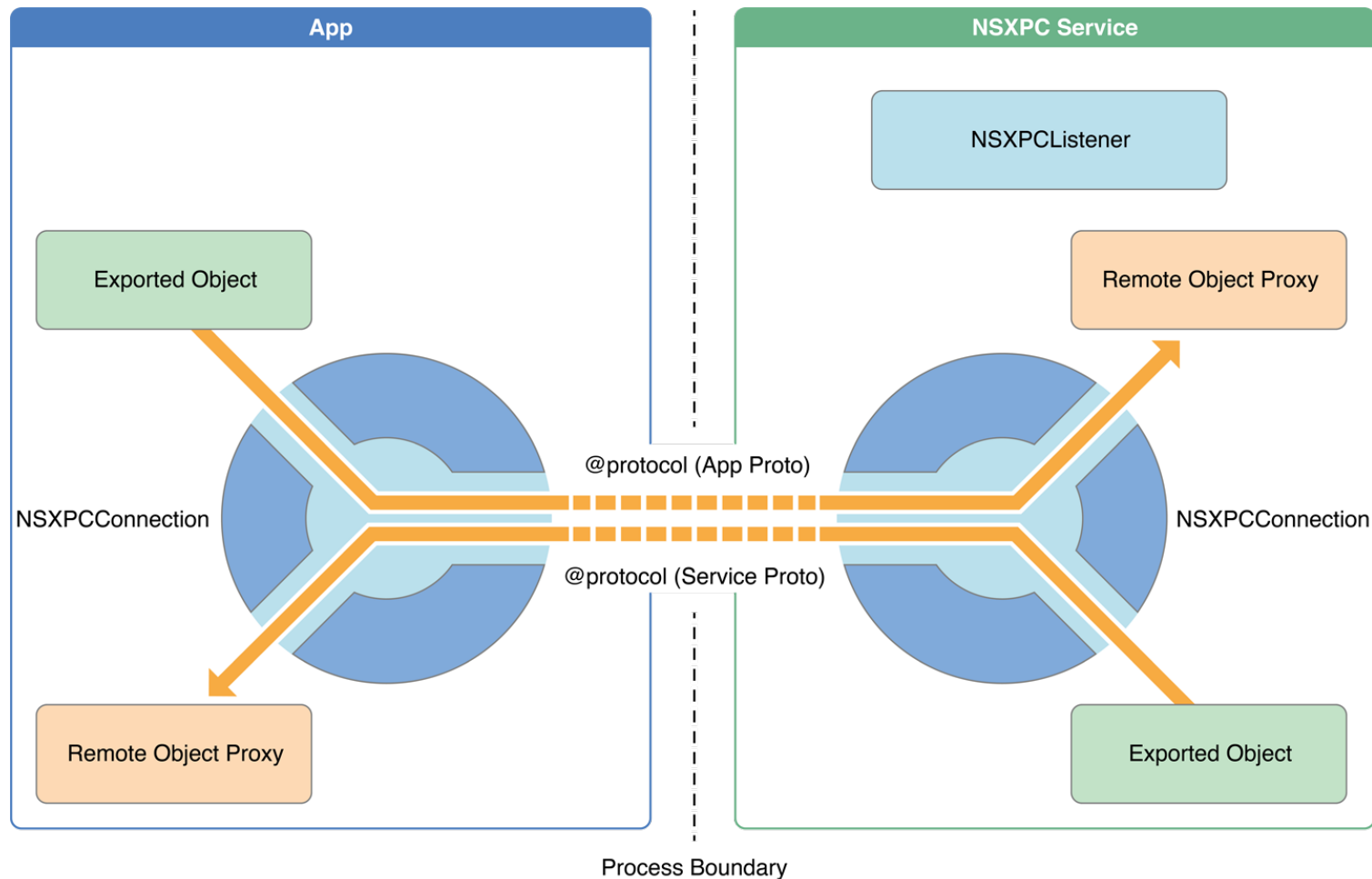
- Object-oriented IPC mechanism on top of XPC
- High-level remote procedure call interface that allows you to call methods on objects in one process from another process
- **NSXPCConnection** API
  - **NSXPCListener**
  - **NSXPCListenerDelegate**
  - **NSXPCConnection**

# NSXPC Interfaces

- Use Objective-C protocols to define programmatic interface between the calling application and service
- Supported types of interface parameters
  - Arithmetic types, BOOL
  - C Strings, Structures, arrays
  - **Custom Objective-C objects that implement the NSCoder protocol**

```
@protocol ISDownloadService <NSObject>
- (void)setStoreClient:(ISStoreClient*)storeClient;
- (void)performDownload:(SSDownload*)download
    withOptions:(NSUInteger)options
    replyBlock:(void (^)(NSUInteger, NSError*))reply;
@end
```

# NSXPC Architecture



# IPC Logic Vulnerabilities

## Preferences

Available for: iPhone 6s and later, iPad Pro (all models), iPad Air 2 and later, iPad 5th generation and later, iPad mini 4 and later, and iPod touch (7th generation)

Impact: A local user may be able to modify protected parts of the file system

Description: A parsing issue in the handling of directory paths was addressed with improved path validation.

CVE-2021-1815: Zhipeng Huo (@R3dF09) and Yuebin Sun (@yuebinsun2020) of Tencent Security Xuanwu Lab (xlab.tencent.com)

CVE-2021-1739: Zhipeng Huo (@R3dF09) and Yuebin Sun (@yuebinsun2020) of Tencent Security Xuanwu Lab (xlab.tencent.com)

CVE-2021-1740: Zhipeng Huo (@R3dF09) and Yuebin Sun (@yuebinsun2020) of Tencent Security Xuanwu Lab (xlab.tencent.com)



# What are Preferences?

- Preferences are user-defined settings
  - Persistent data stored in preferences file
  - Property list – “**plist**”
- Service `/usr/sbin/cfprefsd` manages preferences
  - Reads / writes preferences by user requests

# How does App Get/Set Preferences Values?

- Foundation API
  - **NSUserDefaults**

```
NSUserDefaults* defaults = [NSUserDefaults standardUserDefaults];  
[defaults setBool:YES forKey:@"CacheDataAggressively"];
```

- Core Foundation API
  - `CFPreferencesSetAppValue`
  - `CFPreferencesCopyAppValue`

[illegible]

# cfprefsd Handle Requests as a XPC Server

```
service = xpc_connection_create_mach_service(  
    "com.apple.cfprefsd.daemon",  
    0,  
    XPC_CONNECTION_MACH_SERVICE_LISTENER  
);
```

```
handler[0] = _NSConcreteStackBlock;  
handler[1] = 0xC2000000LL;  
handler[2] = &__39__CFPrefsDaemon_initWithRole_testMode__block_invoke_2;  
handler[3] = &__block_descriptor_40_e8_32o_e33_v16__0__NSObject_OS_xpc_object__81;  
handler[4] = v7;  
xpc_connection_set_event_handler(service, handler);
```

**com.apple.cfprefsd.daemon** run with root privilege without sandbox

# Directly Message cfprefsd

```
xpc_connection_t conn = xpc_connection_create_mach_service(  
    "com.apple.cfprefsd.daemon", NULL, 0  
);  
  
xpc_object_t msg = xpc_dictionary_create(NULL, NULL, 0);  
xpc_dictionary_set_string(msg, "CFPreferencesUser", "kCFPreferencesCurrentUser");  
xpc_dictionary_set_int64(msg, "CFPreferencesOperation", 1);  
xpc_dictionary_set_string(msg, "Key", "hello");  
xpc_dictionary_set_data(msg, "Value", "world", 5);  
xpc_dictionary_set_bool(msg, "CFPreferencesCurrentApplicationDomain", true);  
xpc_dictionary_set_string(msg, "CFPreferencesDomain", domain);  
int fd = open("/tmp/xlab.plist", O_RDWR);  
xpc_dictionary_set_fd(msg, "CFPreferencesAccessToken", fd);  
  
xpc_connection_send_message(conn, msg);
```

Where does `cfprefsd`  
Save Preferences Data?

# Preferences File Path Construction

- PreferencesDirectory
  - **kCFPreferencesAnyUser** `"/Library/Preferences"`
  - **kCFPreferencesCurrentUser** `~/Library/Preferences"`
- PreferencesDomain
  - XPC Message - `"CFPreferencesDomain"`
- `"CFPreferencesIsByHost": True`
  - **PreferencesDirectory** + (**PreferencesDomain** + `"."` + **HostIdentifier**) + `".plist"`
- `"CFPreferencesIsByHost": False (Default)`
  - **PreferencesDirectory** + **PreferencesDomain** + `".plist"`

# Implementation of Preferences File Path

- **CFStringCreateWithFormat**

```
CFStringRef filePath = CFStringCreateWithFormat(kCFAllocatorDefault, NULL,  
        CFSTR("%@.plist"), PreferencesDomain  
);
```

- **CFURLCreateWithFileSystemPathRelativeToBase**

- baseURL - PreferencesDirectory
- filePath

```
CFURLRef plist_url = CFURLCreateWithFileSystemPathRelativeToBase (  
    kCFAllocatorDefault,  
    filePath, // fully controllable  
    kCFURLPOSIXPathStyle, // pathStyle  
    true, // isDirectory  
    baseURL // PreferencesDirectory  
);
```

# Features of CFURLCreateWithFilePath- RelativeToBase

## filePath path traversal with "../"

```
/Library/Preferences    ../../tmp/xlab.plist
```

baseURL

```
filePath
```

```
/tmp/xlab.plist
```

## filePath is absolute path

```
/Library/Preferences /tmp/xlab.plist
```

baseURL

```
filePath
```

```
/tmp/xlab.plist
```

## Preferences file path is absolutely controllable



# What if Preferences File Path does not Exist?

```
[CFPDSource cacheActualPathCreatingIfNecessary:euid:egid:isWritable:](...)  
{  
    if ( open(plist_path, O_CREATE, v18) >= 0 ) { ← 1. open preferences file  
        return;  
    }  
    PathComponent = CFURLCreateCopyDeletingLastPathComponent(, v15);  
    _CFPrefsCreatePreferencesDirectory(PathComponent, a4, a5); ← 2. create preferences directory  
  
    v16 = open(plist_path, O_CREATE, 0x384); ← 3. open preferences file again  
}
```

# CFPrefsCreatePreferencesDirectory

```
int _CFPrefsCreatePreferencesDirectory(path, uid, gid) {
    int dirfd = open("/", O_DIRECTORY);
    for (slice in path.split("/")) {
        int fd = openat(dirfd, slice, O_DIRECTORY);
        if (fd == -1 && errno == ENOENT && !mkdirat(dirfd, slice, perm)) {
            fd = openat(dirfd, slice, O_DIRECTORY|O_NOFOLLOW);
            if ( fd == -1 ) return -1;
            fchown(fd, uid, gid);
        }
    }
}
```

# Ownership of Preferences Directory

- Default, ownership is the caller of request
  - `xpc_connection_get_euid`
  - `xpc_connection_get_egid`
- Other, ownership is controllable
  - `CFPreferencesUseCorrectOwner == True`
  - `CFPreferencesUser == 'root'`
  - `getpwnam`
    - `pw_uid`
    - `pw_gid`

CVE-2021-1815 Create arbitrary directories with controlled ownership

# Exploit of CVE-2021-1815

- Periodic scripts
  - The method mentioned by **Csaba Fitzl**
  - Create directory `/usr/local/etc/periodic/daily` with current user's privilege
  - Write a script file in `/usr/local/etc/periodic/daily` directory
  - Wait a day
  - The script would run as root

# Patch of CVE-2021-1815

~~cacheActualPathCreatingIfNecess  
ary:euid:egid:isWritable:~~

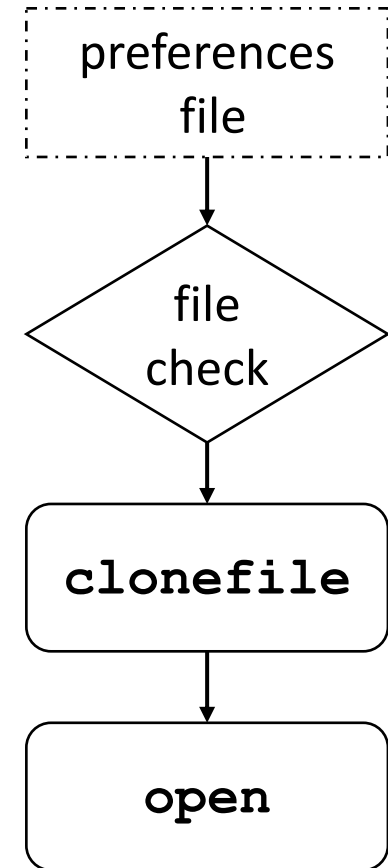


cacheFileInfoForWriting:euid:eg  
id:didCreate:




How does `cfprefsd` Read  
Preferences Data?

# Preferences Read Logic

- How does **cfprefsd** returns preferences file data ?
  - Put the preferences data in the reply directly
- What if the preferences file is too large ?
  - Open the file and return file descriptor
  - What if the preferences file changes ?
    - Clone file and open
    - Return the file descriptor



# Implementation of Preferences File Read

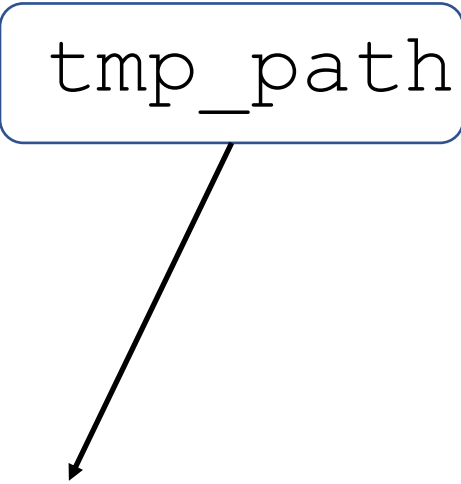
```
char __str[1032];
plist_path = [CFPDSource cacheActualPath];  1. get preferences file path
if (!lstat(plist_path, &stat_buf) && stat_buf.st_size >= 0x100000) {
    snprintf(__str, 0x400uLL, "%s.cfp.XXXXXXX", plist_path);  2. judge the file size
    tmp_plist_path = mktemp(__str);
    if (tmp_plist_path) {
        if (!clonefile(plist_path, tmp_plist_path, 0) ) {
            v4 = open(tmp_plist_path, 0);  3. clone preferences file
            ...
        }
    }
}
```

[CFPDSource cloneAndOpenPropertyListWithoutDrainingPendingChangesOrValidatingPlist]



# Implementation of File Clone

```
clonefile(plist_path, tmp_path)
```



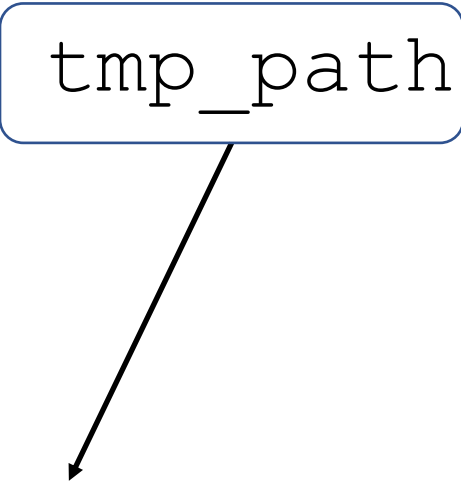
The diagram shows a blue rounded rectangle containing the text `tmp_path`. A black arrow points from the bottom of this rectangle to the `XXXXXXXX` placeholder in the code snippet below.

```
snprintf(__str, 0x400uLL, "%s.cfp.XXXXXXXX", plist_path);  
dst_path = mktemp(__str);
```

**Random file name at same directory of preferences file**

# Implementation of File Clone

```
clonefile(plist_path, tmp_path)
```



The diagram shows a blue rounded rectangle containing the text 'tmp\_path' from the previous code block. A black arrow points from the bottom of this rectangle to the first argument of the 'mktemp' function in the code block below.

```
snprintf(__str, 0x400uLL, "%s.cfp.XXXXXXX", plist_path);  
dst_path = mktemp(__str);
```

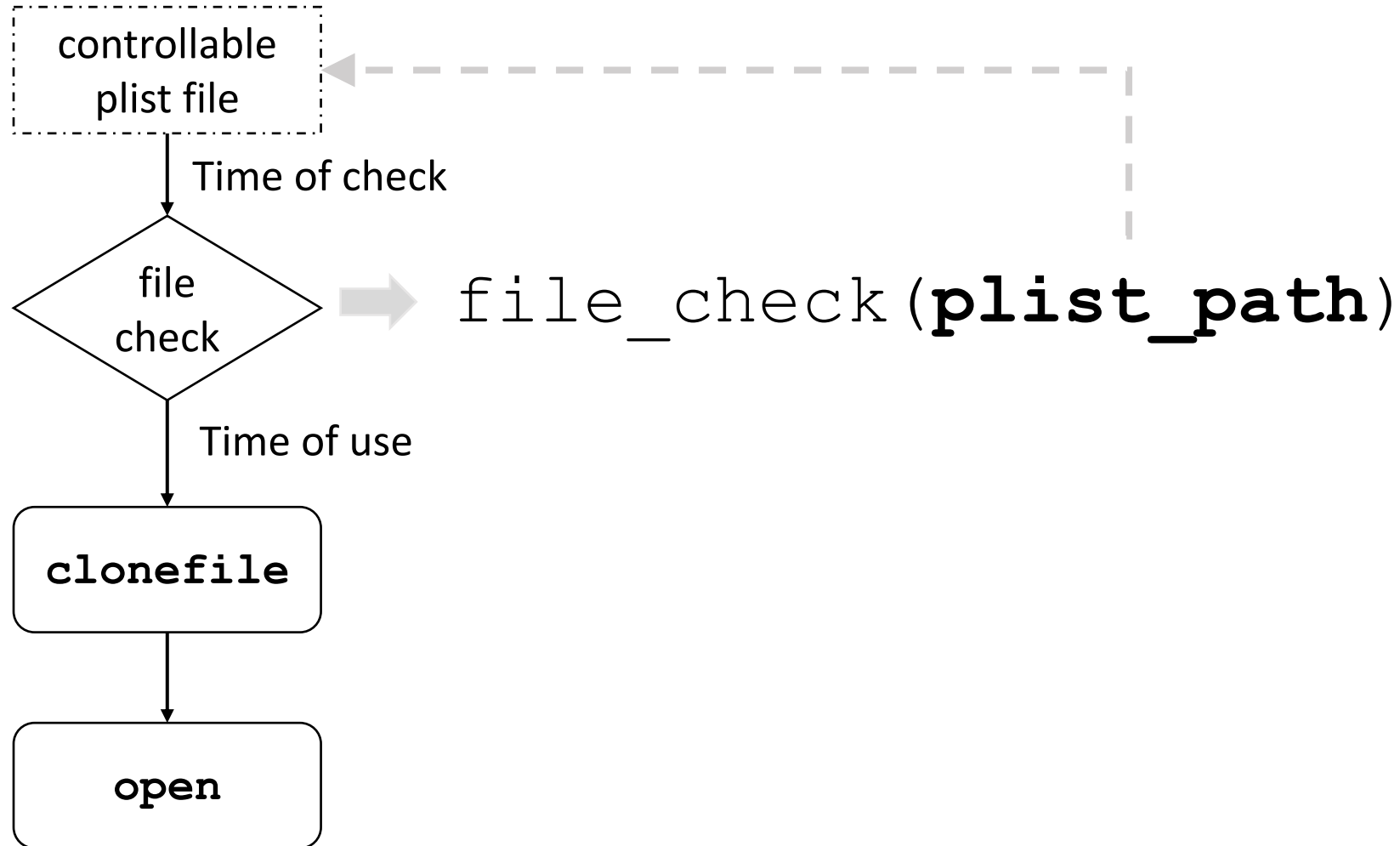
**Random file name?**

# Really Random File Name?

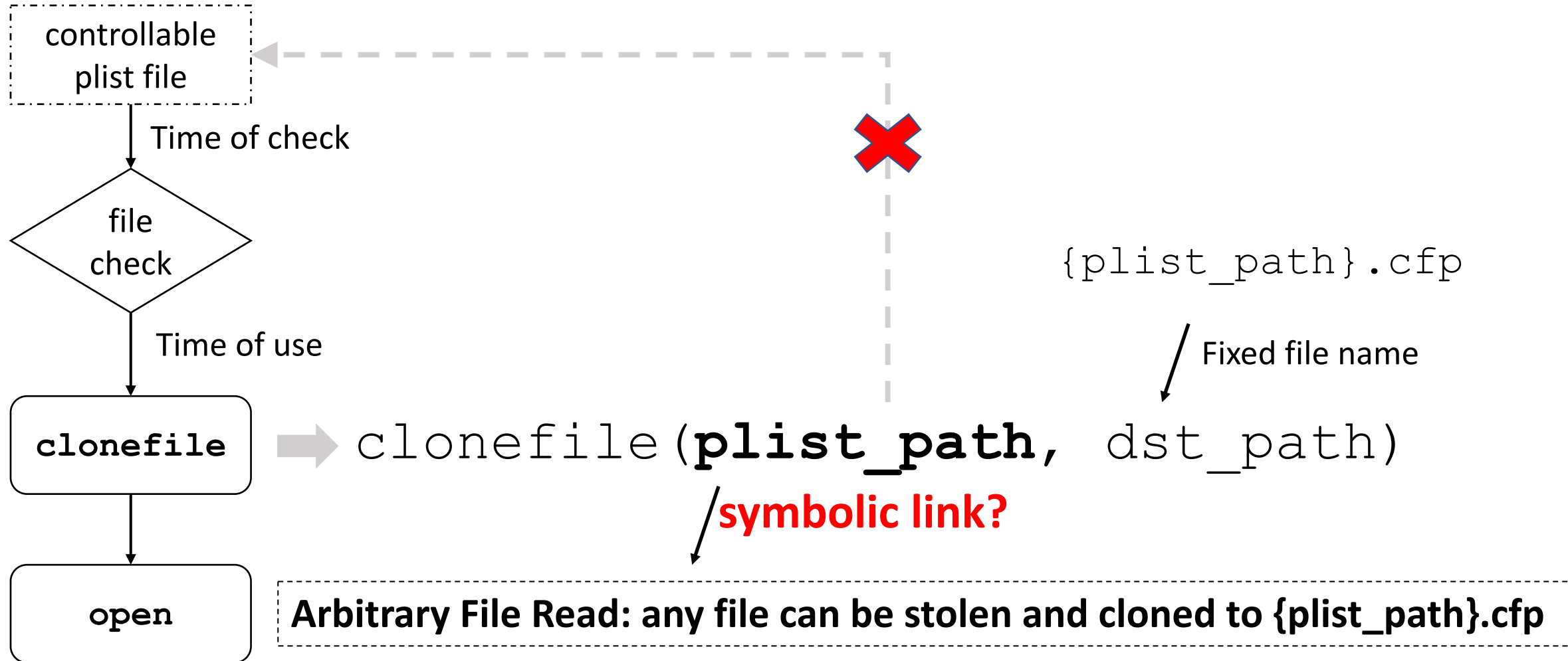
```
snprintf(__str, 0x400uLL, "%s.cfp.XXXXXXX", plist_path);  
dst_path = mktemp(__str);
```

- **snprintf**
  - Generate formatted string with its MAX length as 0x400
- **mktemp**
  - “The trailing `X’s are replaced with a unique alphanumeric combination”
- What if **strlen**(plist\_path) + **strlen**(".cfp") is equal to 0x400-1?
  - **snprintf** will overflow and generate "\_str" without "X"
  - **mktemp** will return a fixed filename without any randomness

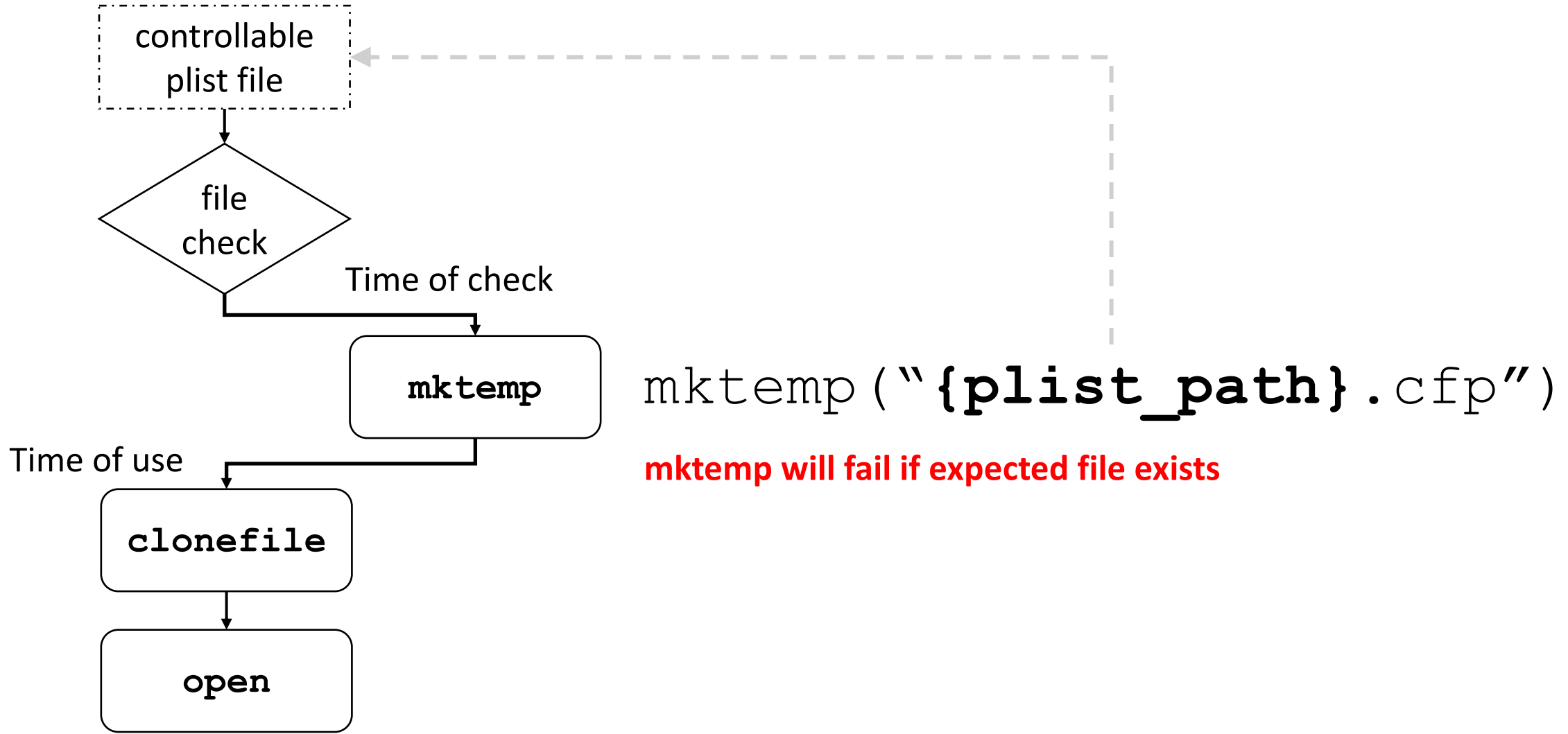
# Time of Check



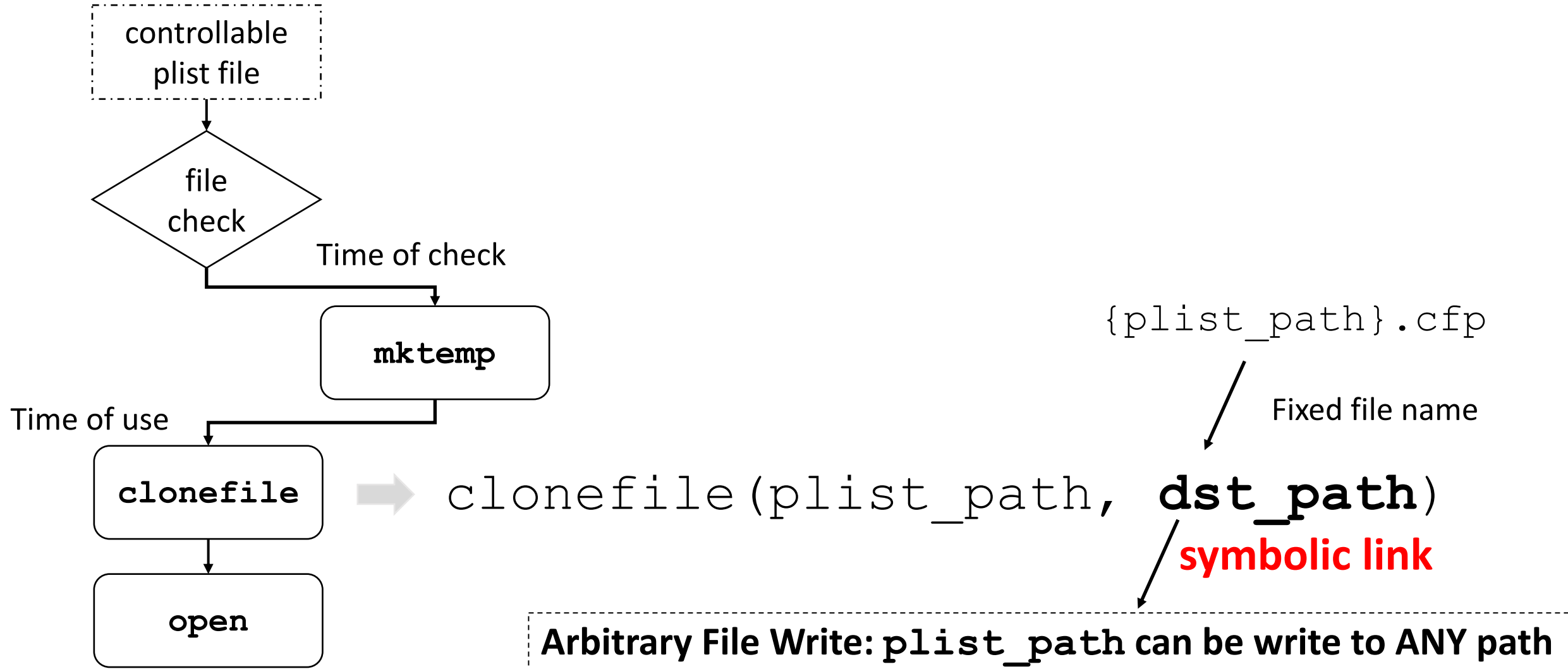
# Arbitrary File Read



# Make Temporary File Name



# Arbitrary File Write



# Patch of CVE-2021-1740

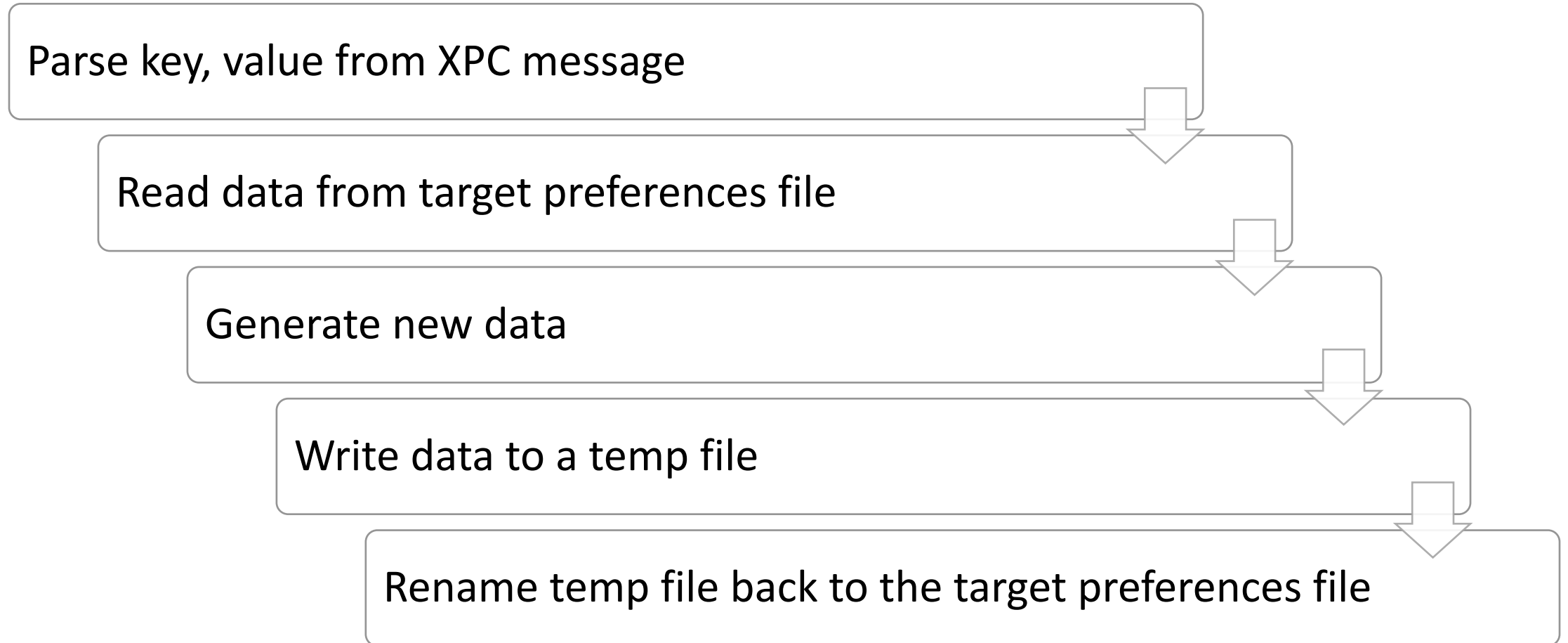
- Replace temp path with symbolic link? No more fixed file
  - Predicted/fixed temp path need to overflow **snprintf**
  - Random temp file will not be created unless **clonefileat** is called successfully, so we have no time window to replace it

```
int ret = snprintf(__str, 0x400uLL, "%s.cfp.XXXXXXXX", plist_path);
if (ret >= 0x400) {
    goto FAIL;
}
char *temp_path = mktemp(__str);
if (!clonefileat(dirfd, plist_file, AT_FDCWD, temp_path)) {
    int fd = open(temp_path, 0);
    // ...
    return fd;
}
```



How does `cfprefsd` Write  
Preferences Data?

# Preferences Write Logic



# Client have Write Permission to Preferences File?

The client needs to pass the file descriptor to **cfprefsd** to prove that it has write permission to preferences file

```
bool -[CFPDSource validateAccessToken:accessType:] {
    char fd_path[1024];
    xpc_fd = xpc_dictionary_dup_fd(xpc_msg, "CFPreferencesAccessToken");
    if (fcntl(xpc_fd, F_GETPATH, fd_path) != -1) {
        // check if path is consistent, plist_path is controllable by client
        if (!strcmp(fd_path, plist_path) &&
            // check if the file is writable by client
            ((fcntl(xpc_fd, F_GETFL, OLL) & 3) == 2)) {
            return true; // check success
        }
    }
    return false; // check failed
}
```

# Implementation of Preferences File Write

```
int64 _CFPrefsWritePlistToFDThenClose() {  
    tmp_file_fd = _CFPrefsTemporaryFDToWriteTo(v3, v4);  
  
    fcntl(tmp_file_fd, F_GETPATH, tmp_file_path);  
    while (...) {  
        write(tmp_file_fd, plist_data, plist_size);  
    }  
    close(tmp_file_fd);  
    rename(tmp_file_path, plist_path);  
}
```

↙ 1. generate temp file

↙ 2. write preferences data to temp file

↙ 3. rename temp file to target plist file

# Source Path is Symbolic Link?

Created in temp directory

Fully controllable by client

```
rename(tmp_file_path, plist_path)
```

**Symbolic link?**

No, created in root-owned directory, client has no access to it

# Target Path is Symbolic Link?

Created in temp directory

Fully controllable by client

```
rename(tmp_file_path, plist_path)
```

**Symbolic link?**

**rename** will firstly delete the symbolic link if it exists already

“If the **final component** of target is a symbolic link, the symbolic link is renamed, not the file or directory to which it points.”

# Target Path is Symbolic Link?


Created in temp directory

Fully controllable by client



```
rename(tmp_file_path, plist_path)
```

**Symbolic link?**



**rename** will firstly delete the symbolic link if it exists already

“If the **final component** of target is a symbolic link, the symbolic link is renamed, not the file or directory to which it points.”

# What if **Middle Component** of `plist_path` is a Symbolic Link?

```
rename(tmp_file_path, plist_path)
```

`/tmp/test/hello.plist`

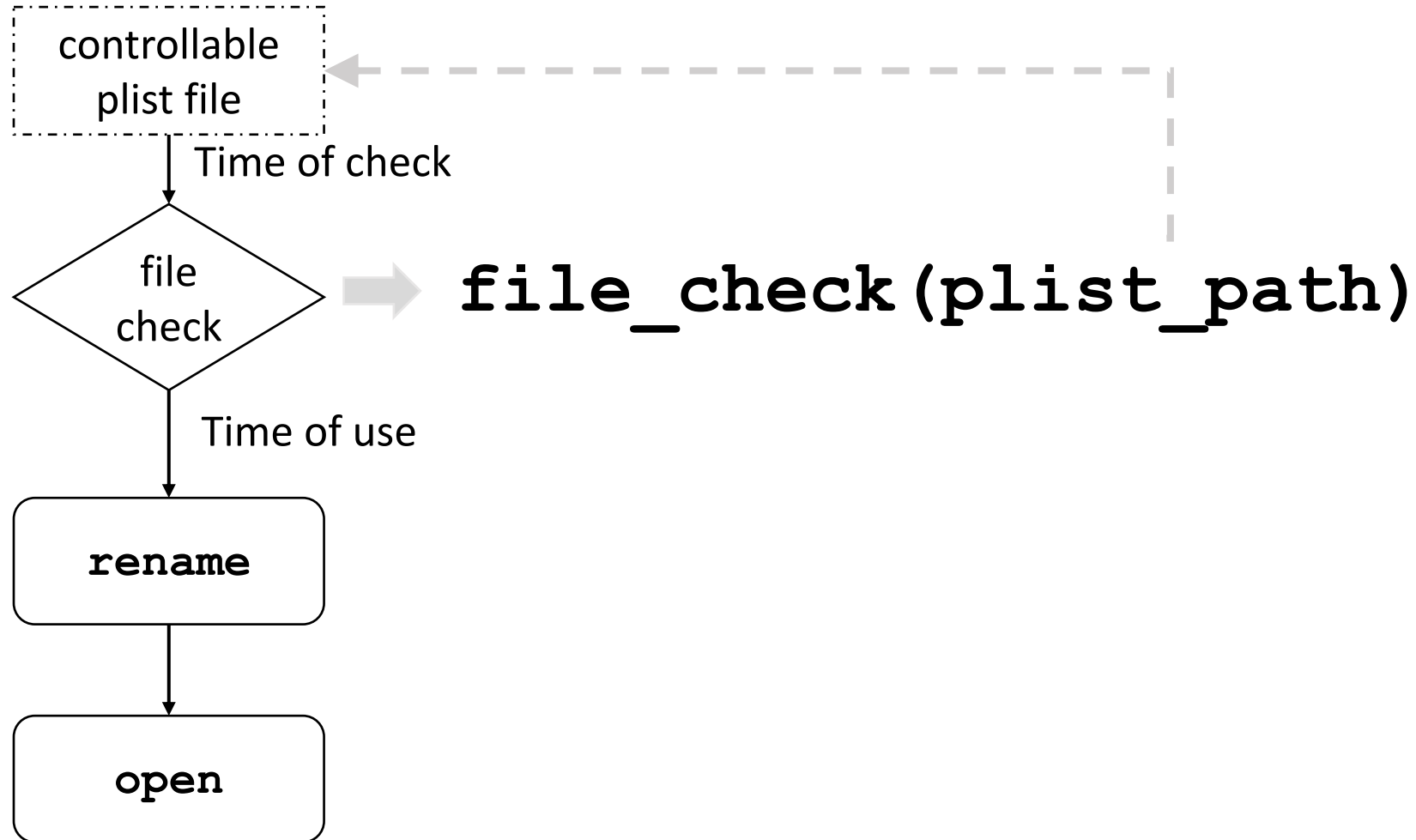
middle component

final component

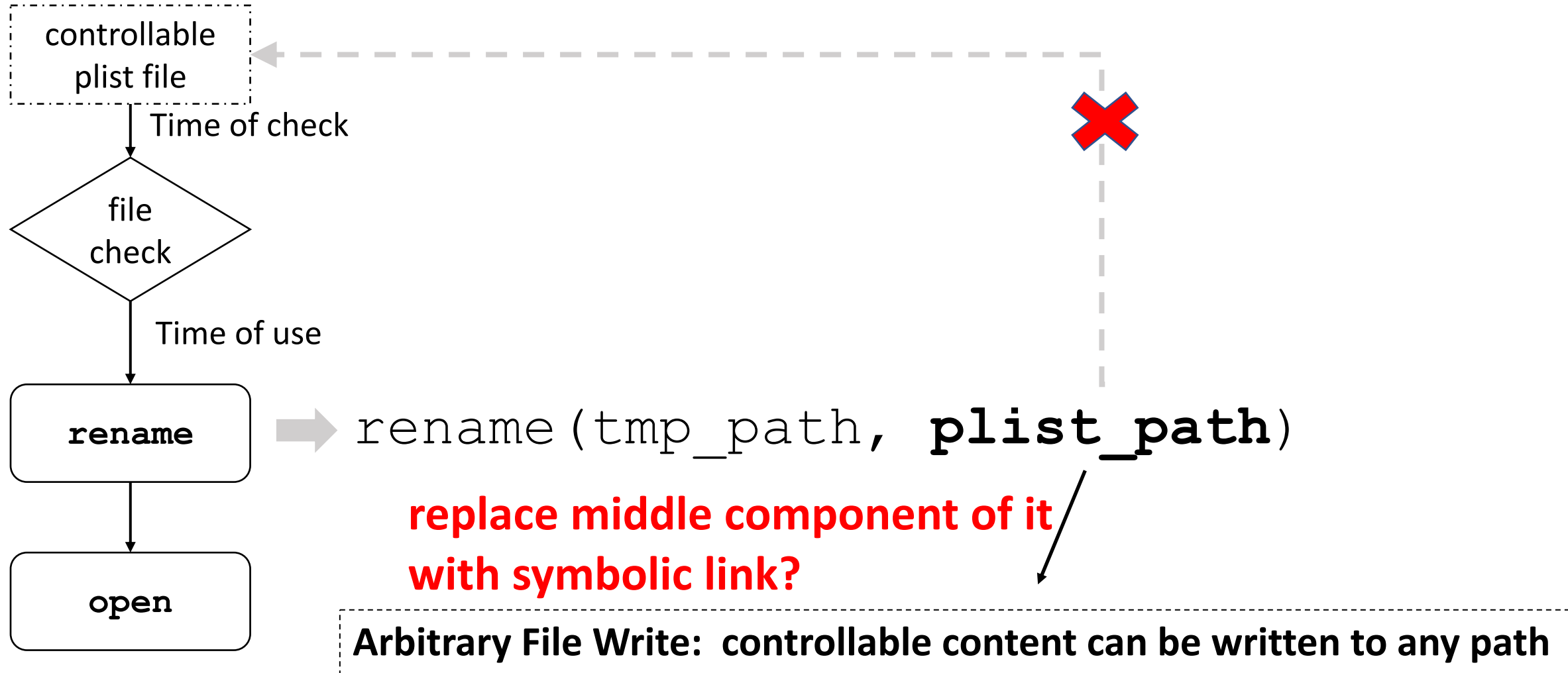
```
→ ln -s /Library/LaunchDaemons /tmp/test
→ ls -l /tmp/
lrwxr-xr-x  1 xuanwulab  wheel   22  6 29 18:07 test -> /Library/LaunchDaemons
```



# Time of Check



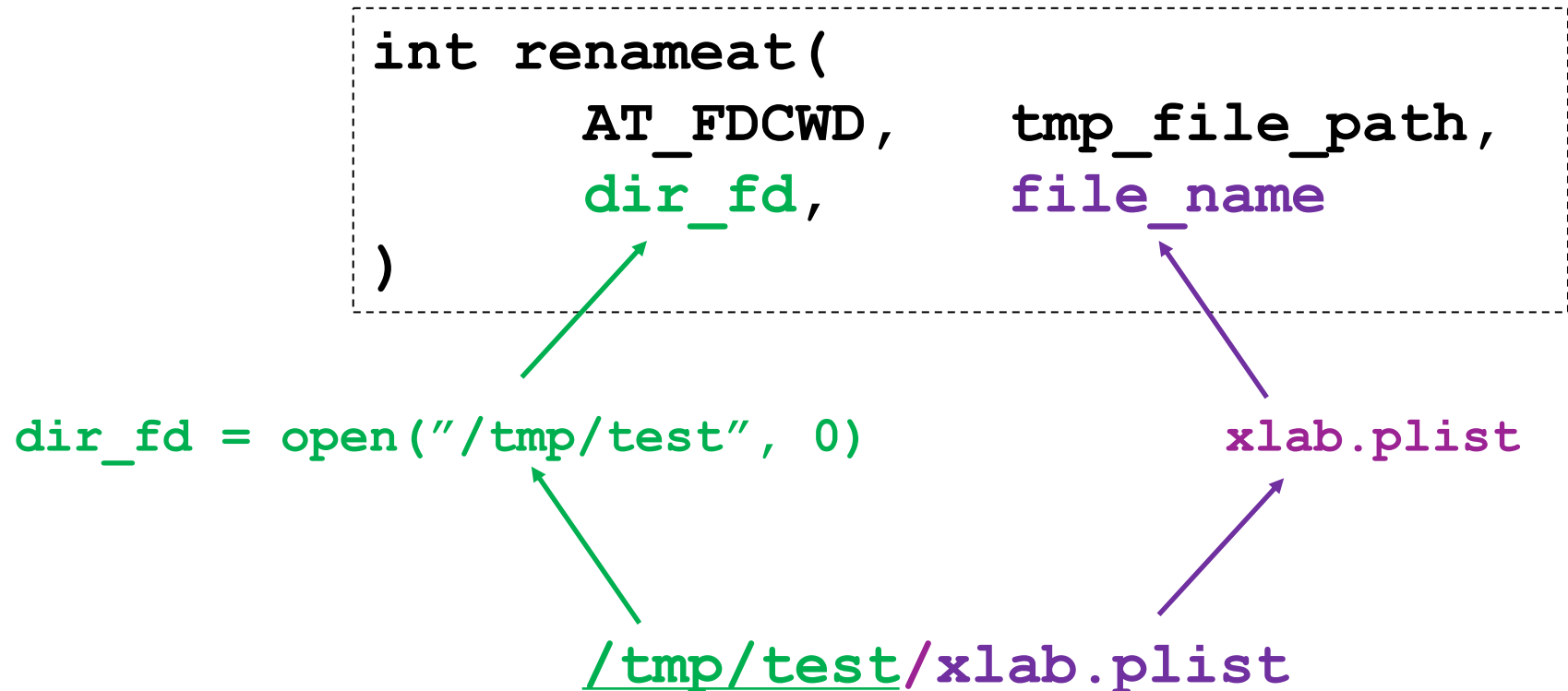
# Arbitrary File Rename



# Patch of CVE-2021-1739

- **rename -> renameat**

- The target file of **renameat** will be created based on `dir_fd`
- Symbolic link (**middle component** of the target path) will not be followed



# Demo of Preferences Vulnerabilities



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kh6sEcdGruU>

### **App Store**

Available for: macOS Mojave 10.14.6, macOS Catalina 10.15.7

Impact: An application may be able to gain elevated privileges

Description: This issue was addressed by removing the vulnerable code.

CVE-2020-27903: Zhipeng Huo (@R3dF09) of Tencent Security Xuanwu Lab

# NSXPC Server

```
[NSXPCListener initWithMachServiceName: @"com.apple.storedownloadd.daemon"];
```

- **com.apple.storedownloadd.daemon**
- /System/Library/PrivateFrameworks/CommerceKit.framework/Versions/A/Resources/storedownloadd
- Root privilege, but sandboxed
  - Sandbox Profile  
/System/Library/Sandbox/Profiles/com.apple.storedownloadd.sb
  - It is allowed to write many sensitive paths such as /Applications, /Library/Keychains/

# storedownload's Interfaces

```
@protocol ISDownloadService <NSObject>
- (void)setStoreClient:(ISStoreClient*)storeClient;
- (void)performDownload:(SSDownload*)download
    withOptions:(NSUInteger)options
  replyBlock:(void (^)(NSUInteger, NSError*))reply;
@end
```

What to download ? What is **SSDownload** ?

# SSDownload

```
@interface SSDownload : NSObject<NSSecureCoding>
@property(copy, nonatomic) NSArray *_assets;
@end

@implementation SSDownload
+ (BOOL)supportsSecureCoding{
return YES;
}

- (void)encodeWithCoder:(nonnull NSCoder *)coder {
[coder encodeObject:self._assets forKey:@"_assets"];
}

- (nullable instancetype)initWithCoder:(nonnull NSCoder *)coder {
return self;
}

@end
```

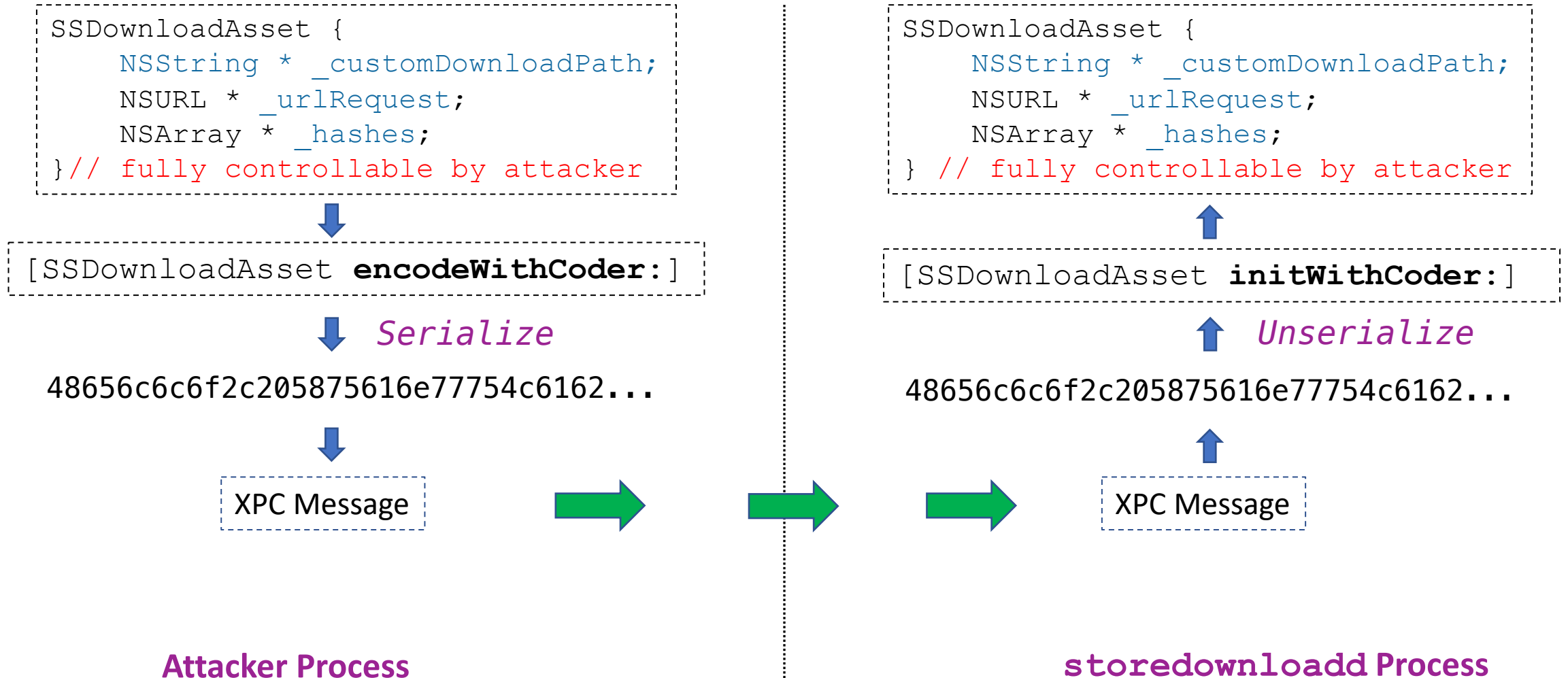


# SSDownloadAsset

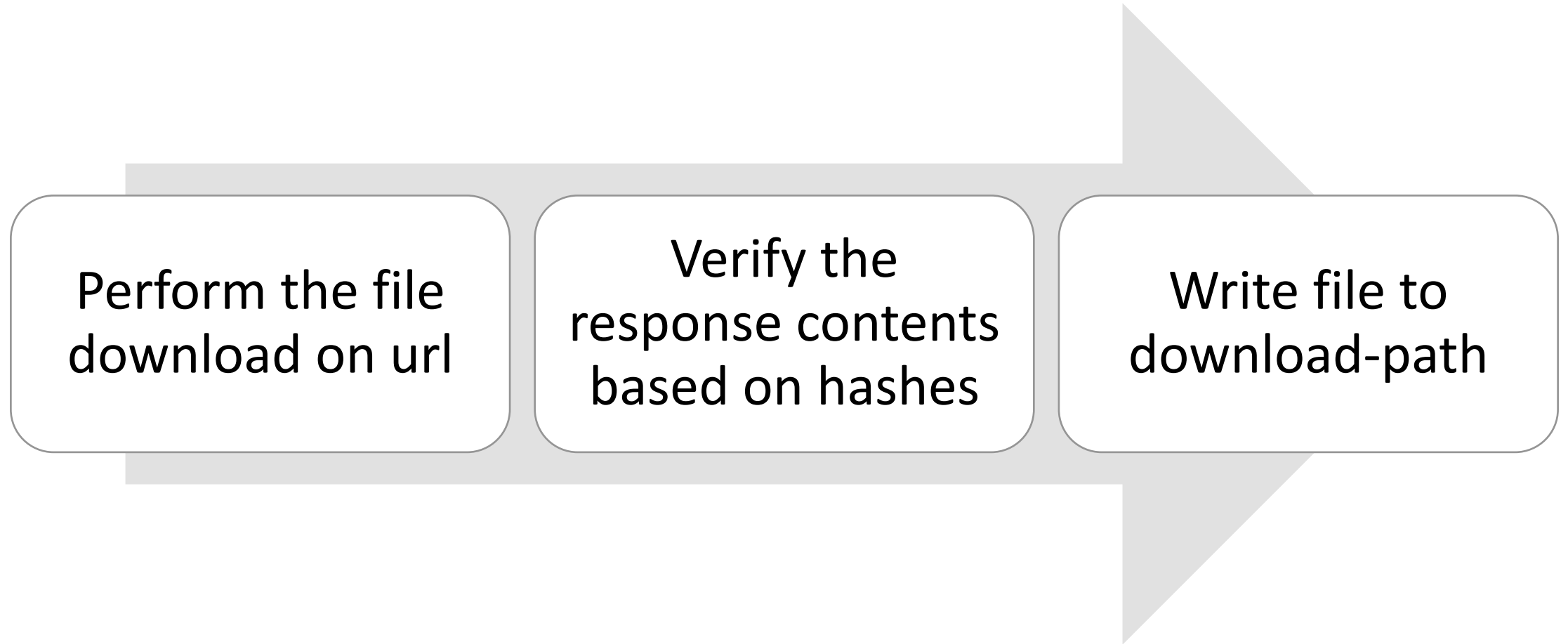
```
@interface SSDownloadAsset : NSObject<NSSecureCoding>
    @property NSString * _customDownloadPath;
    @property NSURL * _urlRequest;
    @property NSArray * _hashes;
@end

@implementation SSDownloadAsset
+ (BOOL)supportsSecureCoding{
    return YES;
}
- (void)encodeWithCoder:(nonnull NSCoder *)coder {
    [coder encodeObject:self._customDownloadPath forKey:@"download-path"];
    [coder encodeObject:self._urlRequest forKey:@"url"];
    [coder encodeObject:self._hashes forKey:@"hashes"];
}
- (nullable instancetype)initWithCoder:(nonnull NSCoder *)coder {
    return self;
}
@end
```

# Serialization and Unserialization



# Download Logic



# Hash Verification

```
- [HashedDownloadProvider  
  _verifyStreamedBytesWithHashes: ]
```

- Calculate hash of response contents
- Compare with input hash

**It's just a data integrity check !!!**

# Exploit of CVE-2020-27903

“Hi **storedownloadd**, please help me to download a file from this URL path, its hash is balabala ... and then write the contents to this download path, thanks!”

# Patch of CVE-2020-27903

- Removing the vulnerable code
- No ~~com.apple.storedownloadd.daemon~~-any more.
  - RIP

# Demo of CVE-2020-27903



A screenshot of a macOS terminal window. The title bar shows a folder icon, the text "Desktop", and a shell icon followed by "-bash" and the window size "111x25". The terminal content shows the prompt "r3df09s-Mac:Desktop r3df09\$" followed by the command "cat /Library/Keychains/test.keychain" and a cursor. A vertical scrollbar is visible on the right side of the terminal window.

```
r3df09s-Mac:Desktop r3df09$ cat /Library/Keychains/test.keychain
```

# Other Logic Vulnerabilities

- XPC Service implementation flaw
  - <https://xlab.tencent.com/en/2021/01/11/cve-2020-9971-abusing-xpc-service-to-elevate-privilege/>
- NSXPC Vulnerabilities in Adobe Acrobat Reader
  - <https://rekken.github.io/2020/05/14/Security-Flaws-in-Adobe-Acrobat-Reader-Allow-Malicious-Program-to-Gain-Root-on-macOS-Silently/>





# Advantage of IPC Logic Vulnerability

- Easy to exploit
- Stable
- One exploit to rule them all

“Logic bugs in core framework like preferences let us rule all Apple platforms, Intel and Apple Silicon alike, without changing one line of our exploit.”

# State of Apple IPC Security

- Reduce the IPC attack surfaces
  - More restricted sandbox rules
  - Delete unnecessary high privilege services
  - Adding more and more private entitlements
    - `com.apple.private.xxx`
  - ...
- Limit the damage
  - Sandbox IPC Server
  - Rootless
  - ...

# Conclusion

## Latest IPC Mechanisms on Apple Platforms

- XPC, NSXPC

## Interesting Apple IPC Logic Vulnerabilities

- Three logic vulnerabilities in Preferences
- One logic vulnerability in App Store

## Advantage of IPC Logic Vulnerability

## Status of Apple IPC Logic Vulnerability

“Logic bugs are always fun!”

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