Tips and Tricks with the proc filesystem

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INTRODUCTION

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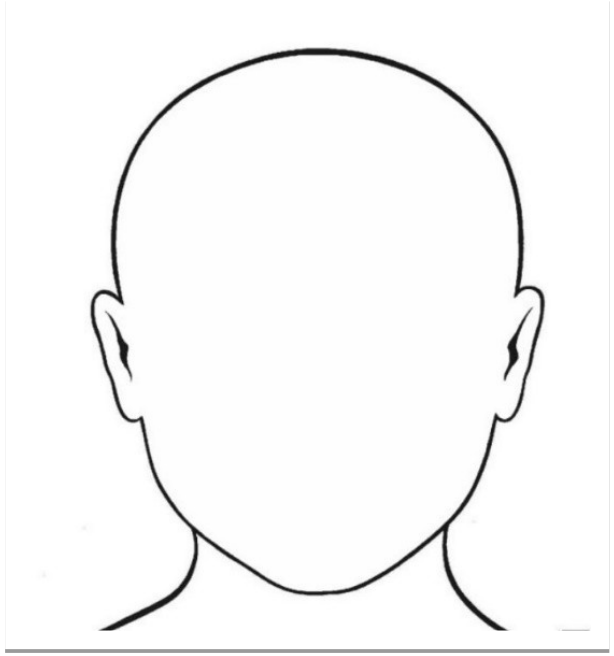


TRAINING ROADMAP: STRUCTURE & PREPARATION

- single 1-2 hour session
- Practical, please open a terminal to a GNU/Linux system
- Use the lower right area of the screen
- Example daemon, mini_httpd:

  https://github.com/jschwartzenberg/mini_httpd
- Example media files: https://media.xiph.org/

PRACTICAL PROBLEMS AND HOW PROCFS WILL HELP YOU

Your terminal here

Preparation

- **Get a copy of mini_httpd**

  Git clone URLs:

- **git@github.com:jschwartzenberg/mini_httpd.git**
- **https://github.com/jschwartzenberg/mini_httpd.git**

  Should build with a simple `make`

Introduction

- **Introduced with UNIX (8th edition), further enhanced in Plan 9, BSD 4.4**
- **Essential part of Solaris and Linux**
- **Continues on the principle**

  "everything is a file"
- **Information about the system and individual processes**

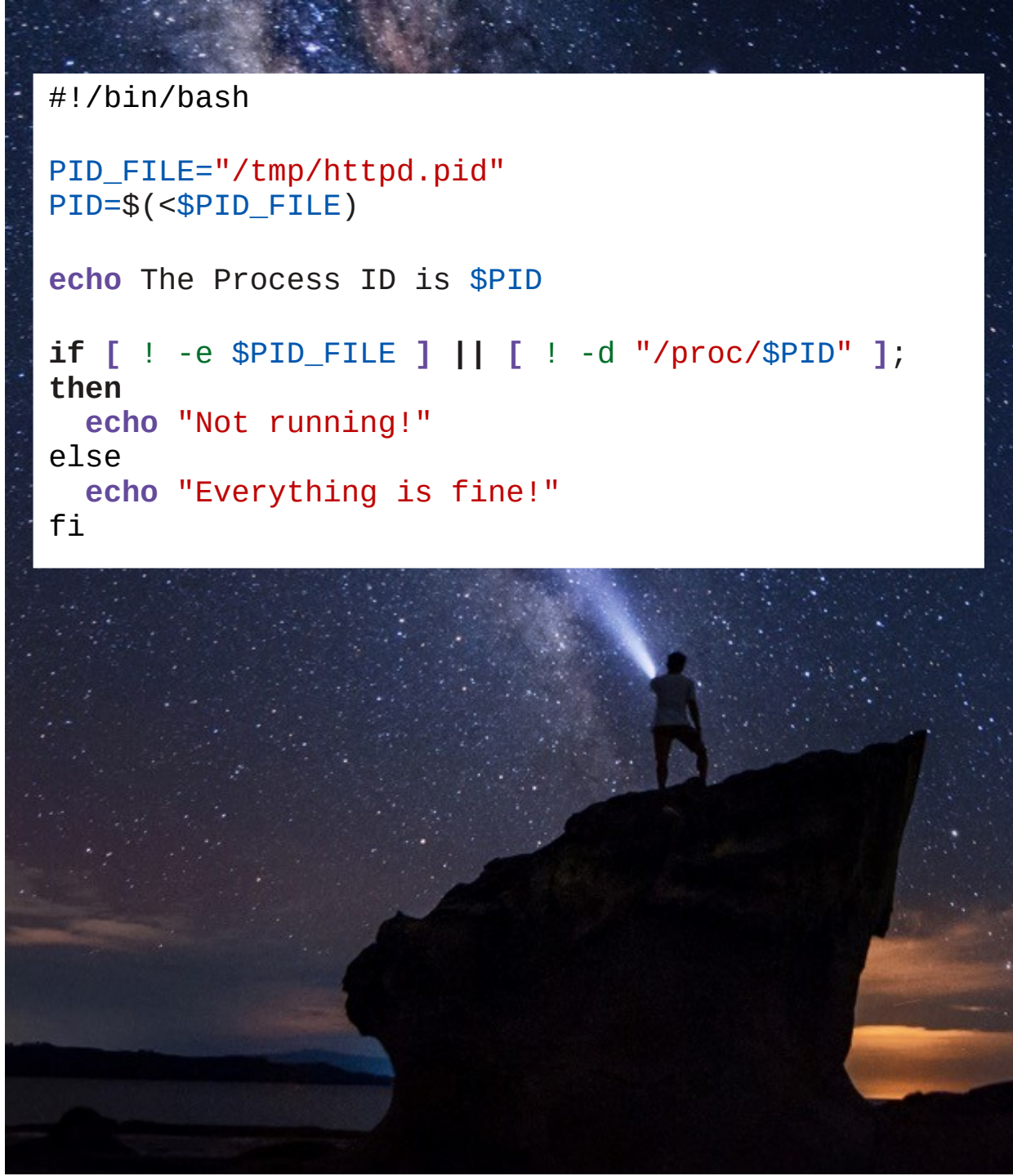
Problem 1: Is my process running? (1/2)

- **Daemon crashes sometimes**
- **Daemon should be started only once**

Problem 1: Is my process running? (2/2)

- **Every running process is represented below /proc**
- **Daemons should create a pid file on start-up**

```
#!/bin/bash

PID_FILE="/tmp/httpd.pid"
PID=$(<$PID_FILE)

echo The Process ID is $PID

if [ ! -e $PID_FILE ] || [ ! -d "/proc/$PID" ];
then
  echo "Not running!"
else
  echo "Everything is fine!"
fi
```

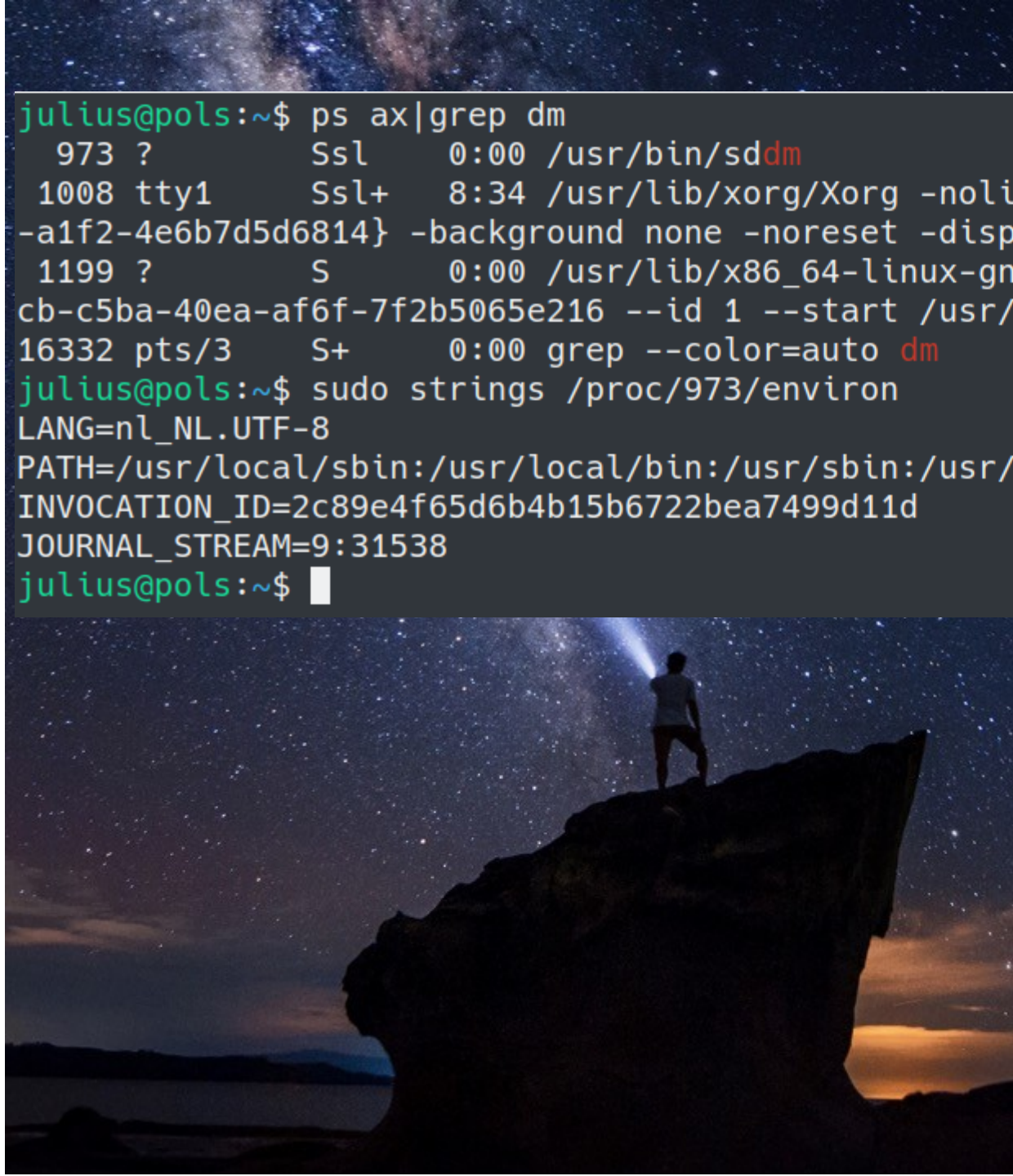


Problem 2: How was my process started? (1/2)

- **You are looking at an unknown system**
- **Analyse its processes**
- **Discover its configuration**

Problem 2: How was my process started? (2/2)

- **Every running process has its own environment**
- **It can be read through /proc**
- **Individual variables are terminated with a NUL**
- **The command line used to start a process is also available**

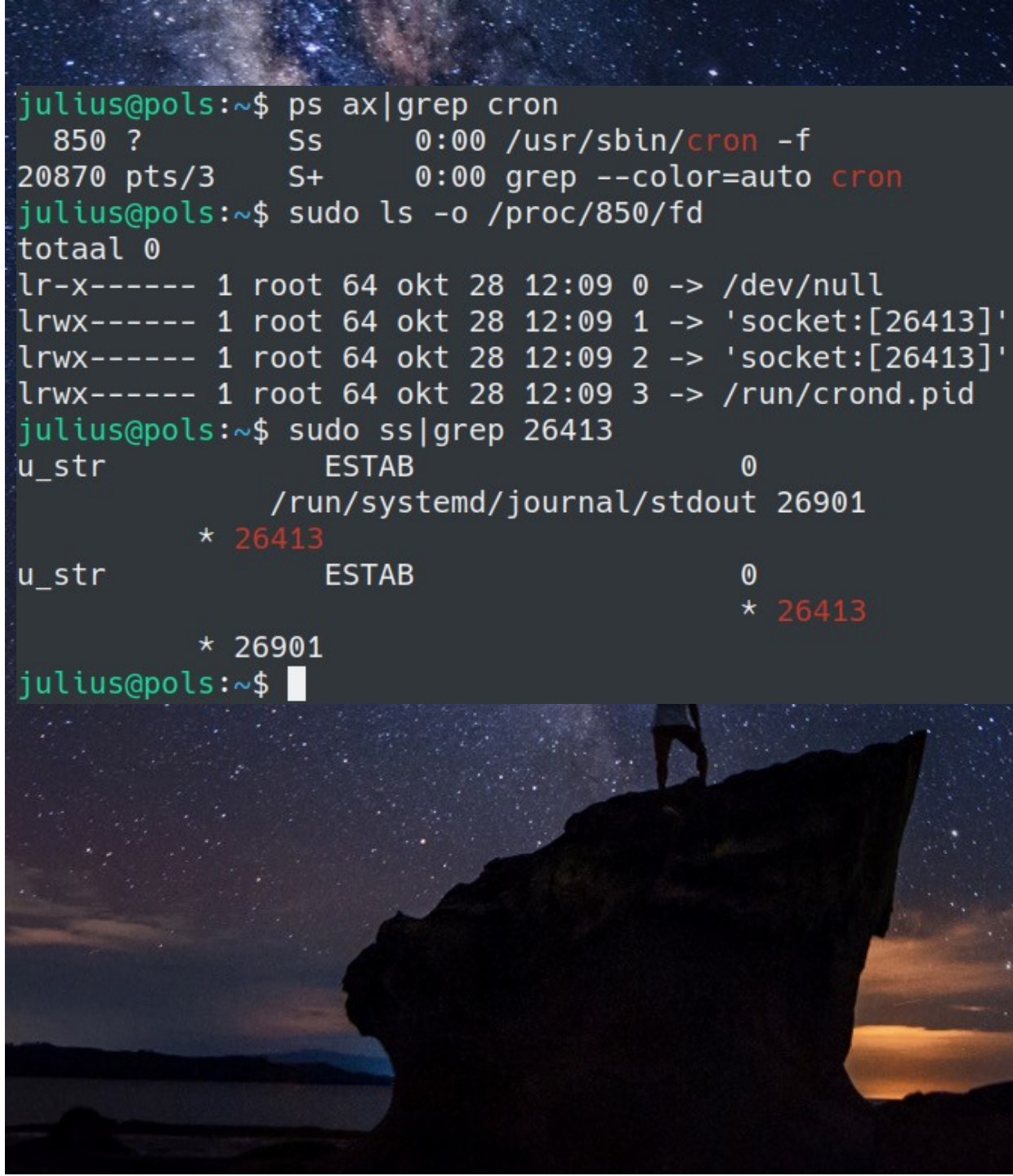


Problem 3: Where is that process logging? (1/2)

- **You are looking at an unknown system**
- **No idea if any logging is in place**

Problem 3: Where is that process logging? (2/2)

- **Every running process has stdio: stdin, stdout, stderr**
- **Logging to stdout & stderr**
- **File descriptors are visible below /proc**
- **stdin: 0; stdout: 1; stderr: 2**
- **ss — tool to investigate sockets**



Problem 4: Does the running process match the executable on disk? (1/3)

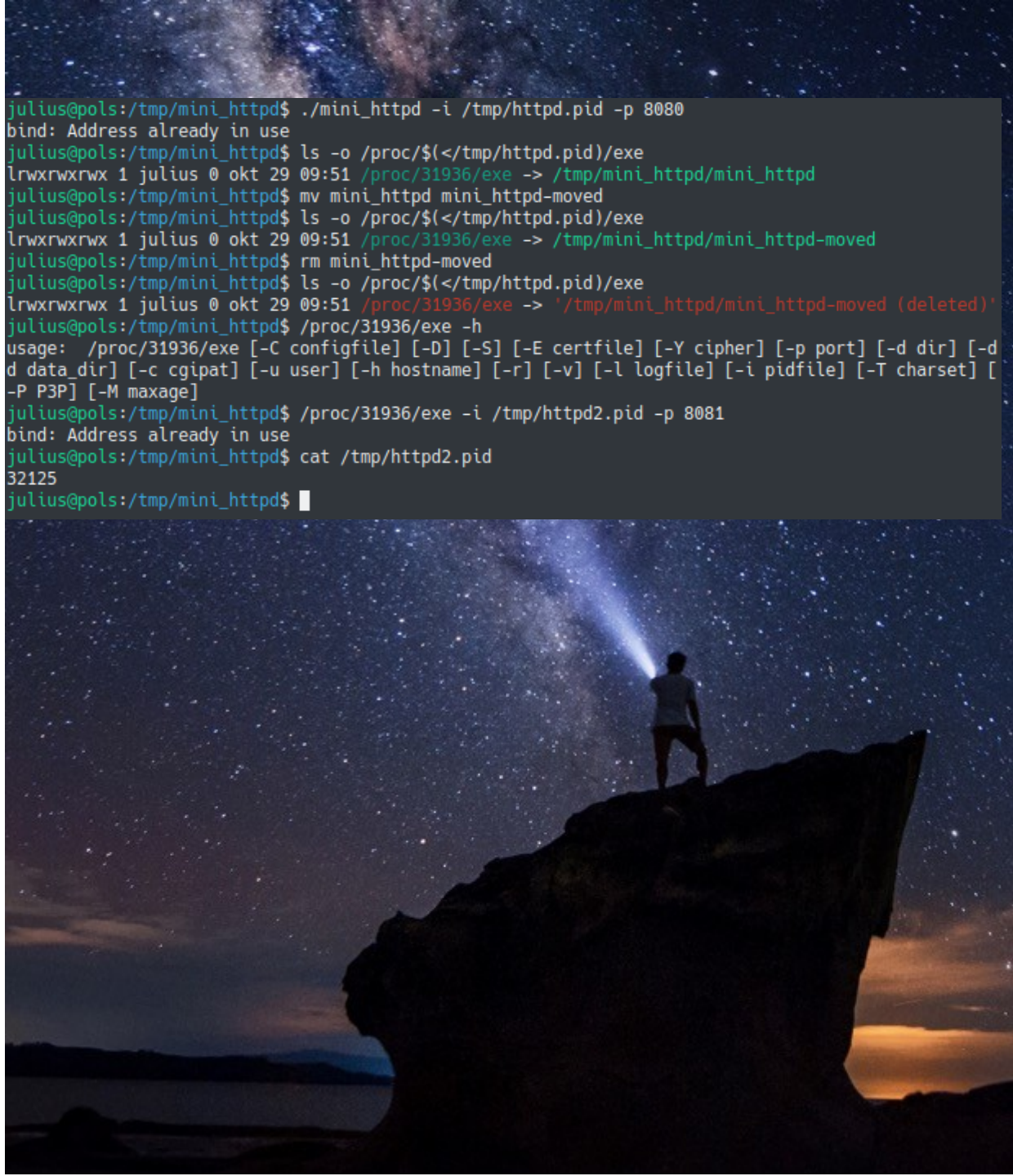
- **Updates were installed**
- **Version on disk might be different from the running one**
- **The previous version is not referenced anymore from the filesystem**
- **It is still somewhere**

Problem 4: Does the running process match the executable on disk? (2/3)

- **There is a pointer to the executable that is running below /proc**
- **Multiple references can point to the same filesystem object**
- **An object is only removed from the filesystem when there are no references left**

Problem 4: Does the running process match the executable on disk? (3/3)

- **Start mini_httpd**
- **Find it below /proc**
- **What happens with mv?**
- **What happens with rm?**
- **What happens when replacing the executable?**
- **Executing from inside /proc?**

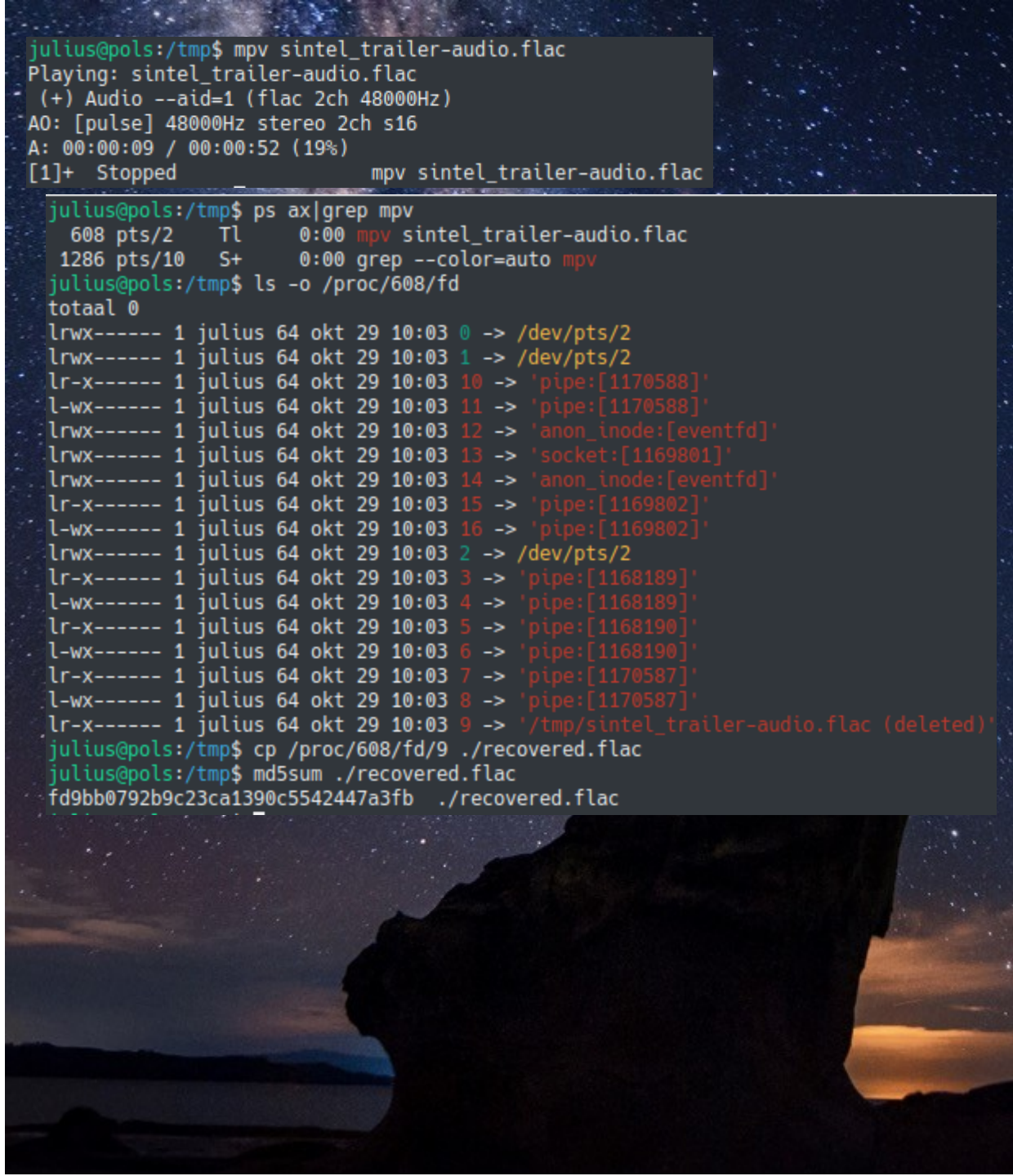


Problem 5: File recovery for open files (1/2)

- **You accidentally deleted a song.**
- **But it is still playing!**
- **How we get to it?**

Problem 5: File recovery for open files (2/2)

- **Whenever a process opens a file, this is handled through a file descriptor**
- **If your process might complete, you might want to suspend it: Ctrl+Z**



Problem 6: Read stdin when a file is expected (1/2)

- **Your want to embed a file in your shell script and pass it as input to your program**
- **Many programs can read stdin, but not all**
- **Example: wget --ca-certificate=<file>**

Problem 6: Read stdin when a file is expected (2/2)

- **stdin in is represented as a file**

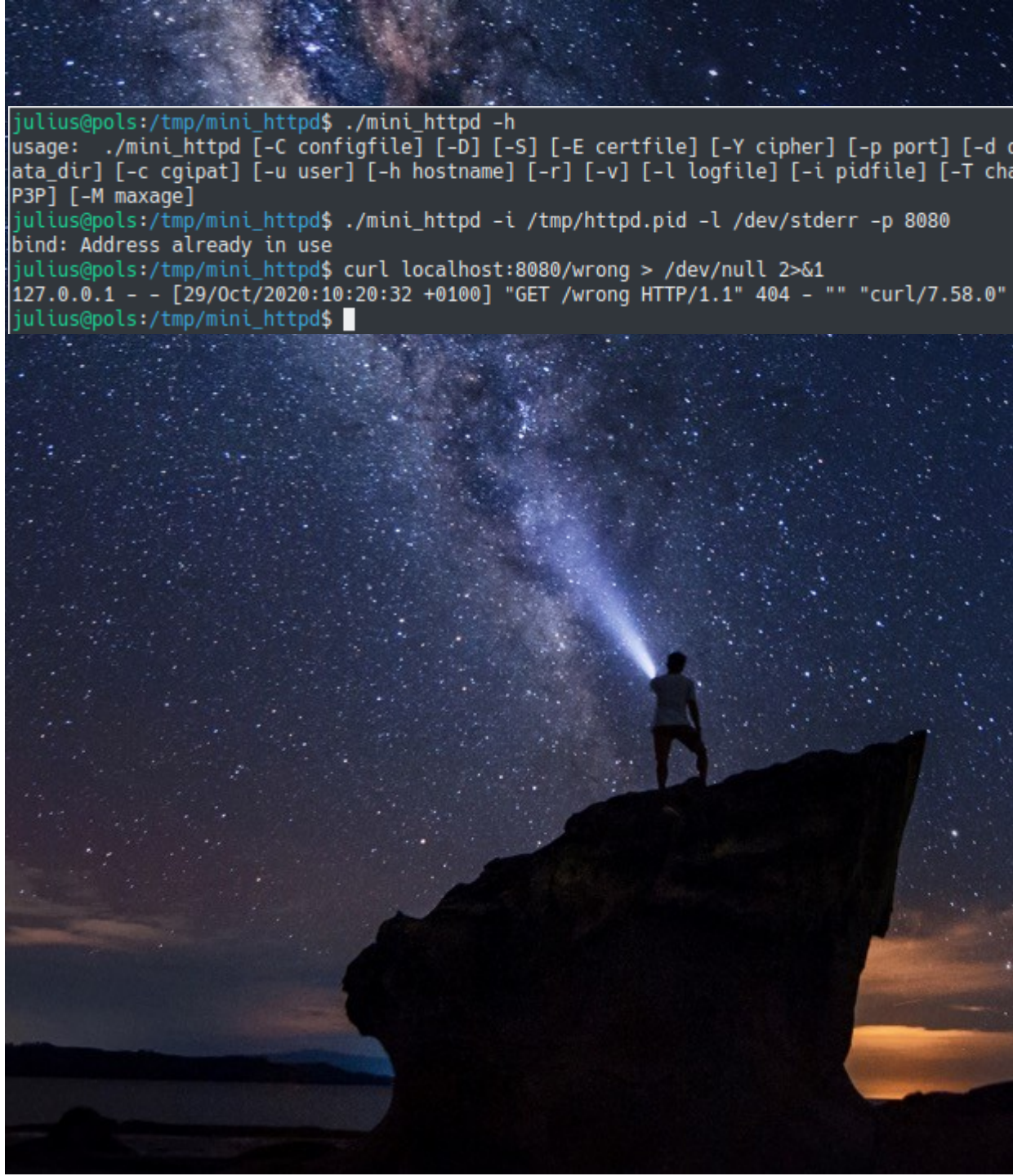
```
#!/bin/bash


CERT="-----BEGIN CERTIFICATE-----
MIIDeTCCAmGgAwIBAgIJAPziuikCTox4MA0GCSqGSIb3DQEBCwUAMGIxCzAJBgNVBAYTAlVTMRMwEQYDVQQI
VQQHDA1TYW4gRnJhbmNpc2NvMQ8wDQYDVQQKDAZCYWRTU0wxFTATBgNVBAMMDCouYmFkc3NsLmNvbTAeFw0x
MDgyMzQxNTJaMGIxCzAJBgNVBAYTAlVTMRMwEQYDVQQIDApDYWxpZm9ybmlhMRYwFAYDVQQHDA1TYW4gRnJh
YWRTU0wxFTATBgNVBAMMDCouYmFkc3NsLmNvbTCCASIwDQYJKoZIhvcNAQEBBQADggEPADCCAQoCggEBAMIE
aEmwIrX5lZ6xKyx2PmzAS2BMTOqytMAPgLaw+XLJhgL5XEFdEyt/
ccRLvOmULlA3pmccYYz2QULFRtMWhyefdOsKnRFSJiFzbIRMeVXk0WvoBj1IFVKtsyjbqv9u/2CVSndrOfEk
q71FdIzSOciccfCFHpsKOo3St/qbLVytH5aohbcabFXRNsKEqveww9HdFxBIuGa+RuT5q0iBikusbpJHAwnn
dAcgCskgjZjFeEU4EFy+b+a1SYQCeFxxC7c3DvaRhBB0VVfPlkPz0sw6l865MaTIbRyoUCAwEAAaMyMDAwCQ
AaggwqLmJhZHNzbC5jb22CCmJhZHNzbC5jb20wDQYJKoZIhvcNAQELBQADggEBAGlwCdbPxflZfYOaukZGCa
95w7fChXvP3YkE3UYUE7mupZ0eg4ZILr/A0e7JQDsgIu/
SRTUE0domCKgPZ8v99k3Avka4LpLK51jHJJK7EFgo3ca2nldd97GM0MU41xHFk8qaK1tWJkfrrfcGwDJ4GQP
TlRXlCLd8ufWhhiwW0W75Va5AEnJuqpQrKwl3KQVewGj67WWRgLfSr+4QG1mNvCZb2CkjZWmxkGPuoP40/
y7Yu5OFqxP5tAjj4YixCYTWEVA0pmzIzgBg+JIe3PdRy27T0asgQW/F4TY61Yk=-----END CERTIFICATE-


wget --ca-certificate=/dev/stdin https://self-signed.badssl.com/ -O - <<< $CERT
```

Problem 7: Write stdout/stderr when a file is expected (1/2)

- **You want to see the output in your terminal**
- **mini_httpd -l <logfile>**

Problem 7: Write stdout/stderr when a file is expected (2/2)

- **Solution is similar to the one from problem 6**

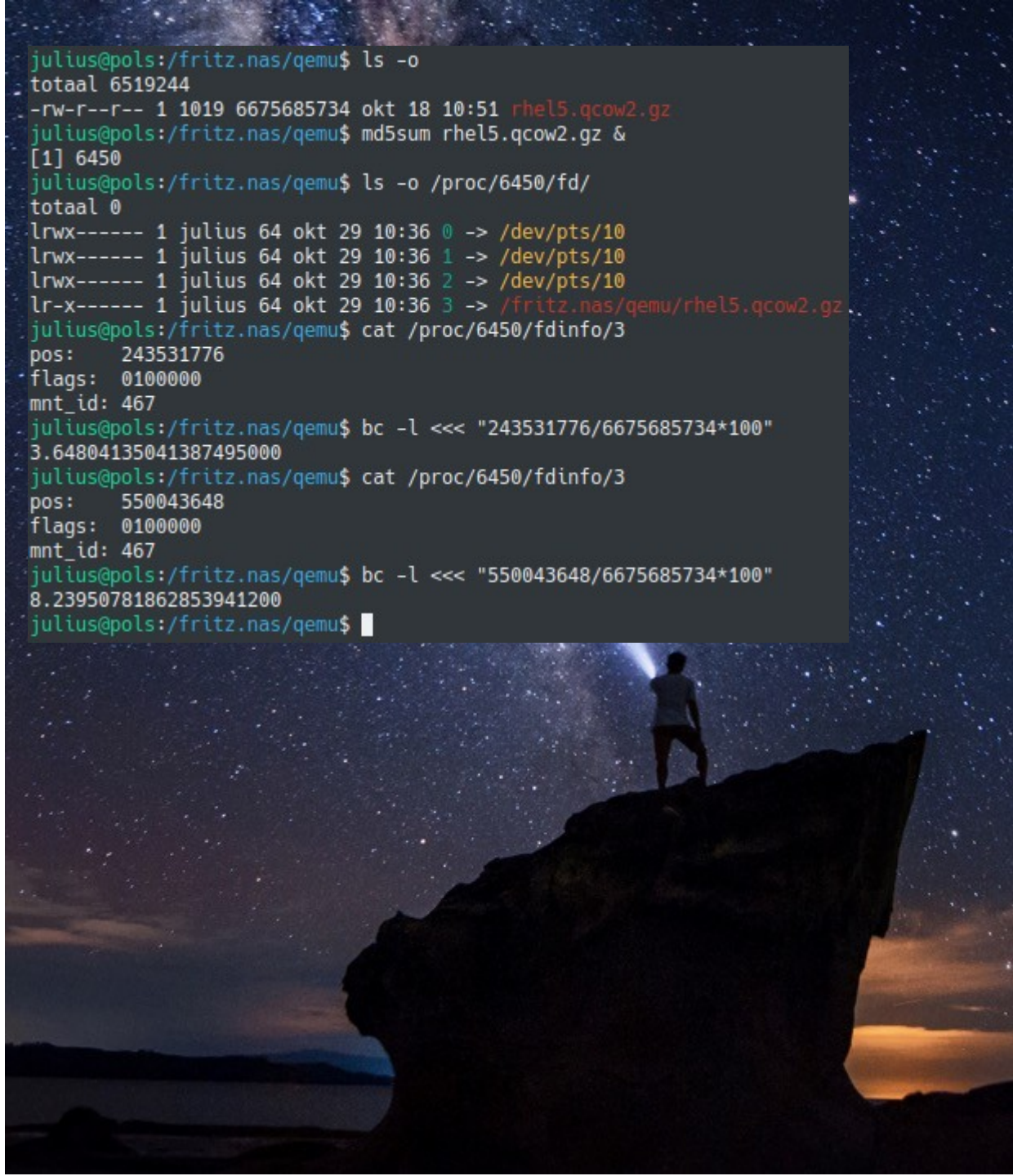


Problem 8: Determine progress of a running program (1/2)

- **A process is running over a large file that will take a long time**
- **You have no idea how much time is left**
- **Usually processes read a file from start to end**

Problem 8: Determine progress of a running program (2/2)

- **In addition to /proc/<pid>/fd, there is also /proc/<pid>/fdinfo**
- **Look for the value of "pos"**

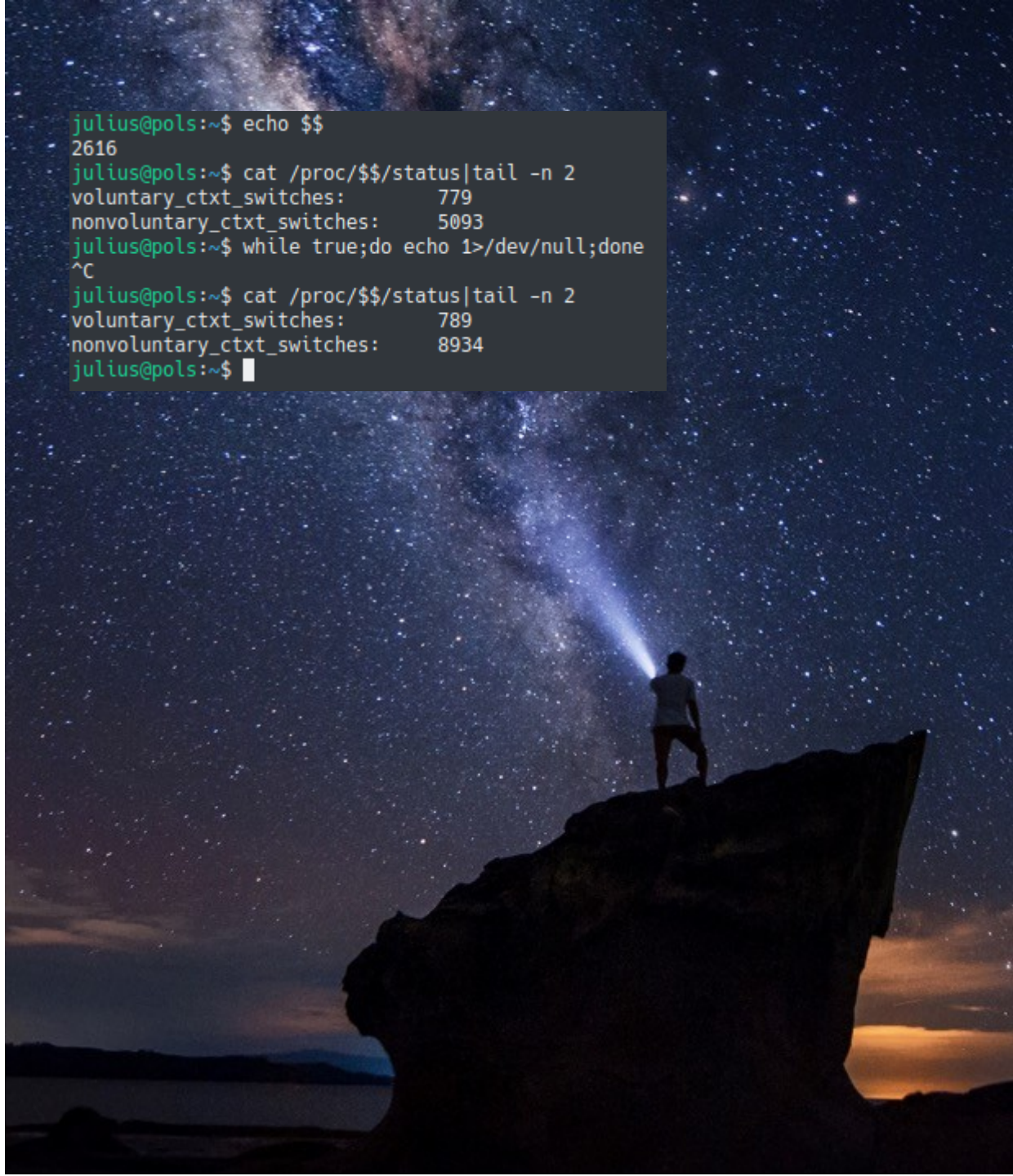


Problem 9: Is a process CPU- or IO-bound? (1/2)

- **A process runs slow**
- **Where is the bottleneck?**

Problem 9: Is a process CPU- or IO-bound? (2/2)

- **Processes that use IO intensively will make more system calls**
- **A system call implies a context switch**
- **Processes that do only calculation will not request a context switch**
- **Context switches are exposed via /proc/<pid>/status**

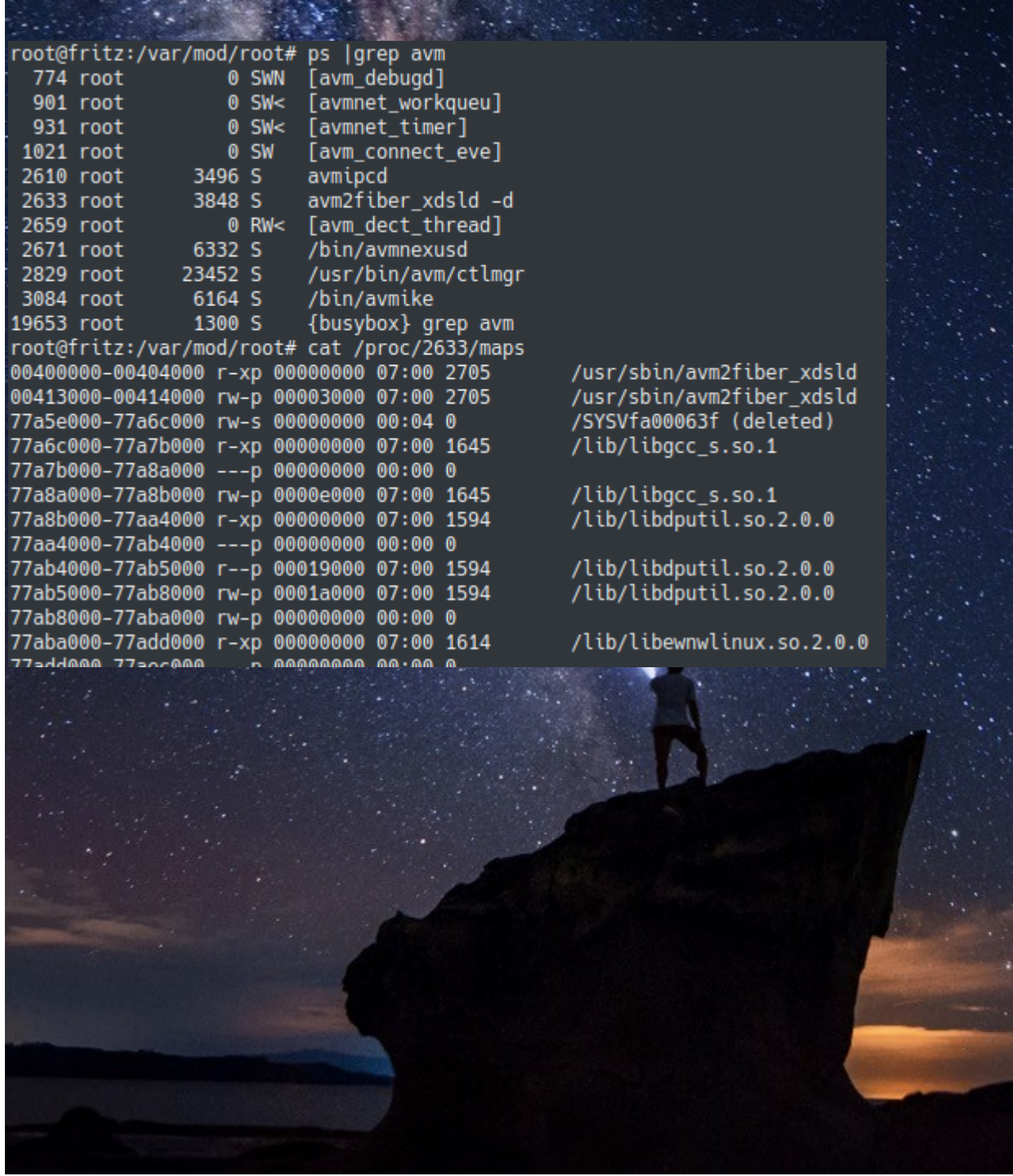


Problem 10: Which libraries are loaded? (1/2)

- **Why is the program crashing?**
- **Might be be loading incompatible libraries at runtime?**

Problem 10: Which libraries are loaded? (2/2)

- **/proc provides insight in the memory map**
- **It shows which libraries are loaded**
- **Take a look at /proc/<pid>/maps**

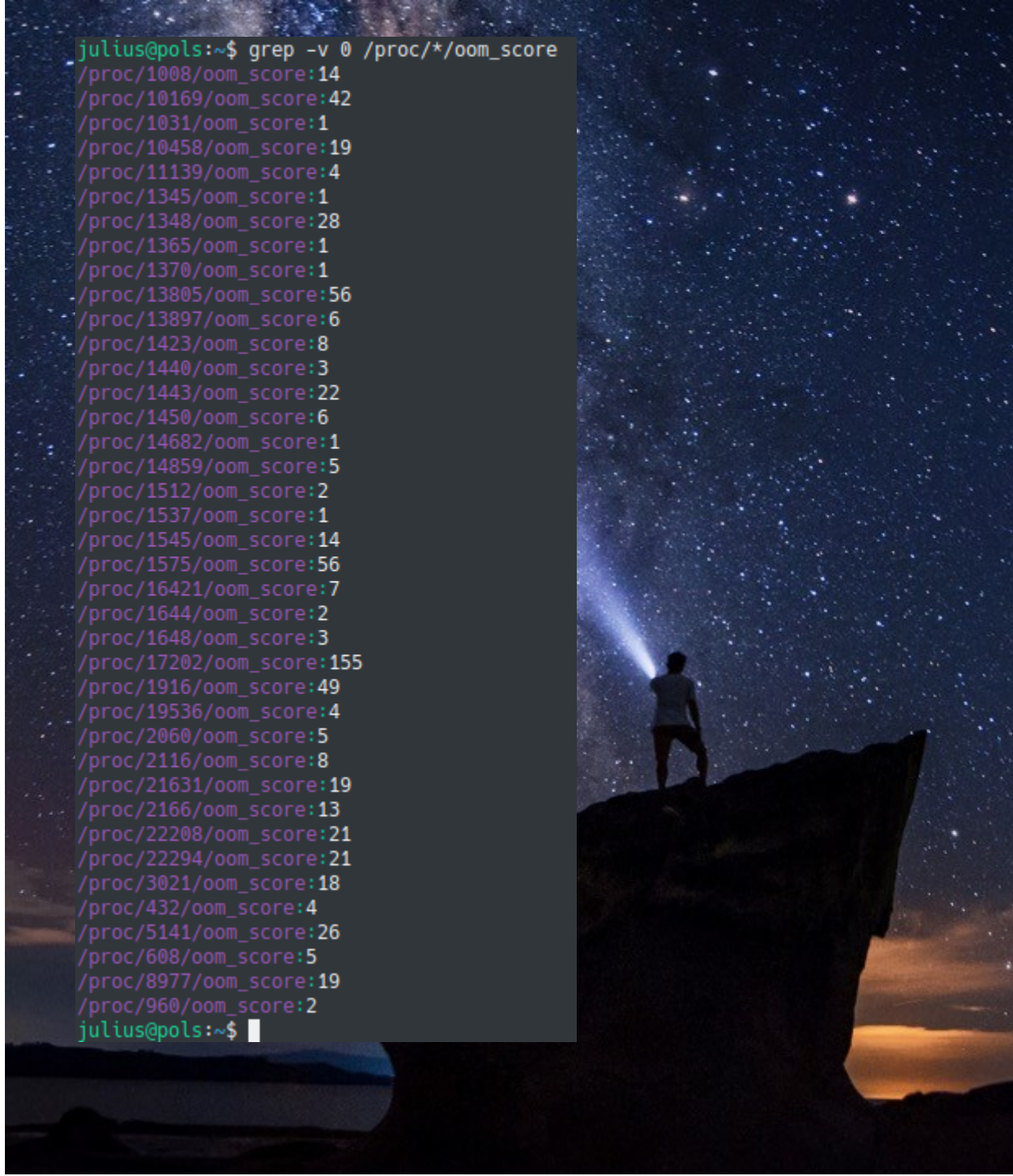


Problem 11: Which process is using so much memory? (1/2)

- **Memory usage on a system is very high**
- **Which process is the most likely culprit?**
- **The Out-Of-Memory (OOM) killer might kick in when it is too late**

Problem 11: Which process is using so much memory? (2/2)

- **The OOM killer keeps track**
- **The scores are available below /proc**



Problem 12: Writing to other terminals (1/2)

- **Can you hijack one terminal from another?**
- **Can one script output to multiple terminal windows?**

Problem 12: Writing to other terminals (2/2)

- **A terminal is attached to a pseudo terminal device**
- **Look at its file descriptors**
- **What happens when you write into a pseudo terminal device?**

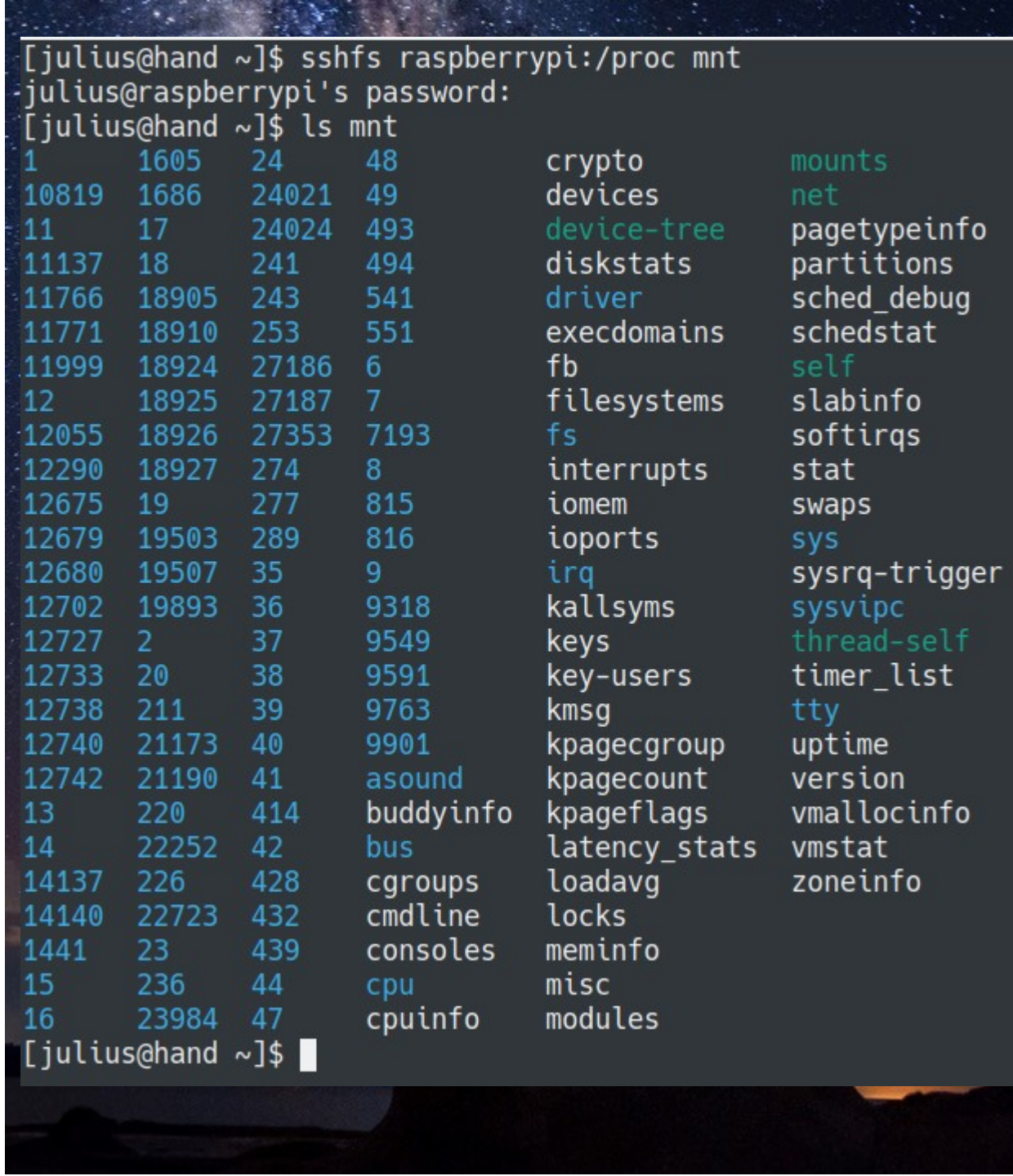
```
#!/bin/bash


konsole &
KONSOLE_PID_1=$!
sleep 2
for f in /proc/$KONSOLE_PID_1/fd/*; do
  FBASENAME=$(basename "$f")
  if [ $FBASENAME != 0 ] && [ $FBASENAME != 1 ] && [ $FBASENAME != 2 ]; then
    if [[ $(readlink $f) = *"/dev/pts"* ]]; then
      KONSOLE1_FD_PTS=$f
    fi
  fi
done


sleep 2
echo "Hi on Konsole One!!" >> $KONSOLE1_FD_PTS
sleep 2


konsole &
KONSOLE_PID_2=$!
sleep 2
for f in /proc/$KONSOLE_PID_2/fd/*; do
  FBASENAME=$(basename "$f")
  if [ $FBASENAME != 0 ] && [ $FBASENAME != 1 ] && [ $FBASENAME != 2 ]; then
    if [[ $(readlink $f) = *"/dev/pts"* ]]; then
      KONSOLE2_FD_PTS=$f
    fi
  fi
done


echo "Hi on Konsole Two!!" >> $KONSOLE2_FD_PTS
sleep 2


echo "Bye on Konsole One!!" >> $KONSOLE1_FD_PTS
sleep 2
kill $KONSOLE_PID_1


echo "Bye on Konsole Two!!" >> $KONSOLE2_FD_PTS
sleep 2
kill $KONSOLE_PID_2
```

Problem 13: Mounting a remote /proc? (1/2)

- **Can you mount /proc remotely?**

Problem 13: Mounting a remote /proc? (2/2)

- **NFS does not work**
- **What about SSHFS?**

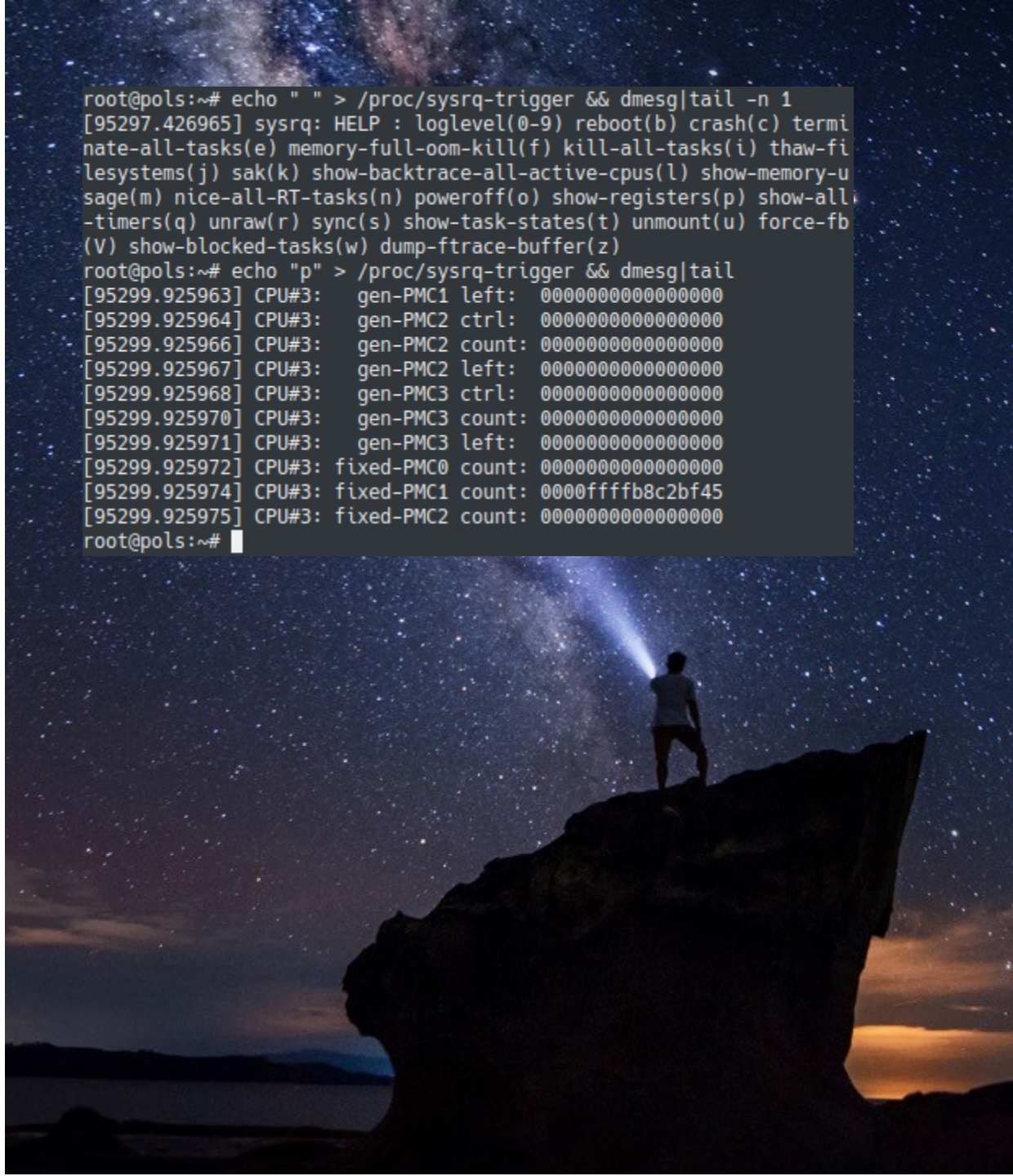


Problem 14: Rebooting or shutting down (1/2)

- **The userland shutdown and reboot binaries are missing**
- **Logged on remotely (no SYSRQ key)**

Problem 14: Rebooting or shutting down (2/2)

- **Magic SysRq is also possible via /proc/sysrq-trigger**
- **Be careful!!**
- **Alt+SysRq+Space shows available triggers**



The End: Questions?

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