Accidental Honeypot: How I Ended Up Receiving Tens of Thousands of Emails Meant for "No One"

BSidesPDX 2025 Talk by
Cøry Solovewicz

(aka interpünkt)

> whois interpünkt.local

Hi, I'm interpünkt, but some people call me Cøry.

I'm a Full Stack Web Developer turned cybersecurity professional.

I'm passionate about digital privacy and security.

About 5 years ago, I inadvertently created a honeypot.

Today, I'll tell you how it happened, what I discovered, and what I learned.

2010 - The Beginning

Started thinking about data privacy

Used Gmail "+ addressing" to track retailers

Email address: sasquatch@gmail.com

Examples:
- sasquatch+shopping@gmail.com
- sasquatch+newsletter@gmail.com

2015 - Enter Catch-All Email

Registered domain: notgettingmy.info

Set up a catch-all email (wildcard) 😊

Any address at the domain lands in one inbox

Great for tracking and filtering

Bonus: Made phone reps say "notgettingmy.info" out loud 😄

What Is a Catch-All Email?

Receives all mail sent to a domain, regardless of the prefix

bigfoot@example.com

sasquatch@example.com

yeti@example.com

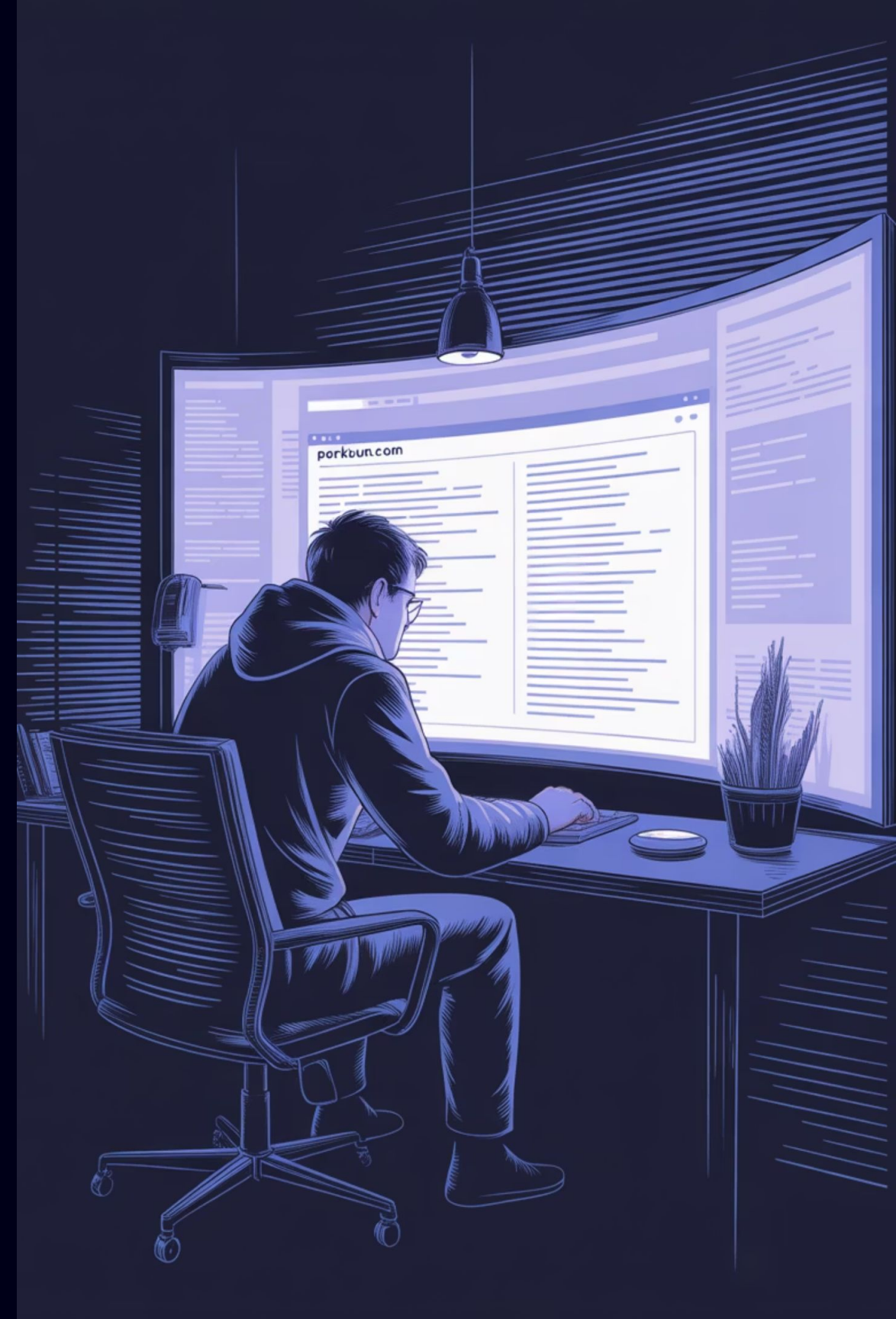All land in catch.all@example.com

2020 - The Perfect Domain

Found noreply.us available

Registered it on Feb 29, 2020

Bonus experiment: Leap day registration (Spoiler: no free year)

Initially forgot about it

The Trickling Begins

Started receiving odd emails:

Pizza order with PII	**Job application confirmations**	**Dental Job search emails**

All meant for someone else

Then It Got Serious

- Received sensitive emails from a city government

- Appeared to come from a misconfigured fax machine

- Default reply-to set to @noreply.us

Realization

I had created an accidental honeypot

Decided to monitor the inbox more closely

Began documenting the types of emails and creating filters to help organize.

What I Received

Password resets

Internal tickets

School Platform Account Emails

Service orders

Logistics Bills

Test Platform Credentials

By the Numbers

1,986

Days

Feb 29, 2020 to Oct 23, 2025

27,745

Total emails received

13.97

Unsolicited emails per day

Expanding the Experiment

Registered other "noreply" domains:

noreply.tv

noreply.property

Nothing compared to noreply.us

December 2024 - acquired noreply.net

812.60 emails per day

Stats

noreply.us	noreply.net	.us vs .net
📬 Total number of emails: 27,745	📬 Total number of emails: 239,716	📬 Total number of emails: **7.7x** 📈
📈 Average emails per day: 13.97	📈 Average emails per day: 812.60	Average emails per day: **58x** 🕐
🕐 Emails in last 1 day: 14 🕐	🕐 Emails in last 1 day: 780 🕐	Emails in last 1 day: **56x** 🕐 Emails in last 7 days: **96x** 📅 Emails in last 30 days: **46x** 📎 Emails with attachments: **9x**
Emails in last 7 days: 63 📅	Emails in last 7 days: 6,058 📅	
Emails in last 30 days: 598 📎	Emails in last 30 days: 27,620 📎	
Emails with attachments: 1,184	Emails with attachments: 10,819	

Reflections

1
People assume "noreply" means safe and unused

2
Devs/testers use fake domains that get reused in prod

3
Placeholder values can become liabilities

Call to Action

1

Don't assume a domain is unmonitored

2

Use reserved or internal domains for test data

3

Periodically audit email systems for default addresses

4

And please... don't send faxes to strangers

Final Thought

> "Just because it says noreply does not mean no one is reading."

Thanks!

Do you have any questions?

contact@cory.so

https://github.com/corysolovewicz/bsidespdx-2025

https://www.linkedin.com/in/csolo/