



# Running system tests with active authn/z



**The story starts with  
/.well-known/security.txt**

# Talk objective

*Make teams curious on diverting more effort into system testing with authn/z (and other security features) activated.*

Active = Components running in "production mode", security features like authn/z not mocked or disabled

# Why do we pursue this objective?

It will have an impact on mitigating well known security risks!

## OWASP Top 10:2021 risks

- A01-Broken Access Control
- A05-Security Misconfiguration
- A07-Identification and Authentication Failures
- A09-Security Logging and Monitoring Failures

## OWASP API Top 10:2019 risks

- API1 Broken Object Level Authorization
- API2 Broken User Authentication
- API5 Broken Function Level Authorization
- API7 Security Misconfiguration
- API10 Insufficient Logging & Monitoring

# Disclaimer

*The more I learn about the topic at hand, the more I realize how complex it is. I am not an expert. Life is not simple. All solutions have trade-off's. There are always more than one solution. Context matters - a lot!*

"There is no end state for application security, we just learn and improve"

Code examples is not production quality!!

Some patterns that are discussed are quite risky - be cautious

Doing a threat model exercise of your test system would be the smart thing to do!

# Whoami

- Lars Kåre Skjørestad -  
**Lars** will do just fine 😊
- Application Security Advocate in Equinor's AppSec Team
- Abusing computers since mid 80's
- Living at the west coast of Norway
- 1 wife, 3 grown-up kids
- Hobbies with too little time to pursue (besides coding), cycling, fly-fishing, hunting, hiking
- larskaare @ linkedIn, twitter, github and Mastodon @infosec.exchange
- <https://appsec.equinor.com>

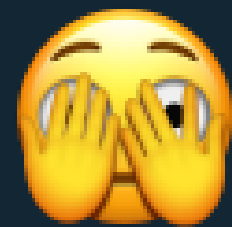


# Outline

- Observations
- Presenting our demo system
- Test principles - Technical Challenges
- Exploring one potential solution
- Wrapping up
- Q&A

Slides and code are open to all.

# Observations

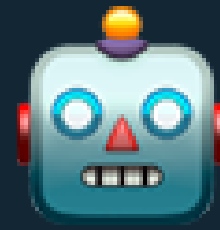




# Teams reports that

- 80%+ of test effort is spent on unit testing, very little on system testing.
- Authn/z are either mocked/stubbed or disabled when testing
- Security features are often disabled/mocked/stubbed
- We don't write security related tests
- We want to, and really should do more integration/system testing
- System testing is hard and time consuming !
- The challenge have multiple perspectives
  - technical - personal skills/proficiency - team compositions - team capacity
  - and not the least - team/company culture!

# Presenting our demo system



... context matters ...

# The Application

Game of Thrones Episodes

Logout

Show Inbox

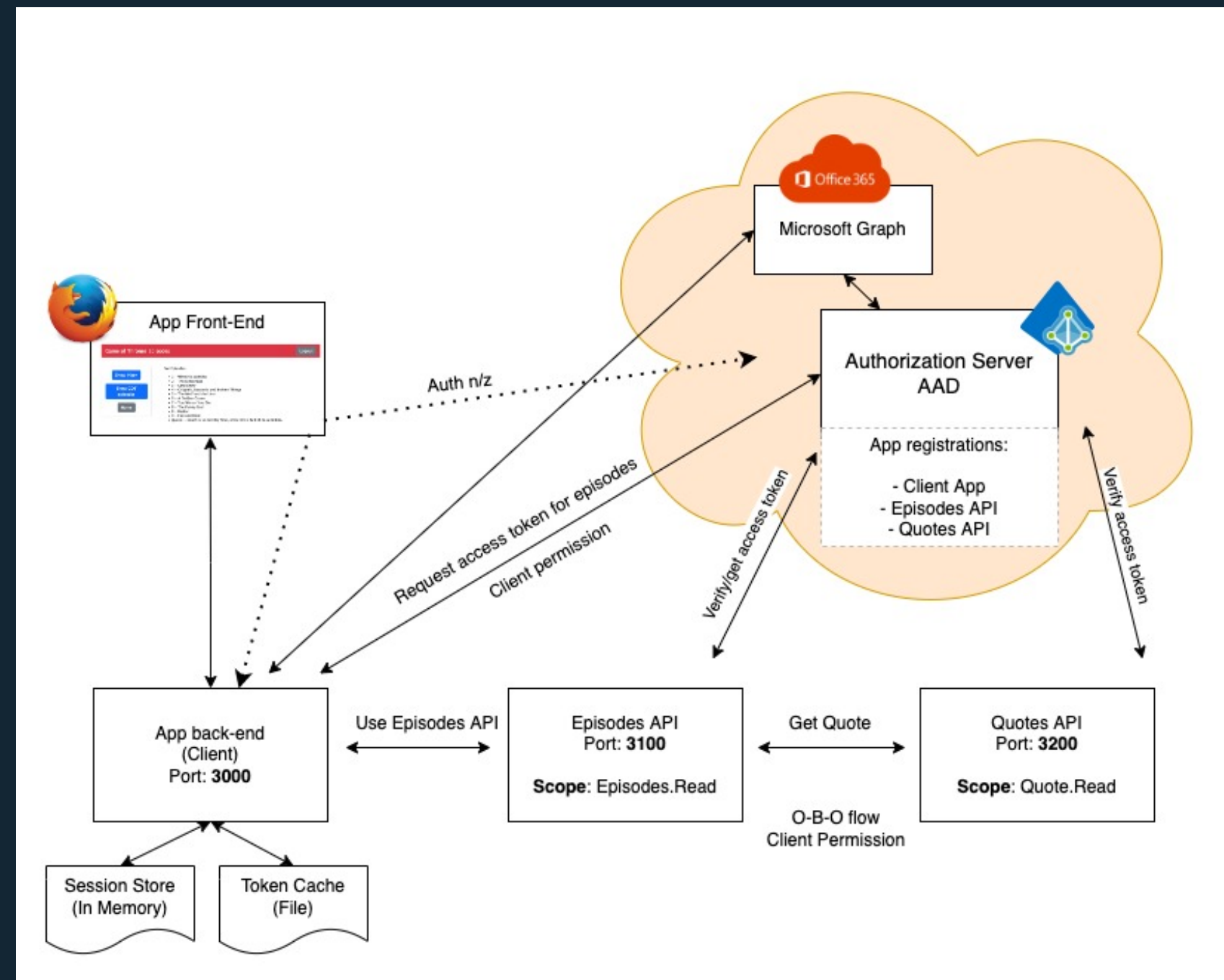
Show GOT  
episodes

Home

## Got Episodes

- 1 – Winter is coming
- 2 – The Kingsroad
- 3 – Lord Snow
- 4 – Crippels, Bastards and Broken Things
- 5 – The Wolf and the Lion
- 6 – A Golden Crown
- 7 – You Win or You Die
- 8 – The Pointy End
- 8 – Bealor
- 9 – Fire and Blod
- Quote: – Death is so terribly final, while life is full of possibilities.

# System Components



We are using OIDC and OAuth2 for authn/z

We are using the Microsoft Authentication Library (MSAL) in the client back-end

We are using a "backends for frontends" (BFF) pattern.

We will be using OAuth2 ROPC rather than Code Grant for the client login in test mode

# The Feature we test

For our testing we are focusing on one specific use case;  
From the browser, log in a user and retrieve a list of Game of  
Thrones episodes.

Further details are [documented](#) in our scenario documentation.

# Test Principles - Technical Challenges



# Test Principles

We could benefit from having a few **principles** to guide our testing.

A few selected could be:

1. We automate more or less all of our testing
2. Non-functional tests are as important as the functional ones  
(performance, usability, reliability, security ....)
3. Don't test in production
4. Use synthetic test data
5. Running code should not know that it's under test
6. Testing should not involve components that we don't control/own

The list is by no means exhaustive. Teams should have their own list!

# Technical challenges

- We must do a login through the browser (to create a valid session)
  - This comes with many issues on it's own.
  - Handing over authentication to a different site will typically break many web drivers.
- There are no tokens in the browser, we must utilize the backend (BFF pattern).
- Could we acquire tokens in the tests and manipulate the token cache?
- Could we mess around with the session objects in the back-end?
- Corporate environments:
  - Users have MFA, makes login automation more or less impossible...
  - Should we even use our "prod" Azure AD (AAD) for testing (ref principles)?  
Creating test users, test objects etc ...
- Could we mock Azure AD with an "oAuth2 Mock Server" component?

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## Potential add-on's for our test principles:

The choices we make should, as far as possible, not disable the security features of our system!  
We would like to develop as little as possible of "test supporting code"

A more elaborate [discussion](#) is available.



# Time to make some decisions

... all choices have trade-off's, we try to balance risk/impact/cost, and we acknowledge the life cycle of both system code and test code ...

We decide to:

- use the MS O365 developer program to acquire separate Azure/AAD test environment  
... and thus use a component that we do not control
- create synthetic test users without MFA to support automated tests
- let our client component "know" that's its under test
  - The "test footprint" should be as little as possible
  - If in test, we use a different flow (ROPC) to login and get the initial tokens
- use Docker and docker-compose to build and serve the system infrastructure
- drive the test from the browser and from the perspective of the end-user.
  - For this we use [Cypress](#)

The system tests must be fully automated and be able to execute in a pipeline.

# Exploring one potential solution



# Running the application

- We are putting the system components into containers
- We have created Azure AD objects for the components
- We use Docker-compose to run the application

*Demo of running application.*

Testing in "private" mode, discussing some of the testing challenges

# Putting the system in test mode

- We use the `NODE_ENV` environment variable to tell the system it is under test
- When testing, we switch from the oAuth2 **Auth Code** flow to **ROPC**
- We provide user name/pwd from the back-end as config params.

*Demo of running application in test mode*

Exploring the test mode code and the login

# Running the test

- We use Cypress to drive the tests

*Demo of Cypress running the test  
(gui and headless)*

Exploring developing tests

# Bringing it all together

- We use docker-compose to
  - Start the system components
  - Put the system under test
  - Run headless tests in Cypress
  - Use exit-code from Cypress for further actions

```
./source ~/path-to-my-env-file/pawa-compose.env  
export NODE_ENV=test  
docker-compose up --abort-on-container-exit --exit-code-from cypress
```



# Wrapping up



# Current status

For our "complex and modern system" we now have:

- A fully automation system test scenario
- A fully synthetic test environment
- System tests with active Authn/z
- System tests with active security controls
- We have very little test support code

We have broken a few principles to reach this state -  
the trade-offs could be acceptable?

Again, a threat modeling exercise on the test system would be smart.

What could possibly go wrong 



# Talk objective

*Make teams curious on diverting more effort into system testing with authn/z (and other security features) activated.*

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It is hard, not only a technical challenge  
- but it is doable - and imho necessary ...

Q&A



# Thank You

I am larskaare @ linkedIn, twitter, github and Mastodon  
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software developer community in Equinor.*

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AppSec in Equinor.*

Slides and code are available at  
[https://github.com/larskaare/pawa-  
system-testing](https://github.com/larskaare/pawa-system-testing)



(The link is legit, I promise, honestly I do! 🤪)