

Top Authentication Fails in ASP.NET Core (and How to Avoid Them)



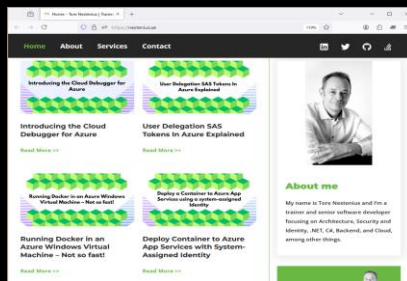
<https://nestenius.se>

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About Tore Nestenius



Work <https://tn-data.se>



Blog <https://nestenius.se>



<https://meetup.com/net-skane>

<https://nestenius.se>

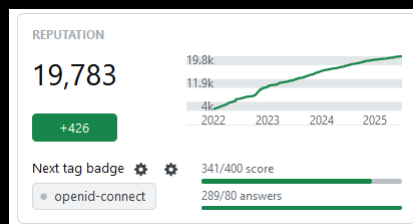
2

Background

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Stack Overflow



Badges

IdentityServer4

OAuth 2.0

OpenID-Connect

Authentication

JWT

.NET

C#

ASP.NET Core

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What is the goal of this presentation?

- Explore common Authentication Problems
- Learn about various gotchas
- Production challenges

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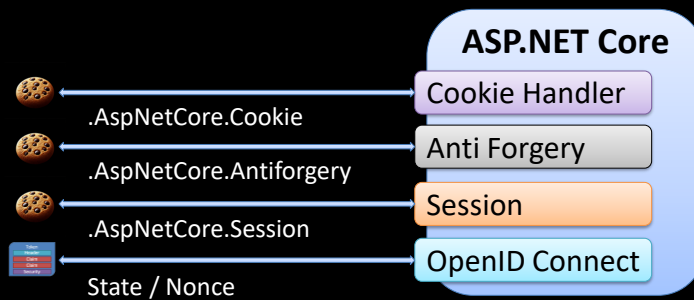
Data Protection

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Data Protection

ASP.NET Core issues several **sensitive items**, including:



It uses the **Data Protection API** to secure this

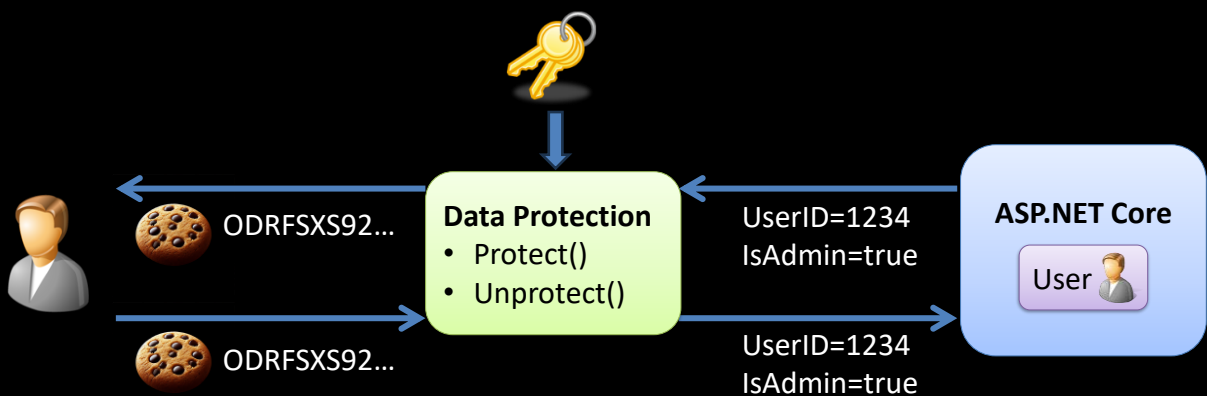
How does this work?

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Data Protection

The data is secured using **encryption**



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Demonstration

Protect and Unprotect demo

Purpose:

Encrypt:

Purpose:

Decrypt:

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Data Protection in Production

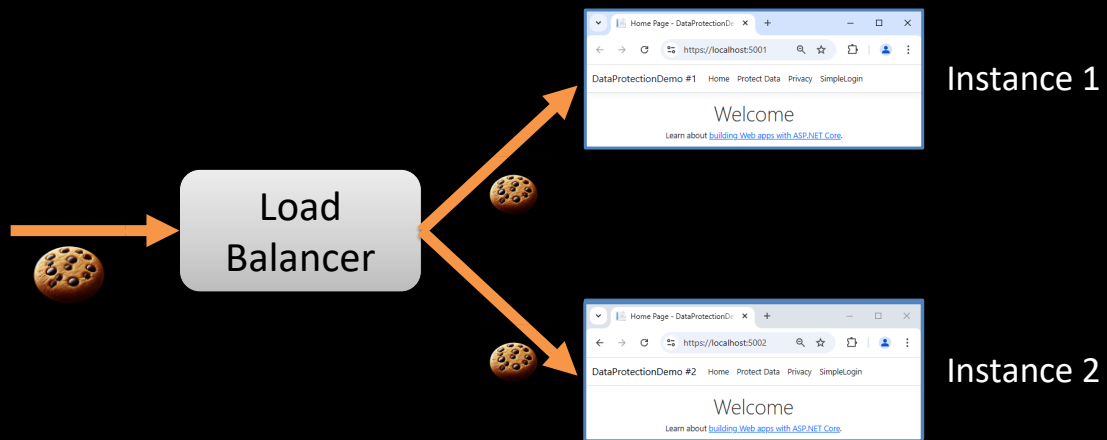
```
Key {} was not found in the key ring. Unprotect operation cannot proceed.  
cookie was not authenticated. Failure message: Unprotect ticket failed
```

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Data Protection

Example Architecture



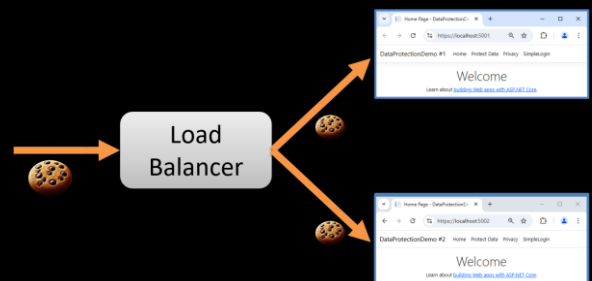
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Data Protection

What can go wrong here?

- Users lose their sessions after redeployment
- Cookies aren't recognized across instances
- Key management
- ...

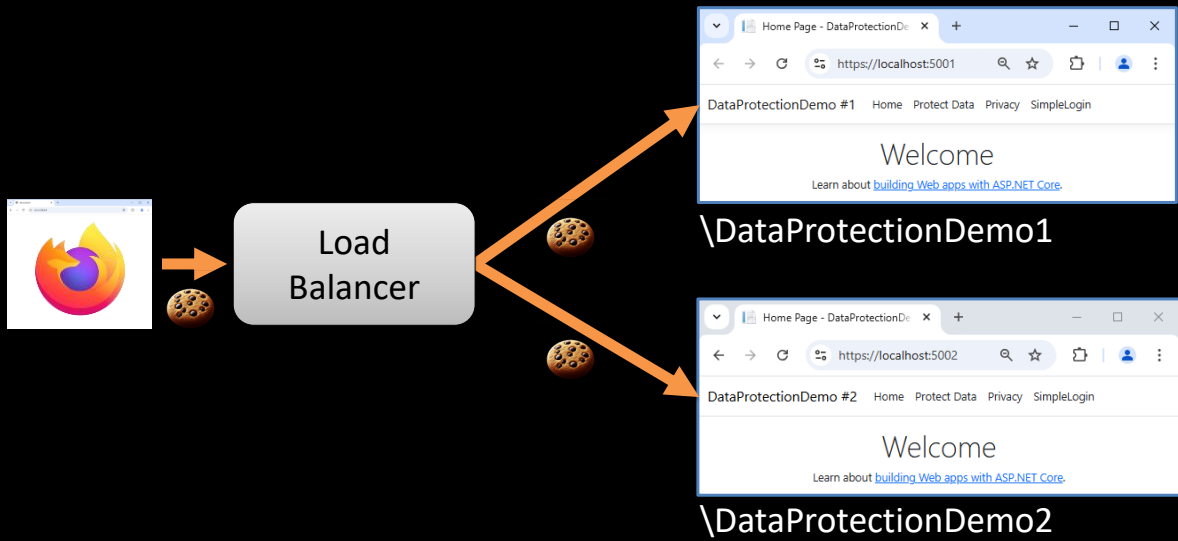


What is the problem?

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Demonstration – Cookies across service instances



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Data Protection at Startup

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Data Protection

By default, a **key** and a **key-ring** is created at startup

ASP.NET Core

```
appsettings.Development.json
appsettings.json
Controllers
HelloASPNETCore.csproj
Models
obj
Program.cs
Properties
Views
wwwroot
```

Data Protection

%LOCALAPPDATA%\ASP.NET\DataProtection-Keys

key-ea6eee38-7cd3-44d6-bc63-f0e7a2b57bc5.xml



```
>dotnet run
```

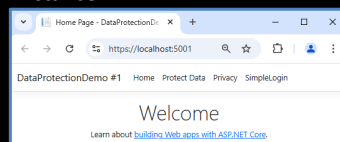
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Data Protection

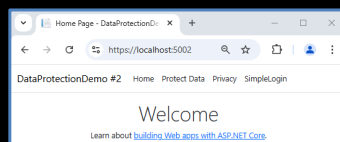
The following happens in our example:

Instance #1



%LOCALAPPDATA%\ASP.NET\DataProtection-Keys

Instance #2



What can go wrong here?

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Data Protection

We can get a race condition!

key-0a69cfb6-ba33-4f6f-8472-30cc919023aa.xml
key-2d196365-58d0-4618-9f7b-f4f23f404196.xml

Instance #1

```
2025-02-03T16:28:44 Repository contains no viable default key.  
Caller should generate a key with immediate activation.  
2025-02-03T16:28:44 Policy resolution states that a new key should be added to the key ring.  
2025-02-03T16:28:44 Creating key {0a69cfb6-ba33-4f6f-8472-30cc919023aa} with  
creation date 2025-02-03 15:28:44Z, activation date 2025-02-03 15:28:44Z,  
and expiration date 2025-05-04 15:28:44Z.
```

Instance #2

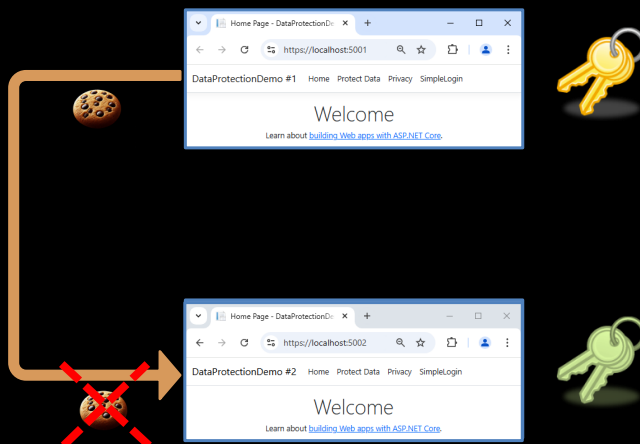
```
2025-02-03T16:28:44 Repository contains no viable default key.  
Caller should generate a key with immediate activation.  
2025-02-03T16:28:44 Policy resolution states that a new key should be added to the key ring.  
2025-02-03T16:28:44 Creating key {2d196365-58d0-4618-9f7b-f4f23f404196} with  
creation date 2025-02-03 15:28:44Z, activation date 2025-02-03 15:28:44Z,  
and expiration date 2025-05-04 15:28:44Z.
```

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Data Protection

Cookies will be rejected if the expected key is not found

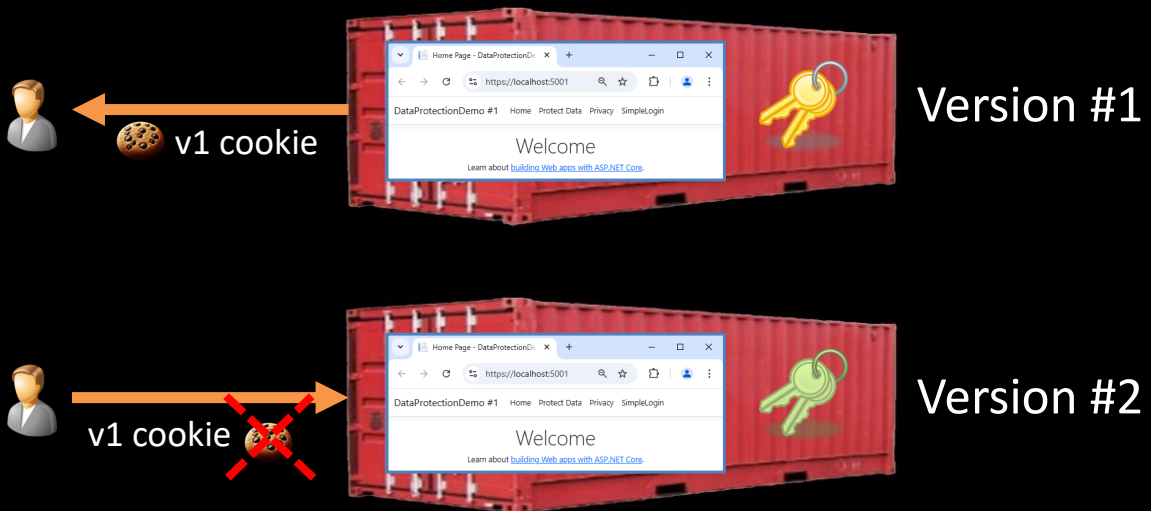


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Data Protection

Cookies will be rejected if the key changes after redeploy

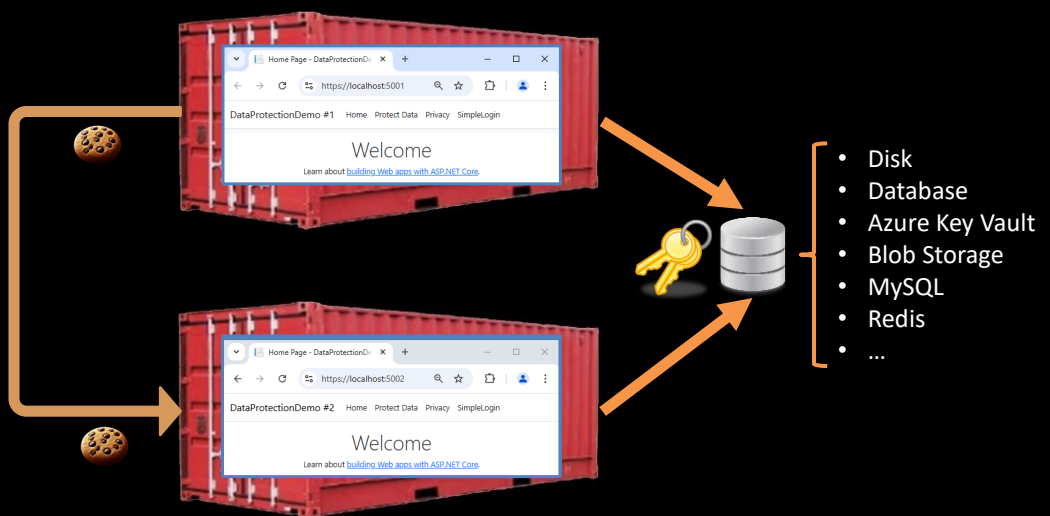


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Data Protection

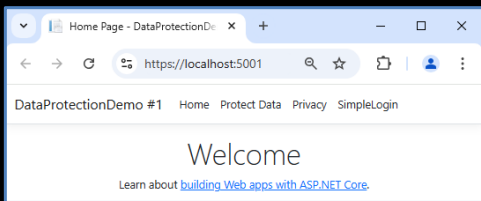
The **key-ring** needs to be persisted in a shared storage



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Demonstration – Persist Keys To File System

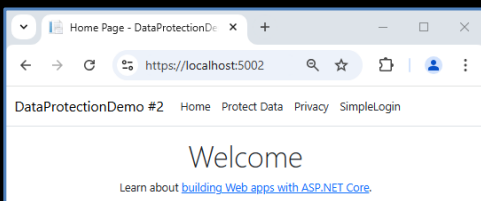


\DataProtectionDemo1

```
var keyPath = new DirectoryInfo(@"C:\Conf\Keys");  
  
builder.Services  
    .AddDataProtection()  
    .PersistKeysToFileSystem(keyPath);
```



C:\Conf\Keys



\DataProtectionDemo2

```
var keyPath = new DirectoryInfo(@"C:\Conf\Keys");  
  
builder.Services  
    .AddDataProtection()  
    .PersistKeysToFileSystem(keyPath);
```

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Data Protection Purpose

Protect and Unprotect demo

Purpose:

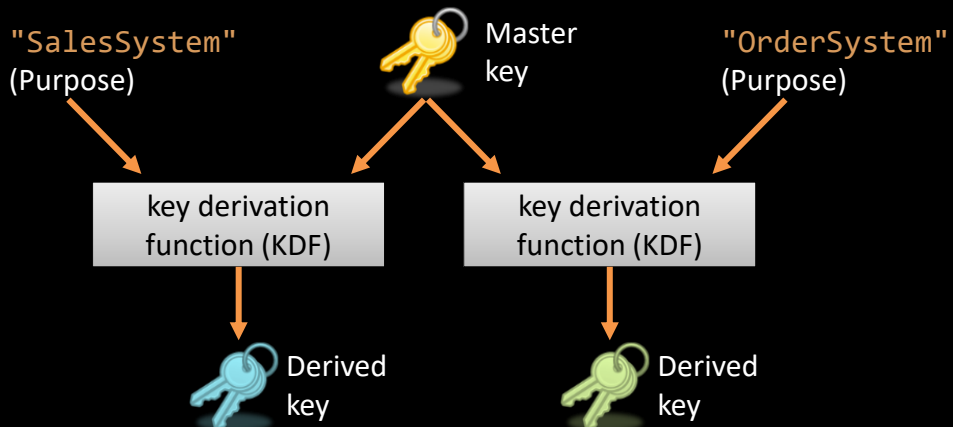
Encrypt:

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Data Protection Purpose

The **purpose** is used to create isolation



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Demonstration - Purpose

Why does this not work?

Instance #1

Protect and Unprotect demo

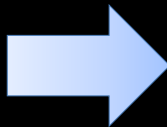
Purpose:
CustomerData.v1

Encrypt:
C# Rocks

Encrypt

Purpose:
CustomerData.v1

Decrypt:
CfDJ8Aqcfla-zj5GombFL7by0iIEEn-u2a80TKp
osu7fWBtkzhdoTxSKRV3WmkTS7yKyZE0MZ-
NSrqWZyp-ZP5AylaVZmdnYMxCkZ6iYg



Instance #2

Purpose:
CustomerData.v1

Decrypt:
CfDJ8Aqcfla-zj5GombFL7by0iIEEn-u2a80TKp
osu7fWBtkzhdoTxSKRV3WmkTS7yKyZE0MZ-
NSrqWZyp-ZP5AylaVZmdnYMxCkZ6iYg

Decrypt

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Data Protection Purpose

We actually have two purposes!

Purpose:
CustomerData.v1
Decrypt:
CfDJ8Aqcfla-zj5GombFL7by0ilEEEn-u2a80TKpF osu7fWBtkzhdoTxSKRV3WmkTS7yKyZE0MZ-H NSrqWZyp-ZP5AylaVZmdnYMxCkZ6lYg
Decrypt

Performing unprotect operation to key {bc7e21f3-69e3-45ce-bb5b-e9007bac85ed}
with purposes ('C:\Conf\Demo - Data Protection\DataProtectionDemo1\
'CustomerData.v1').

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Data Protection Purpose

The **App path** is part of all purposes in ASP.NET Core:



Performing protect operation to key {...} with purposes (
- 'C:\Conf\Demo - Data Protection\DataProtectionDemo1\
- 'SessionMiddleware').



Performing protect operation to key {...} with purposes (
- 'C:\Conf\Demo - Data Protection\DataProtectionDemo1\
- 'Microsoft.AspNetCore.Authentication.Cookies.CookieAuthenticationMiddleware',
- 'cookie',
- 'v2').



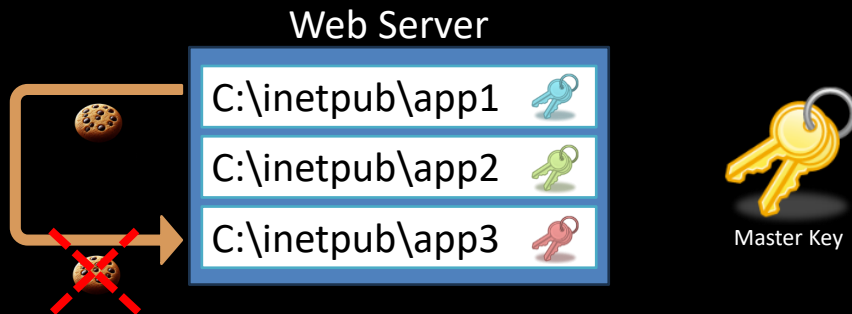
Performing protect operation to key {...} with purposes (
- 'C:\Conf\Demo - Data Protection\DataProtectionDemo1\
- 'CustomerData.v1').

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Data Protection Purpose

We want each app to use separate keys



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Demonstration – Set Application Name

```
var keyPath = new DirectoryInfo(@"C:\Conf\Keys");  
builder.Services.AddDataProtection()  
    .PersistKeysToFileSystem(keyPath)  
    .SetApplicationName("MyApplication");
```

Sets the purpose

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Key Management Problems

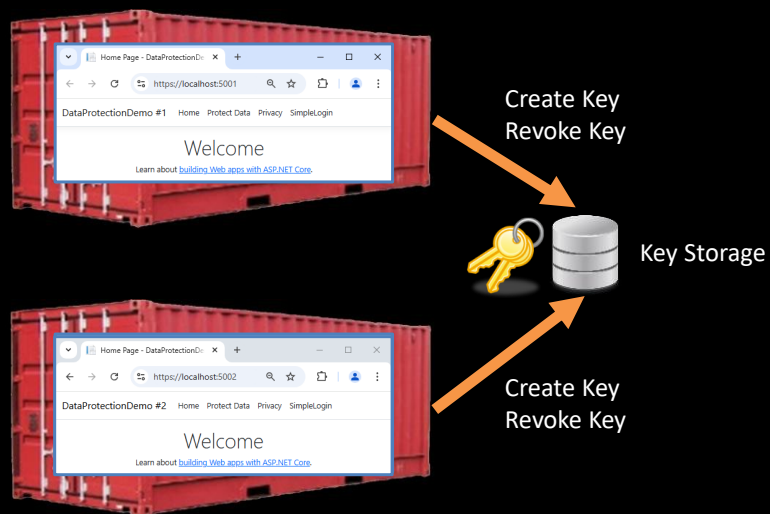


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Key Management Problems

In this setup, both services wants to manage the keys



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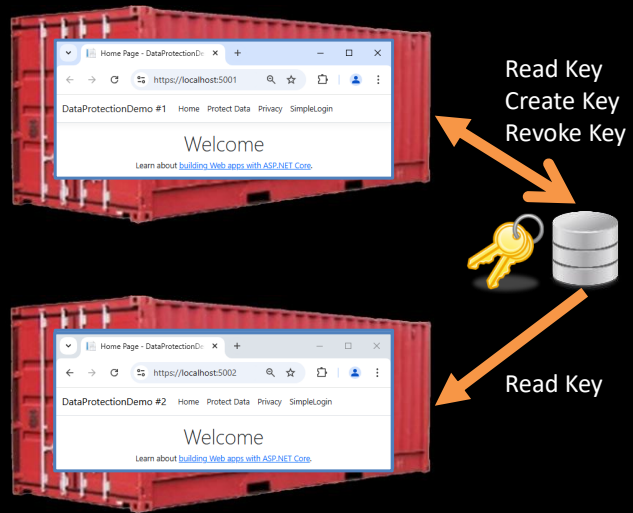
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Key Management Problems

You can prevent services from generating keys

```
// Primary  
builder.Services.AddDataProtection()  
    .SetApplicationName("MyApplication");
```

```
// Secondary  
builder.Services.AddDataProtection()  
    .SetApplicationName("MyApplication")  
    .DisableAutomaticKeyGeneration();
```

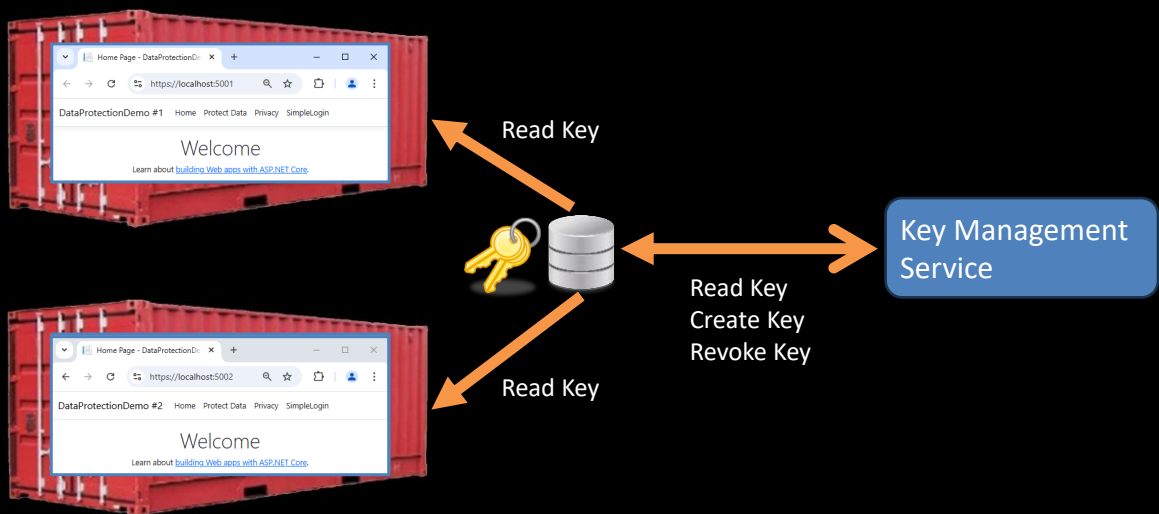


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Key Management Problems

Or you delegate the key management to a service



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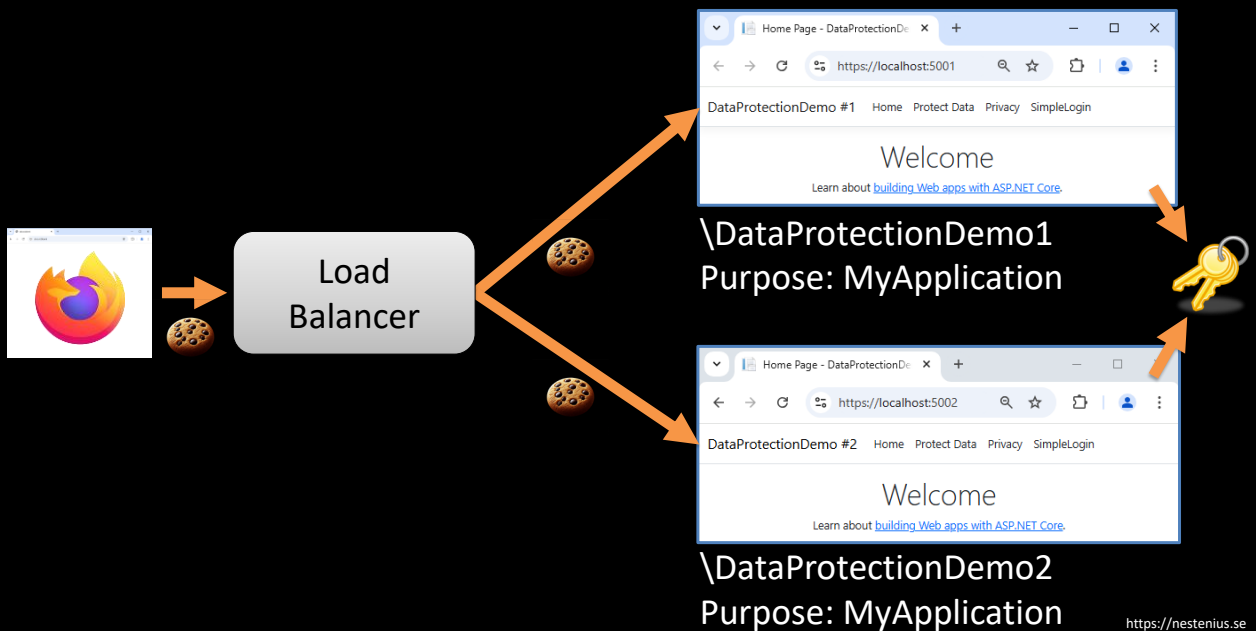
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Summary

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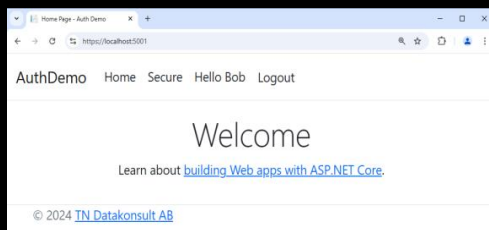
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Summary



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Part #2



<https://localhost:5001>

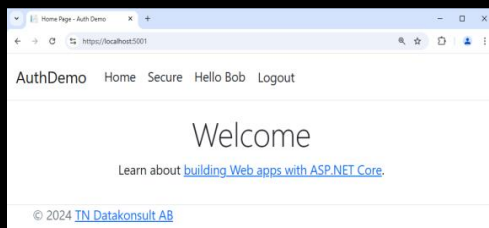
OpenID Connect Server
(IdentityServer)

<https://identityservice.secure.nu>

<https://nstenius.se>

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Problem #1 – HTTP-based Client



<http://localhost:5000>

OpenID Connect Provider
(IdentityServer)

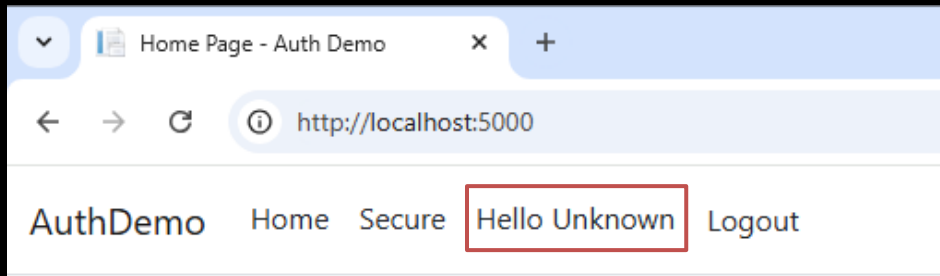
<https://identityservice.secure.nu>

<https://nstenius.se>

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Problem #1 – HTTP-based Client

Authenticating over **HTTP** Works great!



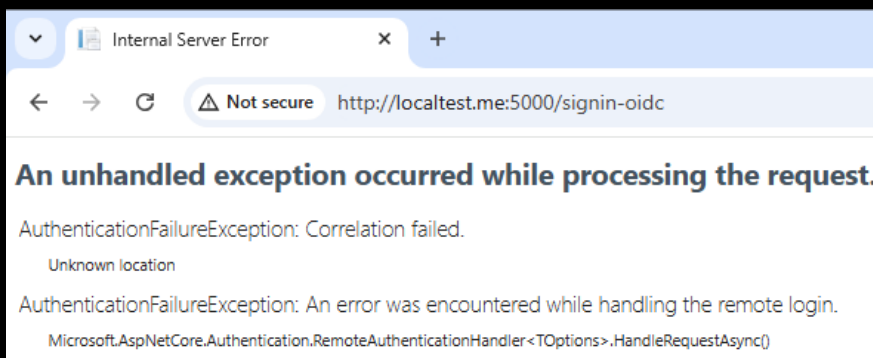
However, we have a problem!

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Problem #1 – HTTP-based Client

Authenticating over a **non-localhost** domain fails!



Why does it work over **localhost**?

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Problem #1 – HTTP-based Client

These are considered **Potentially Trustworthy**

- `http://127.0.0.1`
- `http://localhost`
- `http://*.localhost`
- `file://`

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Demonstration

```
<h1>Is this context secure?</h1>
<p id="secure-status">Checking...</p>

<script>
  const isSecure = window.isSecureContext

  document.getElementById('secure-status').textContent =
    isSecure ? "Yes, this is a secure context." :
              "No, this is not a secure context.";
</script>
```

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Problem #2 – Cookie Confusion

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Cookie Confusion

What is the difference?

Name	Value	Domain	Path	Expires / Max-A...	Size
.AspNetCore.cookie	CfDJ8GiF8Bbiy1RlrW0...	localhost	/	Session	2968
.AspNetCore.Session	CfDJ8GiF8Bbiy1RlrW0...	localhost	/	Session	207

ASP.NET Core

- **AspNetCore.cookie**
 - User authentication session (User login)
- **AspNetCore.Session**
 - Temporary session data

Authentication
Middleware



Session
Middleware



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Cookies Ingredients

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Cookies Ingredients

What is inside the authentication cookie?

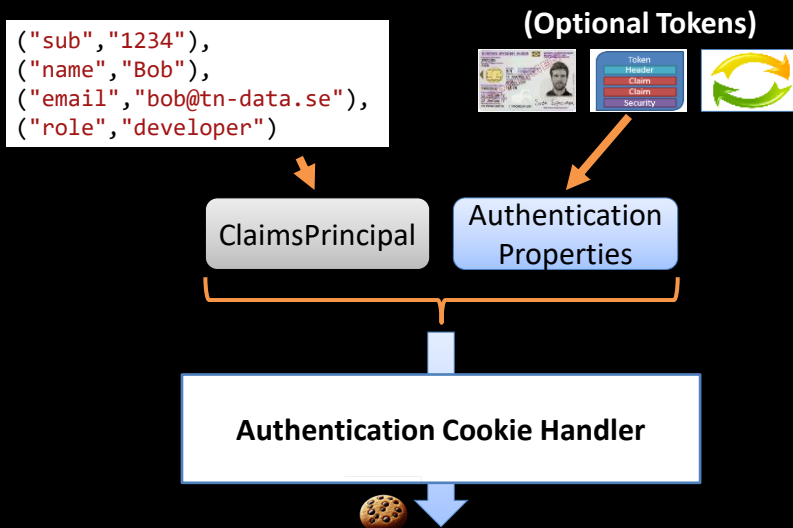
Name	Value	Domain	Path	Expires / Max-A...	Size
.AspNetCore.cookie	CfDJ8GiF8Bbiy1RlrW0...	localhost	/	Session	2968

Let's find out!

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Cookies Ingredients

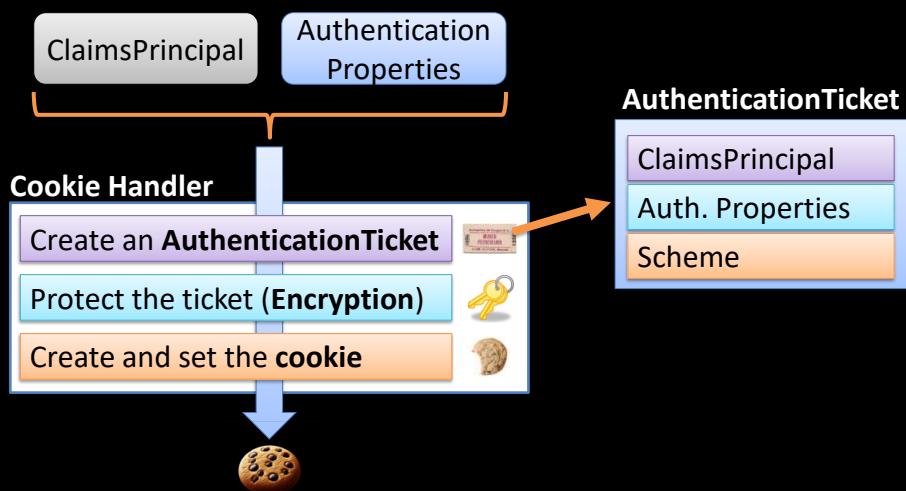


What happens inside the Cookie Handler?

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Cookies Ingredients



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What is inside the authentication cookie?

```
Set-Cookie: .AspNetCore.cookie=CfDJ8IgPXRNAZH1EkNA0dd3_JvtpV0ohM43sH81B8MW4
2T1L57tP0RRWmJu8svjUYUwIrYUOW4xo0ikC1OR3H87teUK4MYy58NBBAjC8RDRWhK06JVz0HuHW1eNSfunLJ_000b
Z1y6kY1F521kzI8cw8VLPzG4zm33hoynL2JHLTCowbugN-3kyOLrUSyVJdotB1ANGcvBT-
jz2rAFuOeUbzCdXXDjm98YzW3E99QffLamD1LlrKe7MX1y31NwdxzQ39m4WmGwUNa3b0iHoyDaeSKJvifmzlMSWT_8o
9x4AUtzC6_whIOFPVHXhYkwCXGTwtPIYeb_KOGuAvidb3S3tTkK4m3LHcf5Fx9ajfbE8RC_5FLOsPxbQiQcF3KgmIUP
0dnHmtK7MHczg4UR-OgBh_TA_sKyMoPy9Ak9sa4P-XvMwWysEk00zxHbi6F
VWbq5CNDe6W1QZG6z5PwtwGsVmx4vK8C3_4b9r-HU; path=/; secure; samesite=lax; httponly
```

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Demonstration

```
.AddCookie(o =>
{
    o.DataProtectionProvider = new MyDataProtector();
});

public class MyDataProtector : IDataProtector
{
    public IDataProtector CreateProtector(string purpose)
    {
        return new MyDataProtector();
    }
    public byte[] Protect(byte[] plaintext)
    {
        return plaintext;
    }
    public byte[] Unprotect(byte[] protectedData)
    {
        return protectedData;
    }
}
```

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Large Cookies



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Large Cookies

Multiple cookies may be used to store the data

Name	Value	Domain	Path	Expires / Max-Age	Size
.AspNetCore.cookie	chunks-6	localhost	/	Session	26
.AspNetCore.cookieC1	CfDJ8GiF8Bbiy...	localhost	/	Session	4008
.AspNetCore.cookieC2	QNuTdN84L4...	localhost	/	Session	4008
.AspNetCore.cookieC3	9pxdjwuL0eGS...	localhost	/	Session	4008
.AspNetCore.cookieC4	tKp8dv4Y2Ld4...	localhost	/	Session	4008
.AspNetCore.cookieC5	vAP3IXzQr1hg...	localhost	/	Session	4008
.AspNetCore.cookieC6	UhpSm298k8...	localhost	/	Session	1334

Can we improve this? Yes, we explore this later!

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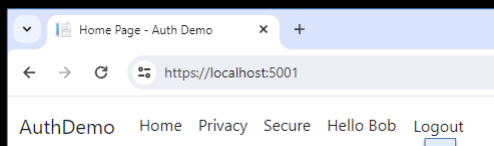
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Insecure SignOut

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SignOut



```
public async Task Logout()
{
    //Sign out from this specific scheme
    await HttpContext.SignOutAsync("cookie");
}
```

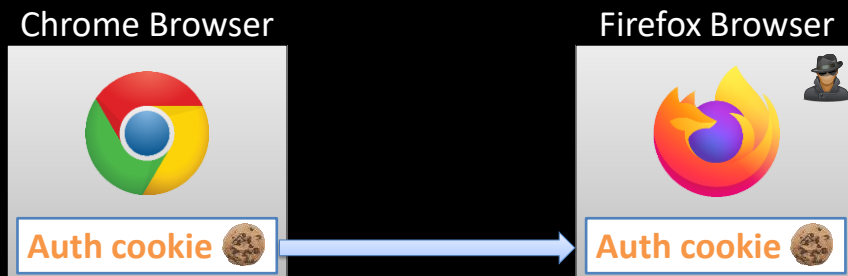


```
Set-Cookie: .AspNetCore.cookie=; expires=Thu, 01 Jan 1970 00:00:00 GMT; ...
```

<https://nstenius.se>

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Demonstration



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Putting Your Cookies On A Diet

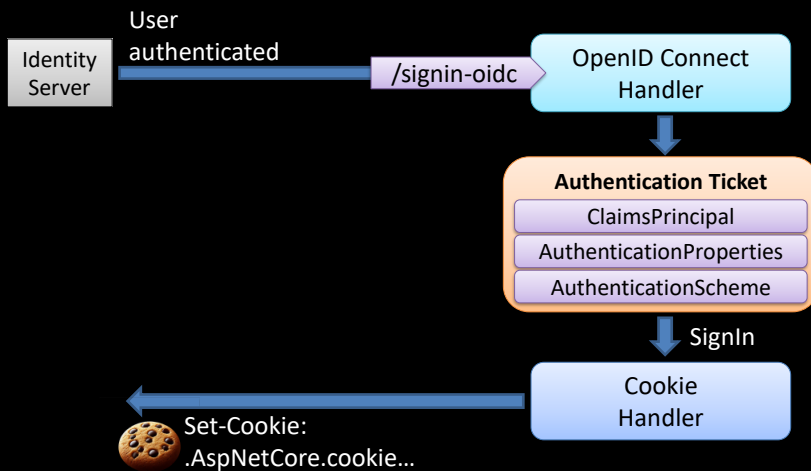


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Putting Your Cookies On A Diet

The authentication stack so far

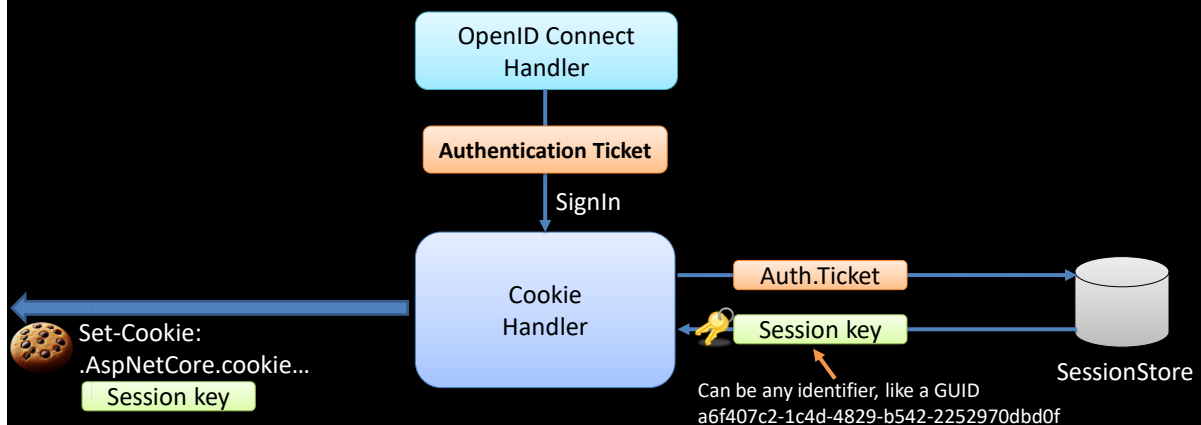


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Putting Your Cookies On A Diet

We can add a cookie **SessionStore**

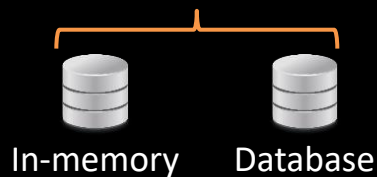


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Putting Your Cookies On A Diet

```
public interface ITicketStore
{
    Task<string> StoreAsync(AuthenticationTicket ticket);
    Task RenewAsync(string key, AuthenticationTicket ticket);
    Task<AuthenticationTicket> RetrieveAsync(string key);
    Task RemoveAsync(string key);
}
```



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Demonstration – Minimalistic SessionStore

```
public class MySessionStore : ITicketStore
{
    private readonly ConcurrentDictionary<string, AuthenticationTicket> mytickets = new();

    public async Task RemoveAsync(string key)
    {
        if (mytickets.ContainsKey(key))
            mytickets.TryRemove(key, out _);
    }

    public async Task RenewAsync(string key, AuthenticationTicket ticket)
    {
        mytickets[key] = ticket;
    }

    public async Task<AuthenticationTicket> RetrieveAsync(string key)
    {
        return mytickets.TryGetValue(key, out var ticket) ? ticket : default;
    }

    public async Task<string> StoreAsync(AuthenticationTicket ticket)
    {
        var key = Guid.NewGuid().ToString();
        if (mytickets.TryAdd(key, ticket))
            return key;
        else
            throw new Exception("Failed to add entry to MySessionStore");
    }
}
```

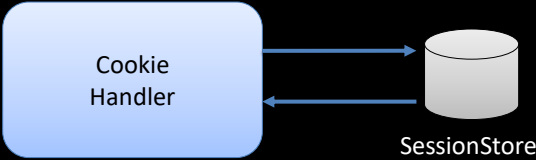
This also solves
the SignOut issue



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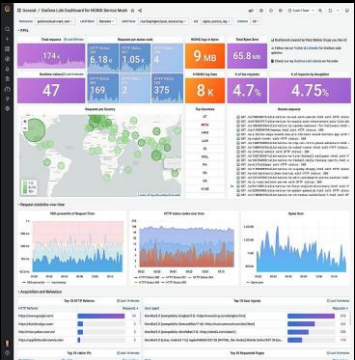
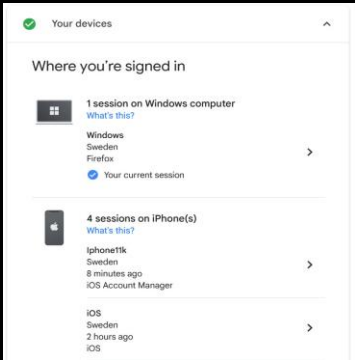
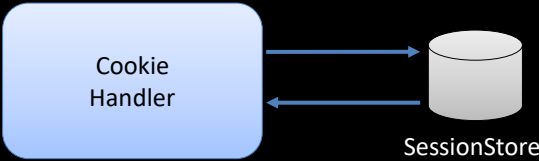
Possibilities using a Session Store



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Possibilities using a Session Store

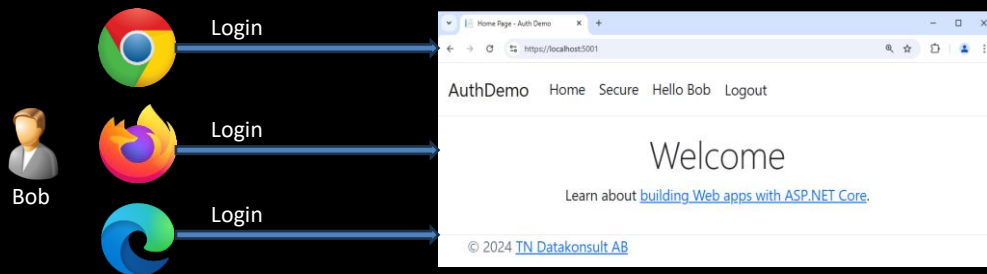


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Demonstration – Advanced SessionStore

```
.AddCookie("cookie", o =>
{
    ...
    o.SessionStore = new AdvancedSessionStore();
})
```



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Insecure Redirects

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Insecure Redirect

What is the problem?

```
[HttpPost]
[ValidateAntiForgeryToken]
public async Task<IActionResult> Login(LoginModel loginCredentials)
{
    var claims = new List<Claim>()
        { new("sub", "1234"), new("name", "Bob") };

    var identity = new ClaimsIdentity(claims, "pwd");
    var principal = new ClaimsPrincipal(identity);

    await HttpContext.SignInAsync(scheme: "cookie", principal);

    return Redirect(loginCredentials.ReturnUrl);
}
```

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Demonstration – Introducing LocalRedirect

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the title 'Login - Auth Demo'. The address bar displays the URL 'https://localhost:5001/SimpleLogin/Login?ReturnUrl=%2FSimpleLogin'. The page content includes a navigation bar with links: 'AuthDemo', 'Home', 'SimpleLogin', 'SessionStorage', and 'Login'. The main heading is 'Login'. Below it, there are two input fields: 'UserName' with the value 'bob' and 'Password' with the value 'bob'. A blue 'Login' button is positioned below the password field. At the bottom of the page, there is a copyright notice: '© 2025 Tore Nstenius'.

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The Back-Channel

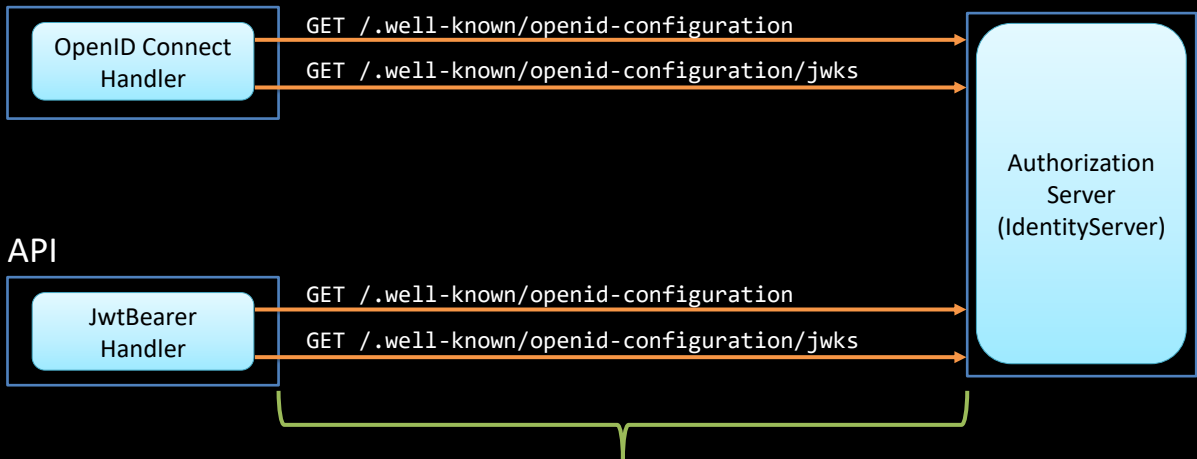
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The Back-Channel

At startup, the clients downloads the OIDC config

Client



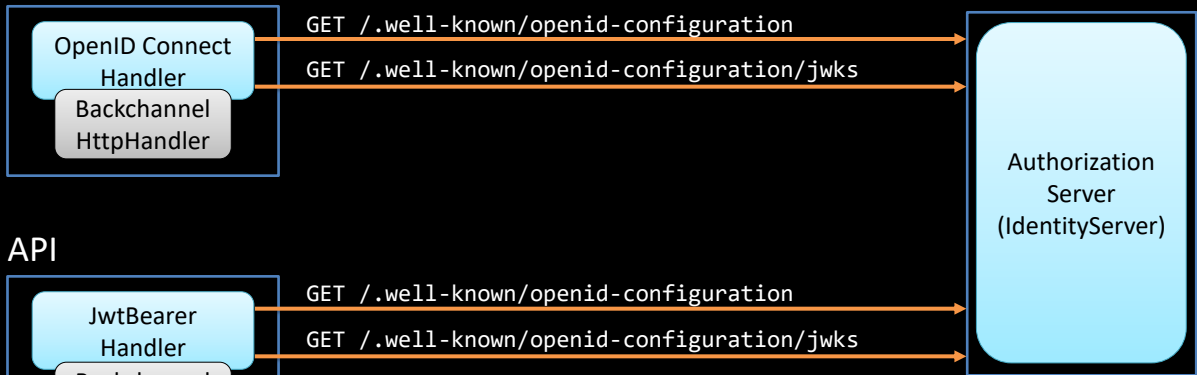
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The Back-Channel

This traffic can be captured

Client



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Demonstration – Logging the Back-Channel

```
public class BackChannelListener : DelegatingHandler
{
    public BackChannelListener() : base(new HttpClientHandler())
    { }

    protected async override Task<HttpResponseMessage> SendAsync(HttpRequestMessage request,
                                                                    CancellationToken token)
    {
        var sw = new Stopwatch();
        sw.Start();

        var response = await base.SendAsync(request, token);

        sw.Stop();

        // TODO...

        return response;
    }
}
```

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Demonstration – Logging the Back Channel – Part 2

```
var responseContent = await response.Content.ReadAsStringAsync();

var url = request?.RequestUri?.AbsoluteUri;
var timeTaken = sw.ElapsedMilliseconds.ToString();

WriteToLog("");
WriteToLog($"### BackChannel request to {url} took {timeTaken} ms");

// HACK: Never run this in production
WriteToLog("#####");
WriteToLog(responseContent);
WriteToLog("#####");
WriteToLog("");

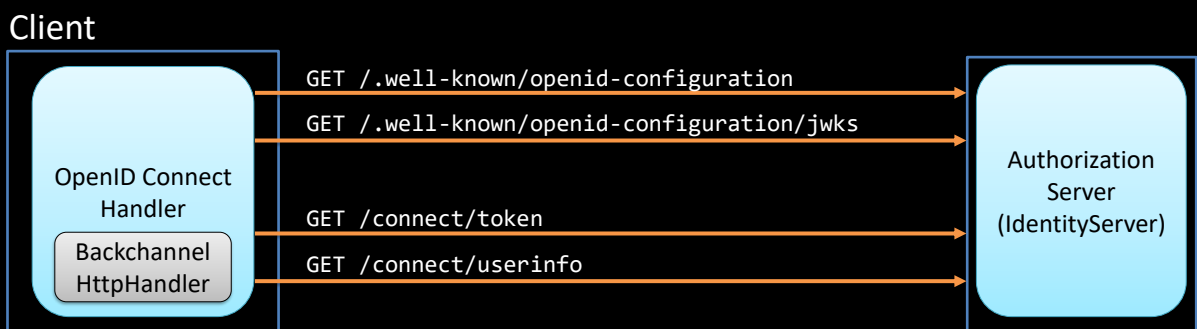
private static void WriteToLog(string message)
{
    Log.Logger.ForContext("SourceContext", "BackChannelListener")
        .Information(message);
}
```

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Demonstration – Logging the Back-Channel – Part 3

We will see the following requests in the output



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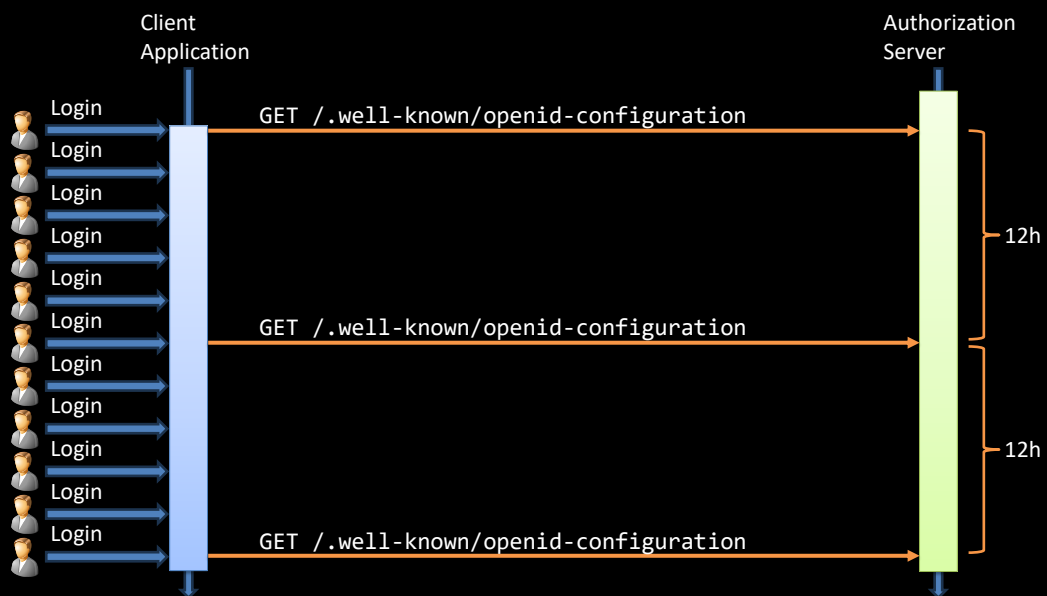
70

Back-Channel Trouble

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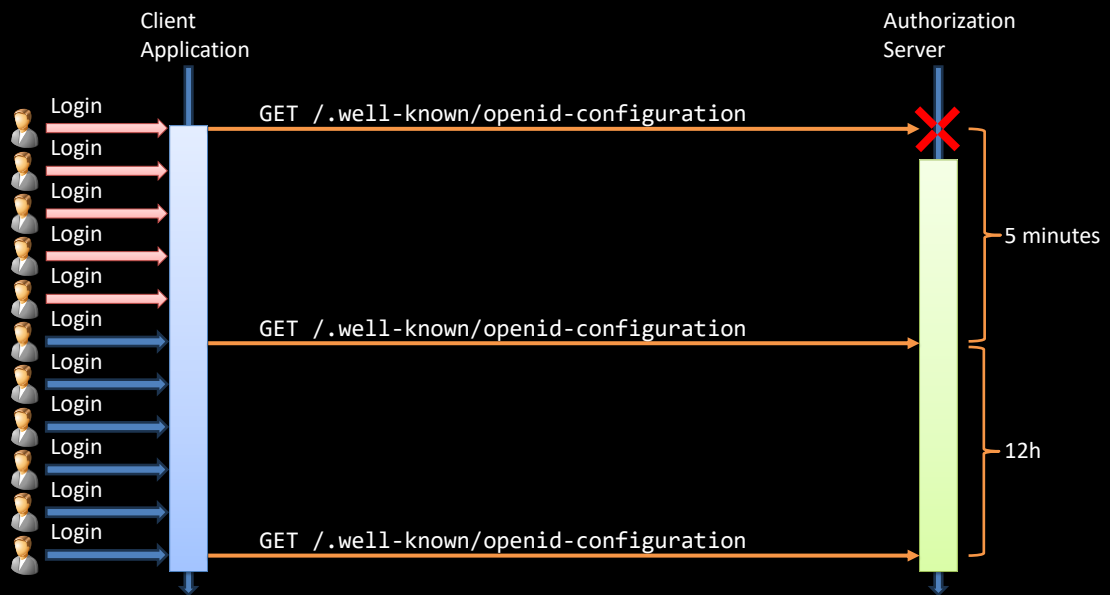
Back-Channel Trouble



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Back-Channel Trouble



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What changed in Version 6.0.26?

September
2024



Microsoft.AspNetCore.Authentication.OpenIdConnect by Microsoft
ASP.NET Core middleware that enables an application to support the OpenID Connect authentication workflow.

6.0.26

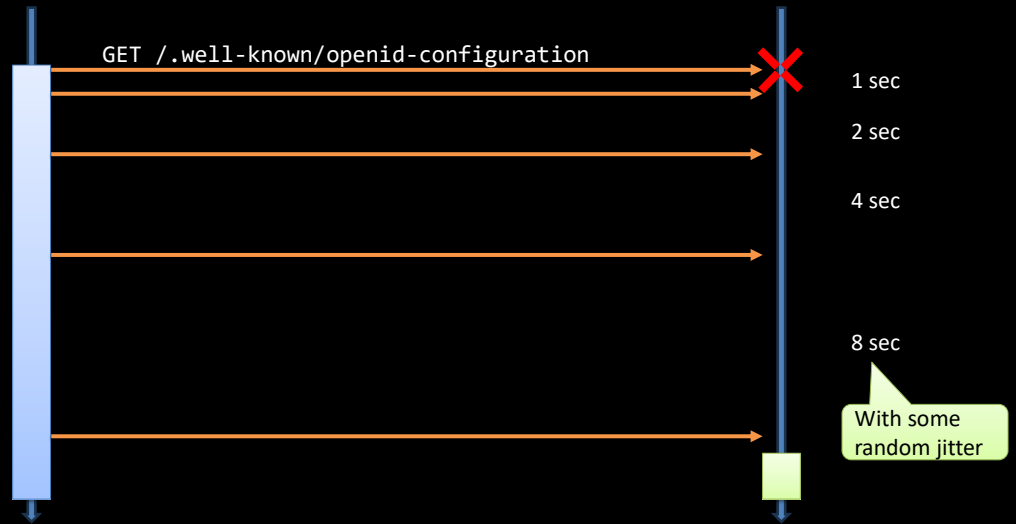
9.0.0

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Back-Channel Trouble

They introduced **exponential backoff** at startup

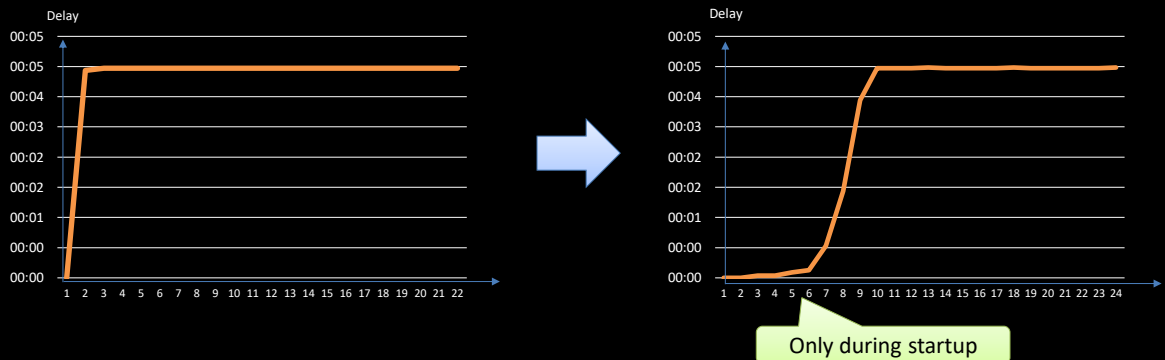


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Back Channel Trouble

They introduced **exponential backoff**



How can we control this?

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Back Channel Trouble

We can control by setting these properties

```
.AddOpenIdConnect("oidc", o =>
{
    // how often an automatic metadata refresh should occur.
    o.RefreshInterval = new TimeSpan(0, 12, 0, 0); //Default 12 hour

    // The time between retries
    o.RefreshInterval = new TimeSpan(0, 0, 5, 0); //Default 5 min
    ...
})
```

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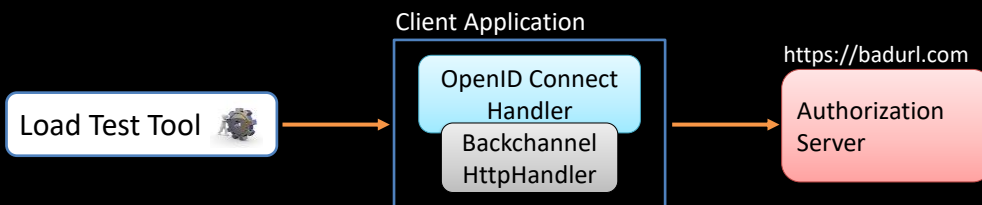
Demonstration - Back Channel Trouble

```
.AddOpenIdConnect("oidc", o =>
{
    o.Authority = "https://badurl.com";

    o.BackchannelHttpHandler = new BackChannelRetryHandler();
    o.BackchannelTimeout = TimeSpan.FromSeconds(1);
});
```

CTRL + F5

```
// Stop sending the logs to the console
Log.Logger = new LoggerConfiguration()
    .WriteTo.Console()
    .CreateLogger();
```



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QUESTIONS?



Presentation and code

<https://github.com/tn-dataab/PublicBlogContent>

Blog

<https://nstenius.se>

Work

<https://tn-data.se>

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