

## **An Account of a Bug, a Puddle of Water, and an Ordinary Man**

It was Tuesday evening. I came back from work, and walked slowly upstairs to my apartment. With my mind being occupied, I paid little attention to my surroundings, and almost stepped on it.

A bug was sprawled out on the cement, by a puddle of water- a spatter of an afternoon rain mimicking Montana. It didn't move. In fact, it looked somewhat deceased. But, heck, what did I know about bugs?

I bent down to inspect it, and realized it was a computer bug. And since one does not come across these all too often, I was quite surprised at that. I shrugged my shoulders and went into my apartment, wondering what it was doing there in the first place, outside of its computer.

It was still there on the following morning. Although Montana had gone through some substantial size reduction. I went to work, came back, and while reflecting upon some investment opportunities, and the acquired taste I have recently developed for capers, I saw the bug; it was still there. And Montana, it was more like Delaware now.

There was no reposition the next morning. The bug was still at the same place, except that Delaware, which used to be Montana, had dried up leaving behind just a dark stain on the cement.

When I came home at night, it was still there, despite the bitter cold and the freezing rain. And Montana that turned into Delaware that evaporated previously into a mere stain, turned into nothing now, and disappeared all together. Bending down, I prodded at the bug, which in its turn refused to move. It did not look well, to say the least.

Truth be told, I knew close to nothing about computer bugs. But in spite- and probably more so because- of this lack of knowledge, I wondered if that was a normal thing. It sitting there for three days, that is.

However, I did read somewhere that ticks could stay at the same exact spot for 10 years without feeding, just waiting for prey to walk by under them. And when it does,

they simply let go, and whoop, they plummet down on the oblivious victim. Perhaps computer bugs were like that too, I wondered.

In any case, the critter looked somewhat miserable there on the cold cement floor, and undoubtedly out of its element. I wondered whether it caught some virus. That wouldn't be such an implausible thought, with all those nasty viruses running around the Net these days. There are probably millions of them, being unleashed every day, crawling in the veins of the web.

All things considered, I was compelled to come to the rescue. So I scooped the thing up, and hooked it onto the USB connection of my computer, upon entering my apartment. I transferred it into my machine, and then ran the antivirus on it. I knew it could take a while, so I took off my suit, and turned to whip up a quick dinner. By the time I finished, the antivirus was done. However, it didn't seem like any germs were eradicated. And with my limited knowledge about bugs, software, diseases, and computers in general, I just left it at that. At least the insect was in its element now.

A few days had passed, with nothing out of the ordinary taking place. I created a shortcut to the bug on my desktop, and checked on its properties every now and then. It was still running.

However, Sunday brought changes.

I took my time getting up that morning. I read The Post and drank my coffee in bed, and went about running errands. I came home at night, fired up my computer, and went in the shower.

And that was the end of the world, as everyone knew it.

When I got out, the computer screen was flashing with a million warning signs; red and green, like a Christmas tree. It was swamped with alarms and blocks, flags and banners all screaming: WARNING.

WARNING

WARNING

WARNING

WARNING

WARNING

It was stuck, it was locked, it was banned, it was blocked. Attempting any kind of action, other than shutting the damn thing off, was utterly useless, inviting only more trouble. A big flashing sign popped up on top of the other million flashing signs, saying: “ACCESS DENIED”

I was denied.

My computer has been invaded, complicated, it was utterly infected.

Most likely with whatever mysterious virus the bug had carried.

Sugar snap peas.

I have never seen anything like that.

Should I call a technician? The Geek squad? The fire department? An exorcist? 911?

There was nothing in the world that could fix *that*.

My computer was finished.

Done with.

Caput.

And since it was Sunday, there was nothing I could do about it anyhow. So, I shut the machine off, and went to sleep.

*The denials and the warnings, the flags and banners will probably be there in the morning, I thought. Although I secretly hoped that magically, they won't.*

But the world will never forget the following day. For it was the biggest technical SNAFU that ever ensued. The cliff notes for the subsequent events and their consequences, embodied the following information:

Wall Street collapsed, jail doors opened automatically, offering untimely freedom to all prisoners inside them, traffic lights began to nervously blink from green to red to orange, bank accounts were erased like they never existed, airports shut down, trains were

derailed off tracks, data was lost never to again be found. The Net was infected. It was down.

The country was a mess. Nothing functioned, for a terrible, mysterious virus had penetrated the web, and contaminated every single computer that was connected to it. And when it was done spreading the disease through the network, it proceeded to all the machines that weren't linked to the web, as well.

An airborne computer virus.

No one and nothing was ready for such a thing.  
A third World War was on the brink of breaking.

People were arrested in the hundreds: Hackers, IT technicians, social workers, democrats, Green Peace volunteers, lobbyists, librarians, ice cream truck drivers (a rumor told of some sort of an underground operation, involving ice cream trucks drivers), dentists, botanists, postmen, interior designers, and more. All were interrogated on account of anti-statism conspiracy.

But they never caught the accountable/s. There was no one to point fingers at, even though there was plenty of finger pointing to go around. There was no one to blame, although everyone could think of at least one person to hold at fault including their neighbors, their mother-in-law, their real estate agent, their father's dog, Stalin, Lenin, Usama Bin Laden, Hugo Chavez, Hitler, and God.

People wanted to put someone on the stake, and to preferably see them burn and suffer. And still, no one had been found liable. They could hold no one responsible.

It took the world 20 years to recover.  
And it was never the same again.  
For better, or for worse.

In any case, strangely enough, I myself came down with something, the day following the commencement of these unfortunate events. I called in sick and stayed at home that day. I was burning up. I managed to drag myself into my car and drive- half in a daze- to the emergency room, where I was told I had a virus.

A peculiar virus at that.

The symptoms were arcane, including but not limited to a red and green rash. However, as baffled as he was, the Doctor informed me that there was nothing to do about it. Plenty of rest and lots of fluid he said. He then instructed me to call the emergency room should it ever get worse, and then added, “It’s some sort of a virus”, shrugged his shoulders, and that was that.

So, I stayed home for an entire week and watched the national disaster unfold from my sick bed. I felt better after a few weeks, although the red-green rash never vanished.

A few months later, I read in the newspaper about some new epidemic that wiped out an entire town in china. People were quarantined, excommunicated. A massive sanitization operation took place; chemicals like human pesticides were dispersed on the entire area, and the area that bordered that area, from airplanes. Then everything was burned to the ground.

A week later, it surfaced in Australia as well. The signs were inexplicable; fever, weakness, and other strange symptoms that included but were not limited to a red and green rash.

Sadly, there is no moral to this story. It’s just an account of some strange events; of a bug, a puddle of water, and an ordinary man.