

## **Chapter 31: The Balloon Goes Up Day 15**

### **At the Sunfish Operating Building:**

The day at the Sunfish Operations Building starts like normal. Most everyone is on station and the level of noise is normal as is the level of activity. Development, test, and support work continue through the morning. At the normal lunch hour, some individuals leave the building. Others gather on the balconies or at the near-by picnic tables.

Armageddon strikes as the computers' internal clocks tick down to 1313 hours.

### **At the Trawler's Hotel :**

Listening to Daisy 3, shouts are heard, a few words of Hindi, Urdu, Albanian, etc. are recorded.

"I am hearing plenty of pain," announces Anna. "There seems to be wide spread panic across the developers bull pen."

### **At the Sunfish Operating Building:**

In the Operations Building developers, testers, configurations support personnel are beginning to experience an unpleasant lack of control over their computers displays. The input devices such as keyboard and mouses are no longer effective. The only control they have is the master power-off button on their machines. In front of these troubled people their displays exhibited an on-screen notice:

"Your computer and its data have been locked tight. Any attempt to analyze the encryption may lead to permanent destruction of the contents and the hardware. The only permitted functionality is the power-off. Once powered off a machine can not be restarted without destroying the contents and the hardware.

"Your computer is being held for ransom. A corporate-wide ransom value of \$350 million US has been set. Your management, Gianni Circolare, has twelve hours to post a notice of agreement to this value. When the sum is paid the encryption will be removed and the original contents restored to their original condition. Contact: [high\\_priest@fungobatJerky.com](mailto:high_priest@fungobatJerky.com) for payment instructions from a non-infected computer or cell phone."

### **At the Trawler's Hotel Suites :**

Listening to Daisy 1, a shut of despair emanates from one developer who has turned off the computer and tried to restart it only to hear the death rattle of blown fuses, the smell of plastic, the snap of blown capacitors.

“I hope lady nada did not overlay her cards,” states Brian. “We do not want to start a fire. We have one computer blowing itself to melted plastic on power-up. That should stop the forensic investigation in its tracks.”

“It sounds like a developer team meeting is forming and moving to the Main Conference Room,” reports Ron from Daisy 5 listening post.

“Here they come,” chimes in Randy from Daisy 4 listening post.

### **At the Sunfish Operating Building:**

The developers, testers, configurations support personnel begin to file into the Conference Room where Daisy 4 records the panic.

“Calm down, calm down,” leads Ramesh. “We are experiencing a ransom-ware attack. Gianni Circolare will speak to us shortly.”

About thirty minutes later in walks Gianni Circolare and announces “I have just notified the Cataliana Executive Senior Vice President Wayne Duffy of the problem. I had to wake him. He has authorized payment to a maximum acceptable number above to I am allowed to settle.

“Please return to you workstations but do not engage in any attempt to turn-off or to restore you computers. We do not want to lose any more assets. You may leave for the day once you collect your personal items.

Circolare and Ramesh wait until the attendees leave before beginning to discuss the matter further.

“I have been told to start at a \$250 thousand US,” says .Circolare “I will submit the counter offer immediately. What do you think?”

“We are hosed,” replies Ramesh. “How did this Ransom-ware creep into our systems?”

Circolare commences a negotiation session with [priest@fungobatJerky.com](mailto:priest@fungobatJerky.com) at a starting counter offer of \$250 thousand US. The back and forth offers and counter offers continue through the afternoon.

“I am going to take a supper break for an hour or so,” Circolare informs Ramesh at the normal business day end. “I should be back here by 1900 hours. If you leave the building before I return let security know I am working into the night and leave the first floor lights on for me.”

“Will do.”

At 1900 Ulcinj time, Ramesh calls his ‘rouge’ friend.

“Sunfish was hit by a ransom-ware attack this afternoon. Everything was ‘locked up and development frozen until a ransom is paid. Sunfish management is in negotiations with the hackers-pirates as we speak. You should not see a ransom ware attack related to the one we have experienced

here since we have not merged any artifacts from your development branch to your isolated trunk folder.

Short silence.

“The only contact your computer and mine have had has been either email or VOIP. So you should be well isolated.”

Short silence.

“Circolare just needs to cleanup Ulcinj. Then we can continue with your modifications and enhancements turning Sunfish into Stingray.”

Short silence.

“We should be back on-line and on-target in the morning. I will call you the regular time.”

Ramesh close-up his desk, leaves the lights for the first floor on. Before exiting he calls security to let them know that Circolare will be returning shortly to do a bit more work this evening.

About 2335 hours that evening Gianni Circolare decides that it is not his money and agrees to a final tendered offer from [priest@fungobatJerky.com](mailto:priest@fungobatJerky.com) of \$3.5 million US. With the agreement made Circolare starts the transfer from a Montenegro banking account to a Cayman Islands banking account. He stays at the Operations Building long enough to witness the beginning of ‘freeing’ of his assets. Once the unlocking has started he sends a message to Wayne Duffyt that the ransom has been negotiated to \$3.5 million and the assets are being restored. Then he turns- off the lights and leaves.

### **At the Trawler’s Hotel : 2337 hours**

Going out on the balcony where Jane, Mark, Anna, Sandi and Lionel have been waiting Brian announces, “ I just received confirmation from the Spook Tower that the ransom was paid and credited to the Cayman account as instructed. I have transmitted to decryption sequence to Daisy 3. The Sunfish computers should begin to return to service minus one that the fools sacrificed by challenging ladykada’s Ransom-ware Bomb.

“I am pulling the plug on all of the Daisies,” announces Brian. “We will start covering our tracks, tomorrow at 0430 hours local time all of the Daisies will receive a poison pill message that will eradicate the hardware and firmware that the supported our surveillance efforts. The less non-surreptitious features of the Daisies will still function and provide service until ‘spiked’ by DorsalFin’s final command at a later date.

With that Brian pours himself a glass of Pinot Noir. He then leaves the balcony for a moment and returns with a box of expensive Cohiba Siglo III. He offers everyone a Cuban cigar if they wish. A couple of takers enjoy on puffs and wine with him.

In between puffs Mark says “You know Lionel, the Evil Empire would have won this episode if you had not discovered that micro SD card and known how to explore its contents.”

“At least we were able to corral Spinnaker-Sunfish in Georgia and here,” states Brian. “So your contribution is complete. I suspect you will be given a nice exit package from Asymmetric Services when you return to Raleigh. I have Randy and Ron scheduled to drive you and Sandi to Tivat. We have a short charter flight for you to Milan and then to Newark and finally Raleigh. Enjoy the First Class accommodations on your uncle’s dime. Anna and the other linguist will be traveling with you as far as Tivat.

“There has been a change of plans. So if you and Sandi wish to vacation for awhile that is good as well. But you should leave Montenegro and go to Western Europe.

“I think it is wise that you are not around Ulcinj as we tidy up a bit here.”

“Thanks for the options. But Sandi and I would like to see the grandkids. So we will take that offer to Raleigh instead of a prolong Western Europe vacation.

“I will miss both of you,” finishes Jane. “Thank you for being here to help us.”

The final ah-shucks and thanks continue for a couple of minutes more before Anna, Sandi, and Lionel retiring for the night.

Brian, Mark, and Jane remain the balcony to have a final discussion. Randy joins the Three Ulcinj Plumbers.

“Anna, Sandi, and Lionel need not know that Daisy 3 and Daisy 4 will not receive their ‘poison pill’ tomorrow. They still have work to do.

“Randy, are you ready for another date with the Ulcinj ladies?”

Smiling Randy says, “For God and Country.”

So a chaotic day closes in Ulcinj with an apparent subplot to be played shortly.