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Be Still My Bleeding Heart!

Q&A on the Heartbleed Bug

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What is it?

Heartbleed is a bug in the method a server and you use to secure your communications back and forth. It is present when you see the little padlock in your browser and the URL begins with HTTPS.

Technical explanation

It is a bug in OPEN SSL. It affects version 1.0.1 through 1.0.1f (inclusive), and it affects servers that run Apache and NGINX mostly. Open SSL is used in a lot of things and the complete list of what is affected has yet to be tabulated, so there's probably other stuff too. Apache and NGINX are the most important ones to start with.

What does it do?

It allows bad guys to get important secret info.

Technical explanation

A malicious actor can use the heart beat feature in the vulnerable versions of OPEN SSL to read the servers live memory, 64k at a time, an unlimited number of times. They can try to

extract valuable information, such as username and passwords, or worse, the private key used in public/private keypair crypto from the data they collect. This is especially damning as the heartbeat channel typically isn't monitored, so this attack leaves no traces.

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