



When Sysadmins Ruled the Earth

Cory Doctorow

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When multiple terrorist acts bring the world to its knees, the future of mankind rests in the hands of a few, mostly overweight, data center geeks.

When Sysadmins Ruled the Earth Details

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From Reader Review When Sysadmins Ruled the Earth for online ebook

Richard Magahiz says

I listened to this out of curiosity when I saw someone in the tech community recommend it as supplemental reading for Ops people. The story didn't really speak to me all that much, with characters who were just a little too cartoony and arguments over conflicts I couldn't bring myself to care that much about. There isn't much action and the character scenes felt like they were done by the numbers, not truly felt. People complain about some of the plot points which seem farfetched, which I don't disagree with, though I think part of it is just the way he introduces them without suggesting that there might be a reasonable basis. I think it could have used an editorial shakedown to clean up these annoyances, and to boost up its strengths which I think come at the very end when the main character muses about what the point of civilization is.

Johan says

I really enjoyed this story. The first pages brought me back to the time when I was on call 24/7. Getting that phone-call in the middle of the night. And if you couldn't restart the program or reboot the server remotely, driving as fast as possible to your work to try it on site in a noisome serverroom. This was very demanding work and you became oblivious to what happened outside, in this story war with all kinds of weapons of mass destruction. This is the first story I've read by Doctorow and the another good thing is it is freely available from feedbooks.com and the author's website.

Saysa says

Un libro que me gustó mucho al principio pero tengo la sensación de que el final ha sido como muy precipitado. Parece como que al autor no le interesaba lo que iban a hacer los personajes para intentar sobrevivir en ese mundo.

Sarah says

This was a quick one night read. It is a short story originally located in the book Overclocked: Stories of the Future Present. I read it as a separate story because it was sent to me by a friend. I really liked it.

It is sometimes hard for authors to write shorter stories. There is a lot of information that needs to get across to the reader in a limited, short amount of time.

The basic premise of this story is that one day a virus hits that kills off most of the people in the world. The only ones left(or so we think throughout) is separate groups of System Admins gathered around the world.

I felt that the idea for the story was a good one and I really liked the characters.

Gastón Rivata says

Es un divertido cuento largo, que creo no se supone que sea divertido pero es inevitable al tener un montón de referencias al particular mundo de IT. Esta bien para un rato.

Remo says

Historia corta sobre un apocalipsis mundial tras el que solo quedan vivos (y conectados) unos pocos sysadmins a los que les pillan el fin del mundo en habitaciones ventiladas, subterráneas y con energía de repuesto. Me pareció muy entretenido. Mención especial a la jefa de sysadmins de Google, toda una estrella.

Dann Todd says

Read as part of the Wastelands collection of short stories. Found this particular story to be notable. What I said in the review of Wastelands...

The nut of this story is that as the world failed, a group of sysadmins kept the internet alive due to their presence in over pressured server farms. The excess air pressure kept the bug that was killing everyone out. There were two obvious holes in the plot. 1) that there would be enough server farms with auxiliary power supplies to maintain some sort of network. 2) that a bunch of computer geeks writing lengthy treatises could create a better world.

I am those geeks. Even I know better.

Mawdawgie says

Finished reading this last night. The other stuff I have read of his I have liked much better. I don't know why but it seemed to me that he wrote this in a real hurry. Can't complain too much about a free ebook.

Andy Parkes says

Review Originally Posted: <http://andyparkes.co.uk/blog/index.ph...>

I guess this doesn't technically count as a book as it's actually a short story...but I enjoyed it so much I wanted to write about it anyway!

We've all heard about nuclear bunkers and it's been written about in fiction and movies about how important

world figures would disappear into these bunkers in the event of some major global catastrophe.

Something we don't really think about is data centres. Many of them make the fact they are highly secure one of their selling points. Lots of them are also designed to withstand a nuclear attack.

This is the angle the story takes. If nuclear war broke out, all around the world there would be groups of network engineers, safe and sound keeping the Internet running! The fact they'd be in control of a massive worldwide communications tool would put them in a position of power. The story follows one specific group and the decisions they make about what to do in the aftermath.

I'll stop here as I'm in danger of writing more than the story itself! As I said it's more of a short story than a book but I really enjoyed it.

Eternalaeon says

The concept was nice, but the execution was really horrible. The whole thing is like your parent trying to drop references to show how cool and hip they are with the kids these days. Characterization was weak with mild bits seemingly tacked on to try to humanize them and promptly forget. There are far better works of nerd literature out there.

Zachariah Carlson says

I kind of like the idea of decentralized communication networks ushering in a new era of self-governance, but I just couldn't get behind this ideal being more important than food and shelter during a disaster. And when the protagonist runs out of food, it turns out he agrees with me. Go figure.

Isaac VR says

Es la primera obra que leo de Doctorow, como alguien que pasa el 95.5% de su tiempo en internet, siempre me topo con escritores que no entienden como funciona el cyberspacio y hacen conjeturas que parecen más reflexiones de un anciano chocheando que una novela que entienda la tecnología.

Doctorow rompe con todo ello, por algo trabaja con el staff de Boing Boing. Es divertido leer sobre un mundo postapocalíptico que existe con los recursos actuales (incluso hay un guiño a los Doodles)...

En fin, la novela te atrapa de principio a fin y es muy muy muy muy muy muy divertida.

Nuno says

El guión se basa en una idea bastante tratada en ciencia ficción y otros géneros: gran parte de la población

empieza a morir por múltiples ataques terroristas a nivel mundial. La novedad en este caso es que el grupo de salvadores está formado por administradores de sistemas.

En general, la historia está bien desarrollada, si bien es bastante lineal y los acontecimientos bastante esperables. Se reflejan todos los tópicos tanto en el género de desastres como en el de *hackers*. No aporta mucho pero se puede pasar un buen rato.

Laura says

[*When sysadmins ruled the world* is a simple, idealistic, and somewhat tender sh

Charles says

When I was still in school, I remember Adrian telling me about a story he read where some sort of global Armageddon-level catastrophe happened, and the only survivors were the System Administrators who happened to be in their hermetically sealed, climate controlled, battery backed-up data centers. They communicated with each other via Usenet and IRC.

He couldn't remember the name of the story or the author, so even though it sounded awesome, I mostly forgot about it. Right up until January 14th, when Cory Doctorow posted it on BoingBoing. It turns out he was the author Adrian couldn't remember.

The story is short, and explaining the premise gives away quite a lot, so I won't go into any more specifics, but I really enjoyed reading this. Docotorow spent some time as a Sys Admin, among his other nerd credentials, and you can feel it in the way the characters think and speak. I (obviously) have no clue how I'd react with an event like this, but the reactions of the characters seem plausible. There was one thing that really stuck out to me right at the end, though.

I don't think it's really a spoiler here, but there's really only two ways this story could end: they stay in the data center forever and die of starvation, or they risk entering into the world. The next paragraph contains spoilers, so if you don't want to know what happens, don't read any further.

After they leave the data center, it seems they never went back. Given the higher purpose all these characters seemed to believe they were called to, it's very surprising to me that they were so gung-ho about keeping their servers running for the first several days and then they never went back after discovering it was safe outside again. I guess it could be because the buildings had no power and the generators ran out of fuel, but surely that group could have engineered their way out of that problem.

I guess there are several possibilities for this:

They are Sys Admins. Of course they went back. It's who they are; it's in their blood. Why would you think anything else?

The world has been destroyed to the point that it isn't feasible to stay alive while maintaining this no-longer critical infrastructure.

The characters have experienced tragedy and they want to start new lives; leaving their old lives (and jobs) in the data center.

I don't know which ending Doctorow intended. Or, frankly, which one I prefer.
