

Self Hosted

9th of December, 2020. The night air was cool and dry, and I had the windows open while sitting in voice chat with my friends waiting for midnight. *Cyberpunk 2077*. With bated breath, we watched the clock, shooting the breeze, as we do... until *they* weren't. Eerily they all stop mid conversation. 10:49:33 PM. As if time had stopped. I did too, for a brief moment. This *had* happened before, but this time it felt different, it felt a little off. Giving it the old *The IT Crowd* fix didn't work this time either.

Upon pressing the button, the fans announced their presence in synchronous symphony, and when they subsided an unfamiliar message greeted me.



Word for word, searching for the meaning of it, the only explanation given to me was that I didn't plug my drive in, or I didn't install Windows. Clearly, not the case. Or maybe it was. "Time for a teardown," I thought. Rummaging through the junk drawers, I fish for the screwdriver and get to tearing down the former Tower of Power. With panels strewn all over the unmade bed and a glass side panel sitting in my chair, a worn screwdriver in one hand and the creased motherboard manual in the other, I play hot potato with the motherboard and the drive every time I find a slot on the board. Each time, same thing, same message, no dice. Cycling through the slots multiple times with eventually enough proficiency that it looks more like a

ritual than diagnostics. Eventually I gave up, calling it a night. Except my pride wouldn't leave it at that.



Windows 10. That's gotta be the problem. Those Linus Tech Tips dudes kept talking about how "Windows 10 sucks and Linux is getting better every year."

One problem though. Linux is a catch-all term, and Linux could mean anything from baby's-first *Hannah Montana Linux* to a SuPeR ePiC l33t h4x0r distro like *Kali Linux*. Armed with my inflated sense of technoliteracy and an old spinning hard drive my dad chucked my way a while back, I went guns blazing for the most advanced flavor of Linux, *Arch*. I mean, it sounded cool and deceptively simple. Unfortunately, it was *too* cool and deceptively simple for me, as I was immediately humbled with an hour-long text-console-only setup tutorial. My hand was forced, due to my terminally online tendencies, to choose something to get me back on ASAP, before the night drew to a close. Pulling out the crusty, dusty laptop from the dim, warmly lit closet and the

nearest thumb drive, I hunkered down in the corner and got to work on gathering the necessary resources.

*Google. Manjaro. Click. Download. Click. Download as ISO. Click. Flash drive inserted.
Format disk. Click. Are you sure? Click. Select file. manjaro-kde-21.2.6-220416-
linux515.iso. Select device. D:\ - NO NAME.*

Eagerly awaiting the progress bar to fill, I then get to affixing the spinning hard drive to the PC case in the event some things go sideways. 4 regular screws, 4 regular thumb screws, 2 captive thumb screws, a couple of hinged glass panels, and a sliding aluminum, edge perforated, top panel later, and the PC is back together on the desk. I plugged the drive, but before I remember

to press the boot keys, I unwittingly hit the power button. *Quick. F2. F8. F12. Del. Ctrl-Alt-Del.*

Too late, but instead of the usual error message, I see the light at the end of this catastrophe.



Autopiloting the install for the rest of the night, I finally hit the hay at some ungodly hour of the night.

10th of December, 2020. The warmth of the sun and a gentle gust of wind carrying a couple leaves wake me slowly and gracefully. Sleep still in my eyes, I shuffle a few steps on over to the

previously occupied wire mesh ergonomic chair, tucking it and myself in towards the desk and hit the button to turn the PC on. This marked the beginning of my Linux journey.

Present day. I snagged the opportunity to build myself a kick-ass media server a while back. I popped all the five drives in and the accompanying accoutrements. Now to set it up.



Browsing the forums and on YouTube, I find this thing, this operating system, called *TrueNAS Scale*. Under the hood? *Linux*. Bingo. Let's get this moving. I load up the flash drive for the first time in a while, process still fresh in my head. Eagerly, I gently insert the flash drive and hit the button. Autopiloting the install again, I flip through multiple tutorials on YouTube.

Edit the folder/file permissions? *I know about that*. Sync the datasets using the `rsync` command? *That too... What is this, a tutorial for noobs?*

This time I was born ready. As of now, this unassuming looking box is in the process of replacing my Netflix, Prime Video, Spotify, and even niche eBay Blu-ray collection. From a decision out of desperation to play a game to a conscious and deliberate stance on media ownership, learning

Linux was the greatest single move that positively altered a significant aspect of my life.

Ownership.