



THE OUTER EDGE

Tall Tales from the
Brink of Sanity

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Browser Brawls

PART 1 – A Short History of Windows and Doors

The Kingdom

By the mid-1990s, King William of Windows had conquered most of the civilized world. The once mighty forces of IBM had been beaten, the mini-Kingdoms of Hewlett Packard, DEC and SUN lay in disarray, and the fertile province of Apple growers had lost vast tracts of its best land.

Suddenly a new threat to the Kingdom of Windows arose: a young knight from mountains of Mozilla crafted a door that opened the illusive world of the Internet to ordinary people. He called it **Netscape Navigator** and claimed it would give people more joy and freedom than they'd ever known.

The people happily paid the price the handsome knight asked for his door and he soon became rich.

When his fame reached the Court of King William at Redmond, the King was not pleased by what he heard. He feared that the people's fascination with doors might lead to a break-away from the Kingdom, so he called his best architects together and told them it was time to diversify from Windows to Doors.

They produced a door in record time but, to the King's dismay, **Internet Explorer** did not find much favour among the people. He ordered his architects to make the door more attractive and they worked hard to please the King, but the people remained loyal to the handsome knight from Mozilla and his **Netscape Navigator**.

The King called a council of his best men and, after much debate, they devised a bold plan: to give **Internet Explorer** to every citizen of Windows for free, including installation. In addition, all the builders in the Kingdom would be offered generous inducements to install the King's door in every new home.

The King liked the idea at once - he had taxed his people heavily and knew that they would love getting something for nothing. The people did indeed, and soon the young knight and his men were fighting for economic survival. With the upstart beaten decisively, King William's court got back to its fancy banquets and gala nights in the glorious palace at Redmond.

Security in the Kingdom

With a monopoly on windows and doors, the King's rule was unassailable. The few provinces that had held onto their independence posed no threat, and the anti-monarchist Resistance had been driven underground. Alas, the wealthy Kingdom of Windows soon became a target for swindlers and thieves. Most houses had installed the standard windows designed by the royal architects and these were easy pickings for burglars. Spies from hostile Kingdoms infiltrated businesses and even sections of the Kingdom's administration. Some people became ill after opening mail laced with viruses, which were said to be the dirty work of anti-monarchists.

People began to complain that the King had broken his promise of keeping them safe from harm, but the King didn't take much notice until an angry mob marched to the palace at Redmond and demanded better security.

The King came out on his balcony, spoke to the people and declared that nothing was more important to him than their security. He promised to strengthen border defences and to upgrade the fortifications around cities and towns. Furthermore he would order the royal architects to design security upgrades for the Windows of the Kingdom.

The people went home happy and the King dispatched an army of tradespeople to all corners of the land to bolster security. Soon rumours spread that they were only patching over the cracks in the walls and handing out leaflets with banal security advice. In the taverns of the towns and villages, people grumbled that the security blitz was little more than window dressing.

Security Project 2, the modifications for Windows, got a better reception but there were countless installation problems. In any case, it didn't take long for the impostors and thieves to find a new point of entry: the front door. Most homes in the Kingdom had installed **Internet Explorer**, and its weaknesses were soon laid bare: Spies gained access to people's most private possessions, perverts exposed children to all kinds of filth, and junk mail flooded into many homes.

People installed extra locks and alarm systems, while businesses hired security firms to protect them. All of this was costly and disruptive and led to a new wave of complaints. The King told his architects to make **Internet Explorer** stronger, but they said it was strong enough and issued new guidelines on lock maintenance.

When it leaked out that even the *Department of Defence* had issued an alert to staff about their front doors, security experts urged people to replace their front doors with stronger ones. That was easier said than done since most other door makers had been driven from the kingdom long ago. The young Knight was still making Netscape under the Duke of Time-Warner's protection, but he'd limited their supply to citizens of his duchy in order to keep the peace with King William.

Freedom Fighters

Beyond the realm of Time-Warner lay the rugged mountains of Mozilla, where rebels and freedom fighters had sought refuge from the imperial forces. These rebels rejected everything that came from the Kingdom of Windows, even money. They shared their inventions freely and swapped essential goods with each other. They had no secrets but their ways were said to be strange and their language difficult to understand. Their tools and weapons were made from Unix, Linux and other exotic materials. Their swords and axes had been hardened in countless battles with the King's armies, but only those trained in their use knew how to wield them to best effect.

Firefox was the front door on every house in the mountains of Mozilla. Not only was it fire-resistant but strong as well, and its handles and locks were of unusual design. Wily door merchants from the Kingdom of Windows soon appeared, wanting to procure these doors for their customers. In no time, the tradesmen of Mozilla were overwhelmed with orders and the region's few guesthouses were booked up months ahead. Some merchants turned to other clans that had remained independent from the Windows Kingdom: the artist colony of **Opera**, the free thinkers of **Avant** and the people of **Maxthon** who'd built an improved version of the royal door.

King William's men looked at these developments with alarm. They knew that smaller things than doors had started major revolutions, like that famous tea party in Boston two centuries ago. They asked the King to issue a new decree and he did so without delay: from now on, any citizen who did not have **Internet Explorer** would no longer have access to the Court at Redmond. In addition, the Court would refuse to have dealings with such citizens and that included businessmen who had won lucrative government contracts. The sting in the decree's tail was that the Royal Mail would no longer deliver letters or parcels to houses that didn't have the front door mandated by the King.

Unrest in the Kingdom

This caused great consternation to citizens who'd followed the advice of the security firms and changed their front doors. They asked friends to collect their mail but an amendment to the decree outlawed that practice before it took hold. Private mail services flourished but, since only wealthy citizens could afford them, anger about the King's brutal measures grew. Soon people marched on the streets once more, demanding for the Decree of Doors to be rescinded.

The King's men were worried about riots breaking out and advised their master to appease the people. King William agreed and, during his next speech on the grand balcony at Redmond, he announced that a new front door was under construction. It would be known as **Internet Explorer 7** and it would have improved locks, more handles and stronger hinges. Prototypes would be available

early the following year and would be supplied to selected households for testing. Meanwhile, the old decree stood, but citizens would henceforth be allowed to have more than one front door. As long as one of them was **Internet Explorer**, the Royal Mail would stop at their houses and their owners would have limited access to the Court in Redmond.

Most citizens saw it as a small victory, since the King had given them some leeway without raising taxes again. But they soon came to see that two front doors meant costly renovations as well as additional maintenance. Also, citizens with modest houses didn't have room for two front doors and had no choice but to wait for the new door the King had promised them.

Prototypes of **Internet Explorer 7** took a long time to reach communities but, after two decades under King William's rule, the people had grown accustomed to long delays. Nor did they hold the royal artisans in high regard after the countless flaws that had plagued their previous designs.

Indeed, **Internet Explorer 7** was more of the same: once the first prototypes were installed, people complained that the door wouldn't open or shut properly and that the hinges creaked so much they woke sleeping children. The King's chief door maker said this was a design feature intended to improve security - creaky hinges made it harder for burglars to sneak into the house - but that claim didn't convince anyone. There were even reports of prototypes coming off their hinges and injuring people entering or leaving houses, and in some cases their installation resulted in severe structural damage. A second prototype was announced and people who'd installed the old one were told they had to rip it out, including the troublesome hinges. That involved more repairs to door jambs and other structural damage.

Castles in the Air

Many questioned if it was worth the trouble, arguing that Internet Explorer 7 wasn't much of an improvement over the old model. Sure it had extra handles and an inbuilt burglar alarm but most people had already installed these on their old doors. All these problems made it hard to find takers for the third prototype; then word spread that the King had assigned all his best artisans to a far more audacious project: a glass castle that reached into the sky. It would offer stunning vistas across the Kingdom, and it would be more secure than any castle ever built. Soon the design was displayed in post offices across the land for people to admire.

The architect's drawings were breathtaking in both scope and beauty but people hung their heads, knowing that taxes would be raised again in order to pay for this extravagance. More disturbing were the plans of the King's administrators for a far-reaching overhaul of the Court's procedures, to coincide with the completion of the glass castle. They said the new systems would improve security and provide a richer user experience, but the people had come to learn what this promise meant: spending many months learning new processes and spending many dollars on expert advice to help them achieve full compliance.

When the production version of **Internet Explorer 7** was delivered to homes in the Kingdom, many citizens voiced their disappointment. The people from Mozilla continued to do brisk business, as did the artists of **Opera** and the other door makers, and the King did nothing to stop them. He was no longer concerned with doors, since his advisors assured him that the rebel door would not meet the royal design standards of the Windows Vista era. Better still, it would be impossible for citizens to look beyond Vista - the royal architects assured the King that anyone who looked at Vista would be blinded by its beauty.

PART 2 – [THE GLOVES COME OFF](#)