Society has forever changed since the adoption of computers and cybercrime. It took no time at all for criminals to adapt to the computer and soon after to make it their own. Previously opportunities for criminals were limited and the life of a con artist was fraught with danger, but no longer. The man had long ago given up his real name and past. It was easy, really, when one thought about the number of identities that freely floated around the web. For the man though, these identities were more than simply a name, they were a story and life to be lived. The thrill, danger, and sense of control he had over people as he adopted their identity and very lives became his life’s work.

“Things are not like they used to be” mused the man as he gazed at the dim light of his computer monitor. “Then again, I am not like I used to be.” Information lazily scrolled across his monitor; names, places, numbers, faces. When the man first realized the power he had with a computer, it was almost too easy to find people who were would part with their information all too easily. But it was also difficult to assume a new identity; there were too many intricacies and quirks and the man still remembered himself too much. But now, the world had changed and so had the man. Gone away were the blissfully ignorant masses who almost freely parted with their bank accounts and stories. Security arrived on the web in force and a myriad of companies offer anti
malware or related services. But just as security tightened more opportunities appeared. “If the average person knew how insecure their cell phone was and just how much information it holds…” he thought, “they probably would demand that the government bring back encryption. But then how would we read other people’s communications? Truly a quandary for the ages” quipped the man sarcastically as he turned his attention back to the screen.

His focus was on finding a good candidate whose identity was to his liking. The man regularly changed who he was based on his mood and his needs. Sometimes it was beneficial to have money and other times not. Other times he enjoyed the thrill of being someone well known or famous. Odder still it was occasionally desirable to be no one and have nothing. But today the man sought a particular self. Still caught by his existential musings, the man looked around trying to find something that reminded him of his earlier days. It was a difficult process and frustrating as well. It had been too long and the time when the man knew who he was was too far gone. Data continued to scroll by but nothing caught his eye. Every person was off in some way or another and the amount of information made the process difficult.

“This would be simple,” he thought “if I weren’t so particular, but if I weren’t so particular, where would I be?” More names went by and still none caught the man’s interest. Too rich, too poor, not smart, too smart, none satisfied. Even the irony of a compromised internet security advocate was not enough. Finally, after almost ignoring it, the man paused the scrolling data. What finally seemed like a promising candidate had appeared. To another person the background information might seem terribly
mundane; this person seemed as ordinary as anyone, unremarkable salary working online in software, few connections to anyone offline, lived alone, etc. But the man was fixated on a detail most people might ignore. This person ceased to exist if you looked back more than a few years. Put that way, it seems impossible, but most people have some identifying details that connect them to their past selves. Perhaps they might be involved in an alumni organization or active in their church which in turn links them to a youth group or any other of a number of possibilities. But not this person. “No, you’re not all you seem either,” the man thought.

Intrigued by the possibility of learning more, the man read further, trying to pry into the details and determine what and where this person had come from. It appeared that this person lead a life of hermitude. They were not poor but they spent little money and seemed to have no financial information. Perhaps a good thing, considering the situation unfolding around their existence. The man made up his mind and downloaded the meager details. It might take days or weeks but his target was settled and he had yet to fail.

The man leaned back in his chair, content. The world was a dangerous place for even the most cautious person. The web connected anyone and everyone and the amount of information freely shared and passed about is almost unimaginable. People like the man with many names take advantage of the freedom and anonymity in order to change identities like clothing. With all the freedom and information so too were there cyber criminals and crime.