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THE DARK SECRETS OF “RED ROOM”

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As strange as it sounds, “Red Rooms” are those alleged spaces within the dark web that conceals illegal and illicit activities, happening online. It is also considered to be “online video portals” wherein people can pay money to watch different live streams and videos of torture, murder, rape, and even worse. Allegedly, the users have paid over tens of thousands of dollars to gain access to these gruesome clips.

What is the dark web?

As we all know, the internet consists of millions of web pages, servers, and other databases that are split into three distinctive layers; surface web, deep web, and the dark web. Being the top layer and the so-called “visible” layer of the internet, the surface web includes those web pages that are found using search engines like Google, Yahoo, etc.

If the entire internet is visualized as an iceberg, the surface web would be just the visible tip of the iceberg that lies above the water and comprises nearly only 5% of the whole internet. Talking about the deep web, it accounts for almost 90% of all websites and lies below the visible surface. It is nearly impossible to figure out the exact number of web pages or servers that are active in the deep web at any given point in time.

The dark web is also a section of this deep web and includes sites and websites that are accessible only through limited and specialized browsers. Although the “deep web” and the “dark web” are usually considered the same, a huge fraction of the deep web is safe and legal, unlike the dark web. The status of the dark web is often associated with criminal and illegal activities, encompassing certain “trading” web-



sites where the users can buy illegal goods or services.

Red Rooms Explained:

The name “Red Rooms” is believed to have been derived from Videodrome, a 1983 horror movie in which the torture is shown live on a TV in a room painted all red. As mentioned earlier, the red rooms are video portals with the kind of videos depicting violence and pain. Child pornography, imaginary live streams (the browsing speeds on the dark web are considered too slow for them to be live) of murder and rape, torture, etc. are some of the contents available on red rooms. Some red rooms also allow the users to “chat” with other like-minded people, all while being anonymous.

But do Red Rooms exist?

Although Red Rooms have been a matter of discussion in various forums, there are no pieces of evidence available that proves their existence. Peter Scully’s case suggests the possibility of such sites or red rooms being available for the users to view illegal and gruesome videos or content. Scully hails from Australia and is entitled as one among the world’s worst paedophiles. His modus operandi was luring indigent children by offering gifts and money and then taking them to his home, in the Philippines. He would then drug the children and film their torture and rape for an international paedophile ring. According to reports, he has sold his videos for over \$10,000 per view.

Some people suggest that red rooms are merely a myth or an urban legend, and were invented through a Japanese horror movie called Red Room, talking about a website that shows live streams of murder. They also pointed out that the user’s identity is concealed to gain access to such sites, and for that purpose, multiple proxies and numerous layers of encryption are required which makes the process too slow to allow live streaming. On the other hand, a certain group of people argue that red rooms do exist and it is possible to access them through certain specialized browsers. But, paying huge amounts of money to watch gruesome acts is illegal and incriminating.

What is being done to curb the dark web and alleged red rooms?

Policing the dark web is a tedious task due to the anonymity of its users. Decrypting communications to apprehend criminals involved in illegal activities through the dark web has been a matter of debate as it increases the risks of exposing everyone's data and making it vulnerable. The whole process is time-consuming and it could take up to a year or two's time to gain access to the inner circles within the dark web. The question of whether the existing acts and laws must be amended to keep up with the changing trends and challenges also exists as it is difficult to prove a particular charge concerning the present laws. But for now, training cyber police officials to face such challenges is much more essential.

References:

- Dewey, C. (2015). In search of the darkest, most disturbing content on the internet. Washington Post. <https://www.the-sun.com/lifestyle/tech-old/2249235/what-is-a-red-room-dark-web>

Myth - Hair evidence does not hold weightage if it doesn't have the root.

Fact - Hair without root can be used to get mitochondrial DNA which is the DNA solely passed on by the maternal parent.