





# The Voices Of Confession





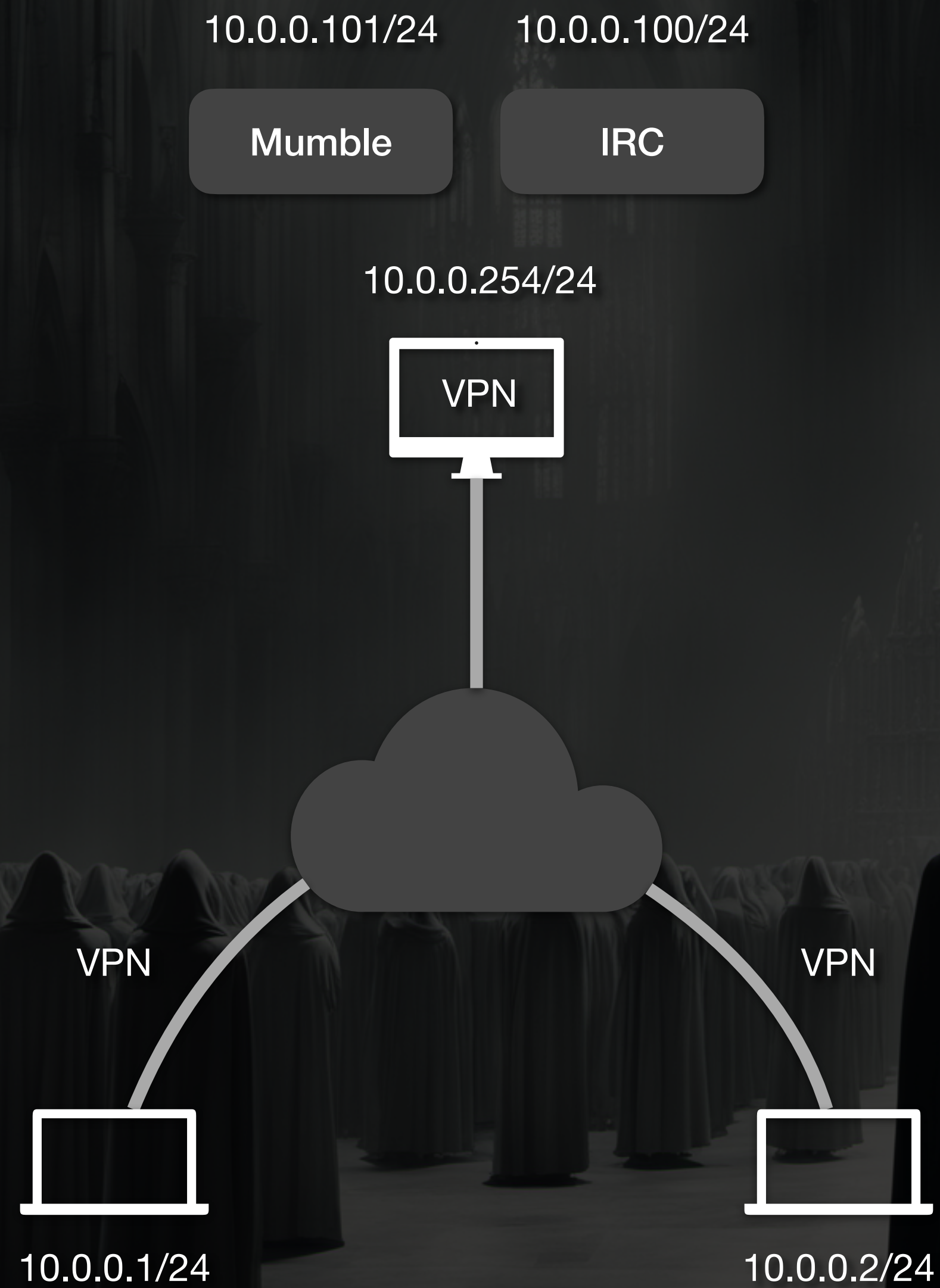
# Gospel

- I stand before you as an independent hacker.
- I care deeply about secure communication.
- Distributed secure communication infrastructure.
- Been working on this project for about 2 years in my spare time.





# Gospel





# Gospel



A

Voice

App X

B

Voice

App X





# Gospel

- Commercial offerings exist, for example Tailscale
- IP only.
- WireGuard (TM) as their DataPlane.
- ControlPlane are closed platforms.
- Open source implementations exist but companies can decide to kill these at any time.
- NordVPN recently killed off their mesh-net without warning.





Gospel

How can we build  
better?







How can we build  
more resilient?





# Principium

- The Sanctum
- The Cathedrals
- The Library
- The Conclave
  - Confession
  - Litany
- The Reliquary





# Sanctum





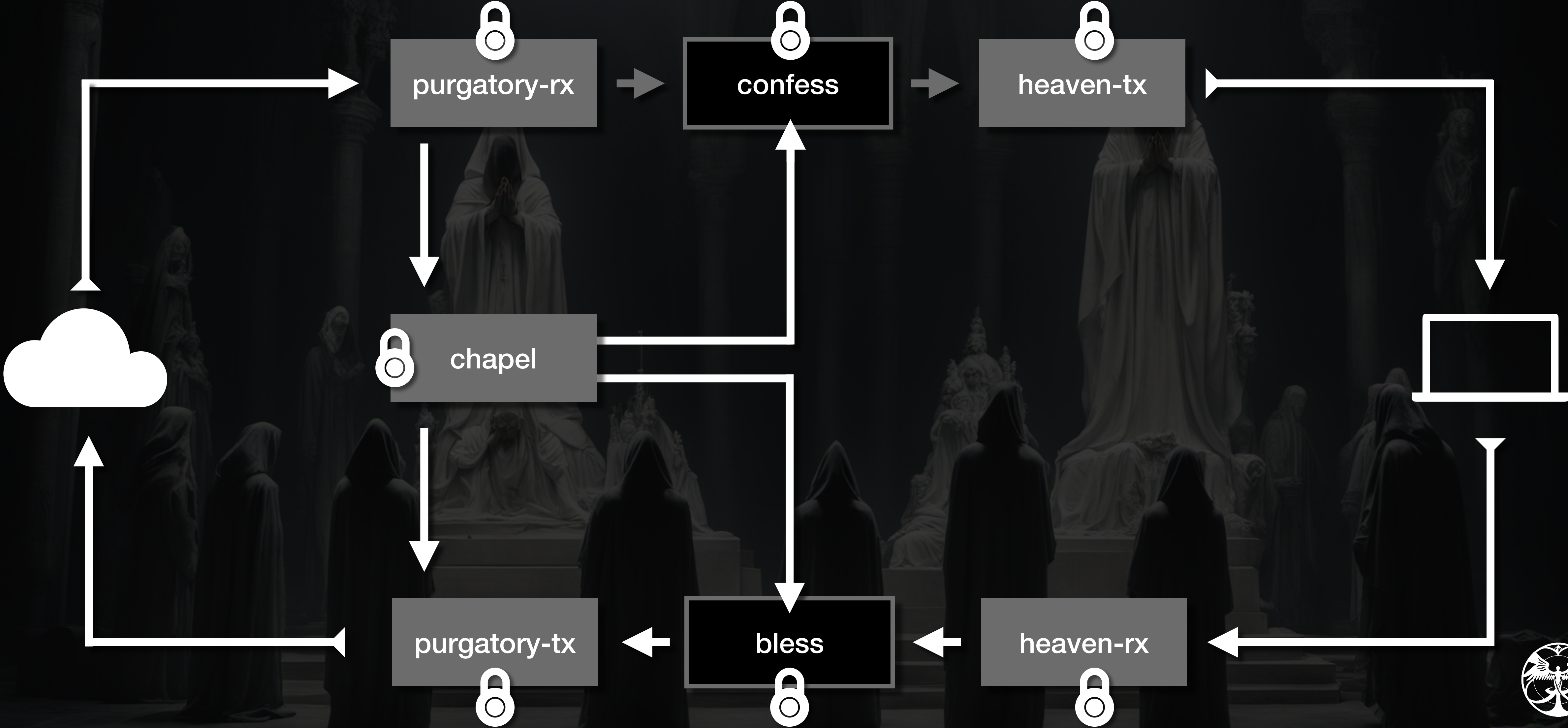
# Sanctum

- Sanctum, a VPN daemon with many novel approaches.
  - ISC licensed, fully free and open.
  - Fully privilege separated at every level.
  - Sandboxed with modern techniques.
  - Implements an easy to understand protocol.





# Sanctum





# Sanctum

- Different modes
  - Tunnel mode (direct connection)
  - One-way mode (in case you have a diode)
  - Liturgy mode (auto discover peers + start tunnel mode)
  - Cathedral mode (what we're going to talk about)





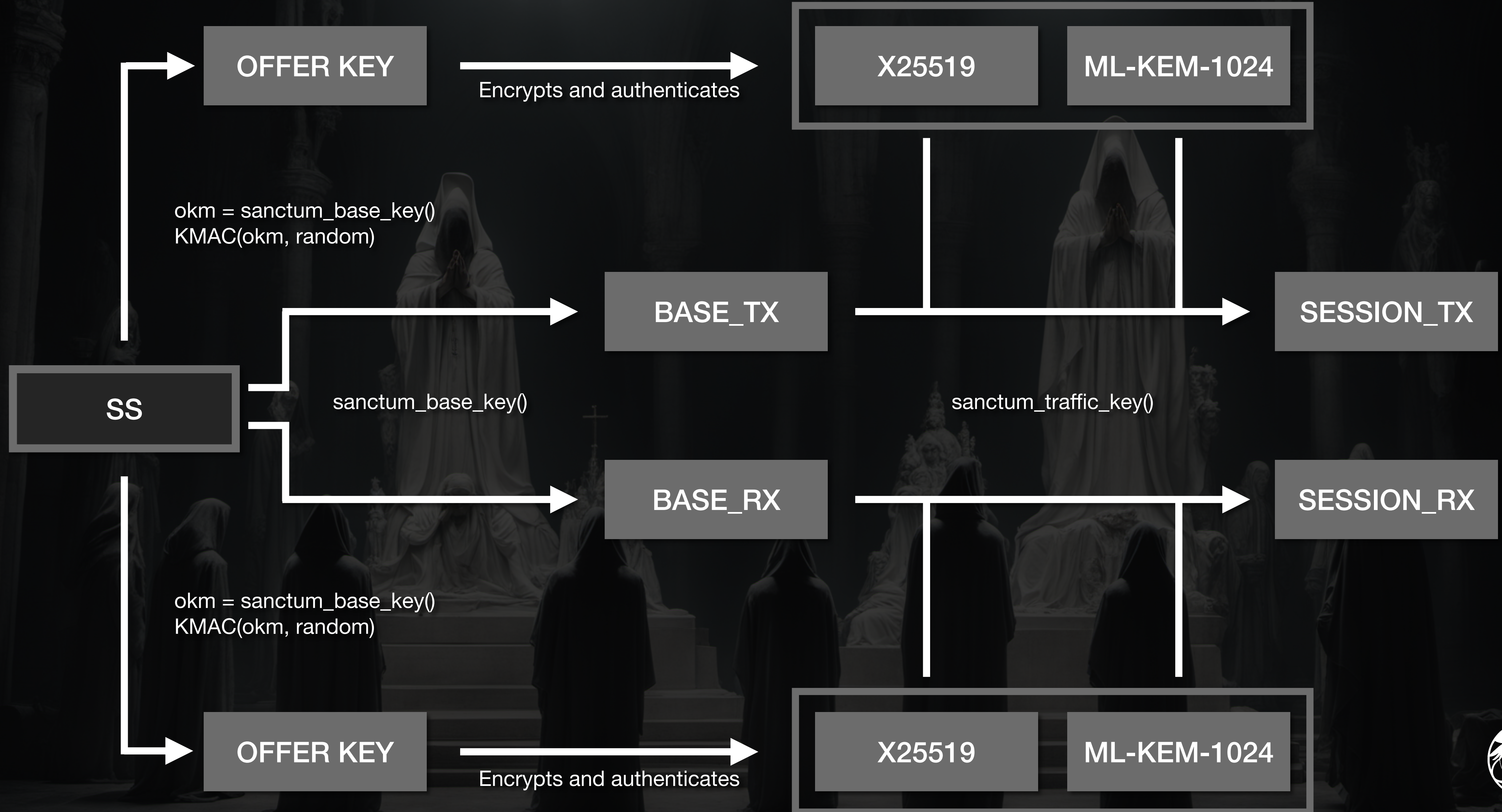
# Sanctum

- Hybridised key exchange
  - Symmetrical key
  - Classical ECDH - x25519
  - PQ-secure - ML-KEM-1024
- 3 secret inputs to KDF for session key derivation.





# Sanctum





# Cathedrals





# Cathedrals

## Design tenets

- Not security critical from a confidentiality point of view.
- Cathedrals cannot inject, decrypt or manipulate traffic.
- Cathedrals may be run on cloud platforms.
- Cathedrals are ephemeral.





# Cathedrals

Discovery

Key Distribution

Resilience





# Cathedrals

## Discovery





# Cathedrals

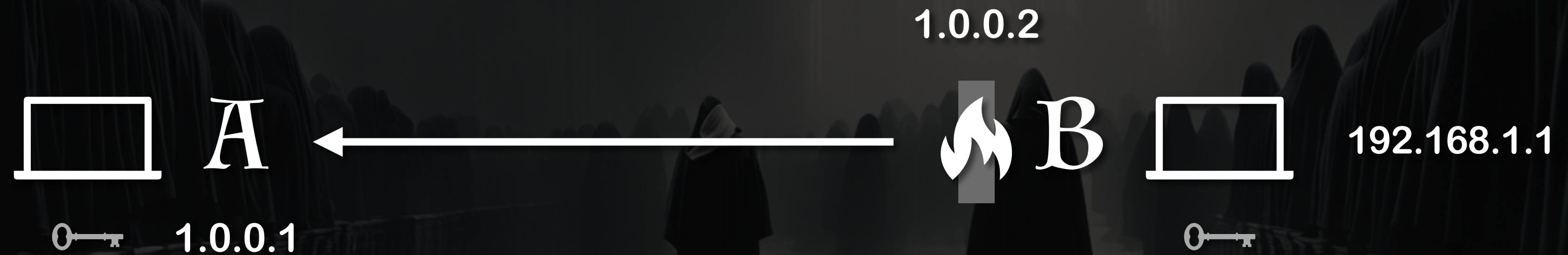
Discovery





# Cathedrals

Discovery





# Cathedrals

## Discovery

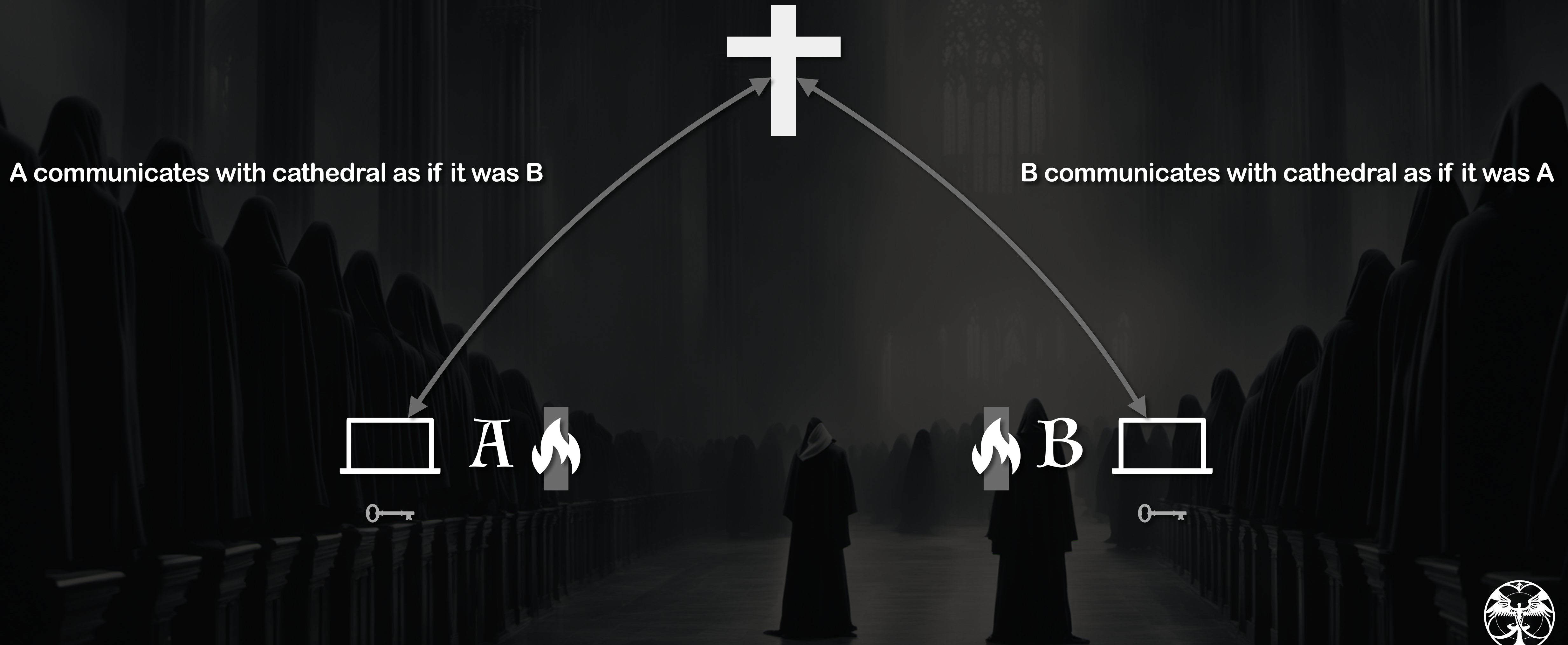
How does A communicate with B if both are behind a firewall?





# Cathedrals

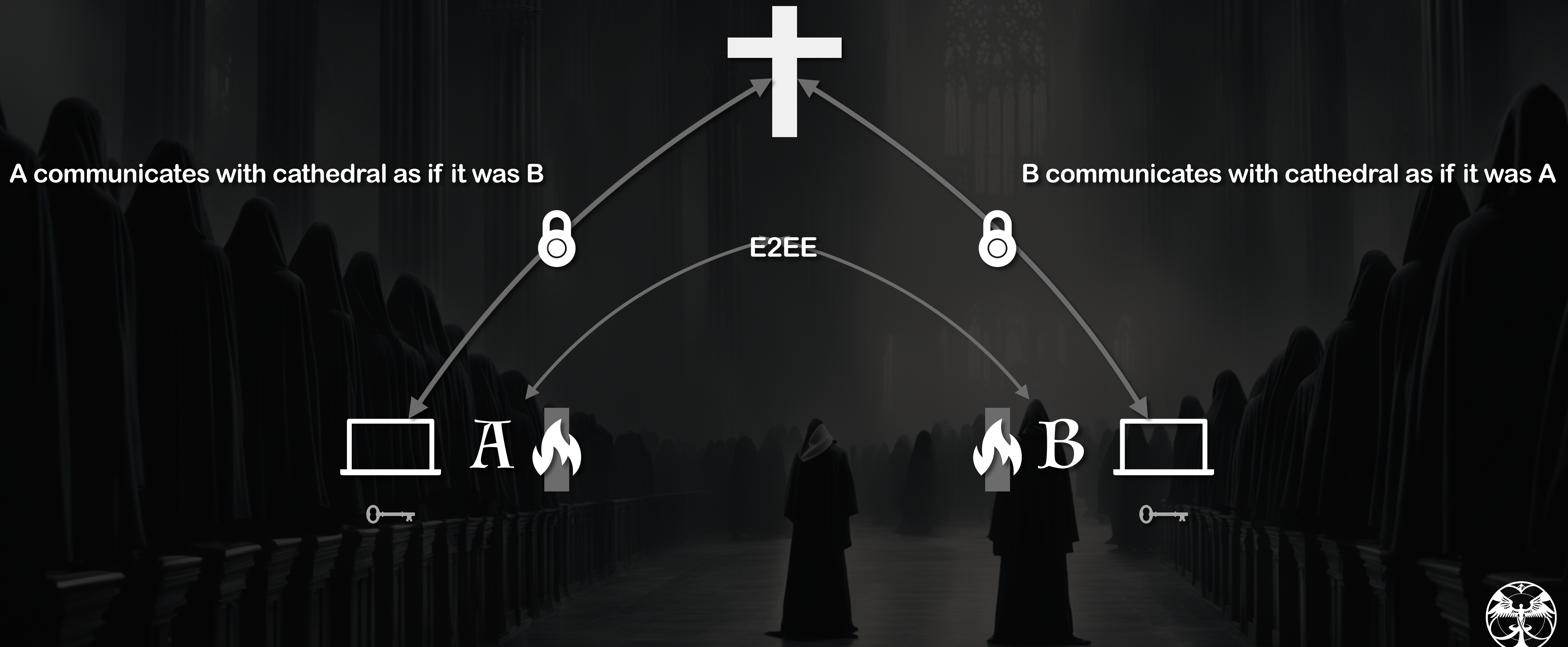
## Discovery





# Cathedrals

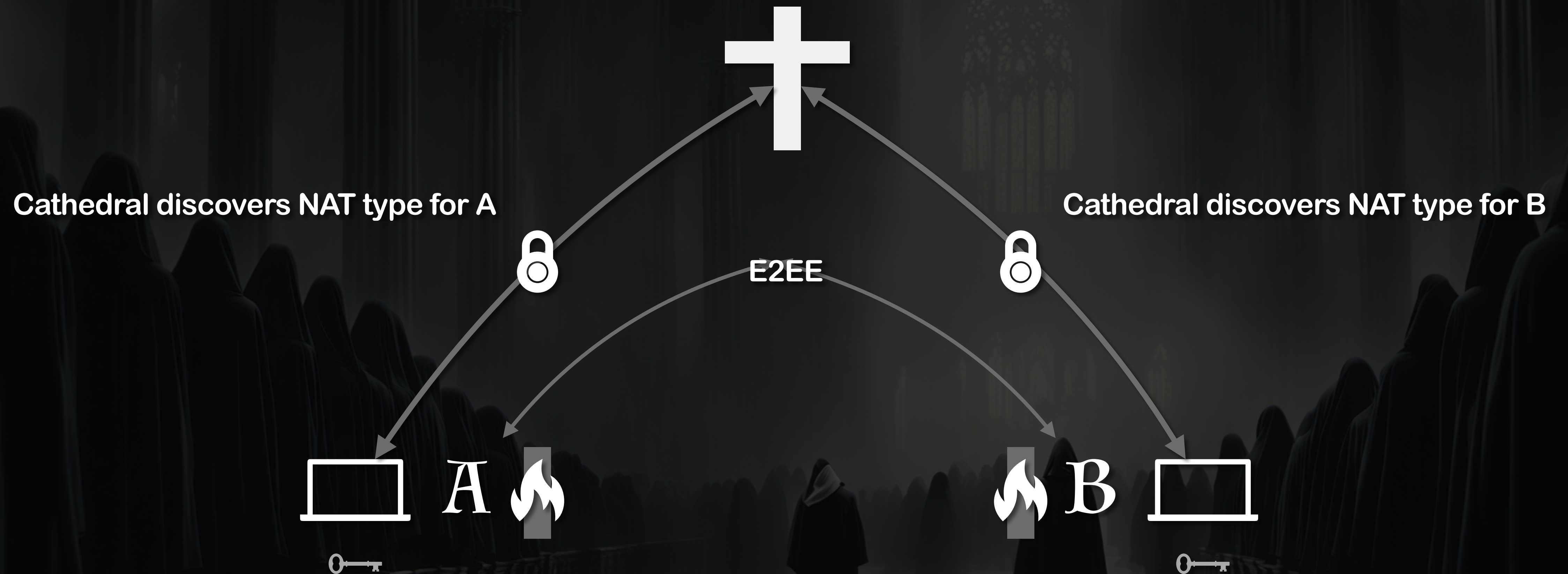
## Discovery





# Cathedrals

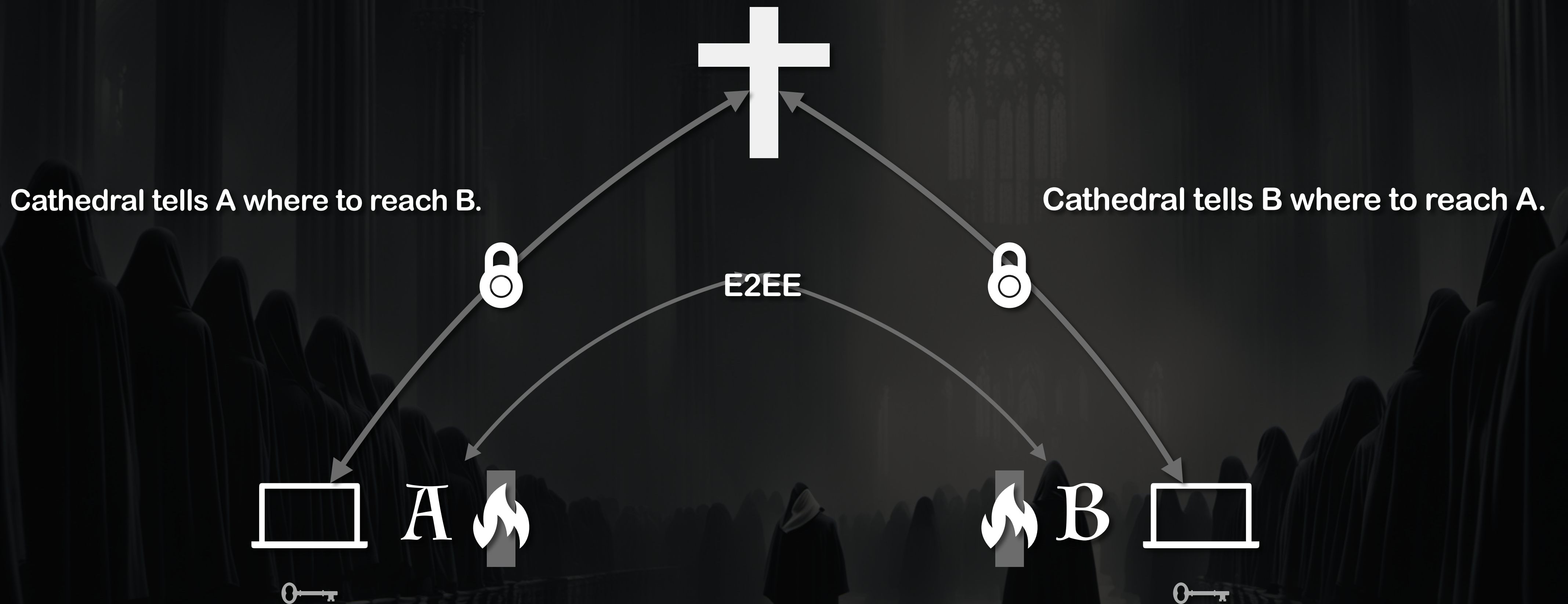
## Discovery





# Cathedrals

## Discovery





# Cathedrals

## Discovery



Hole punching to update NAT states on firewall.

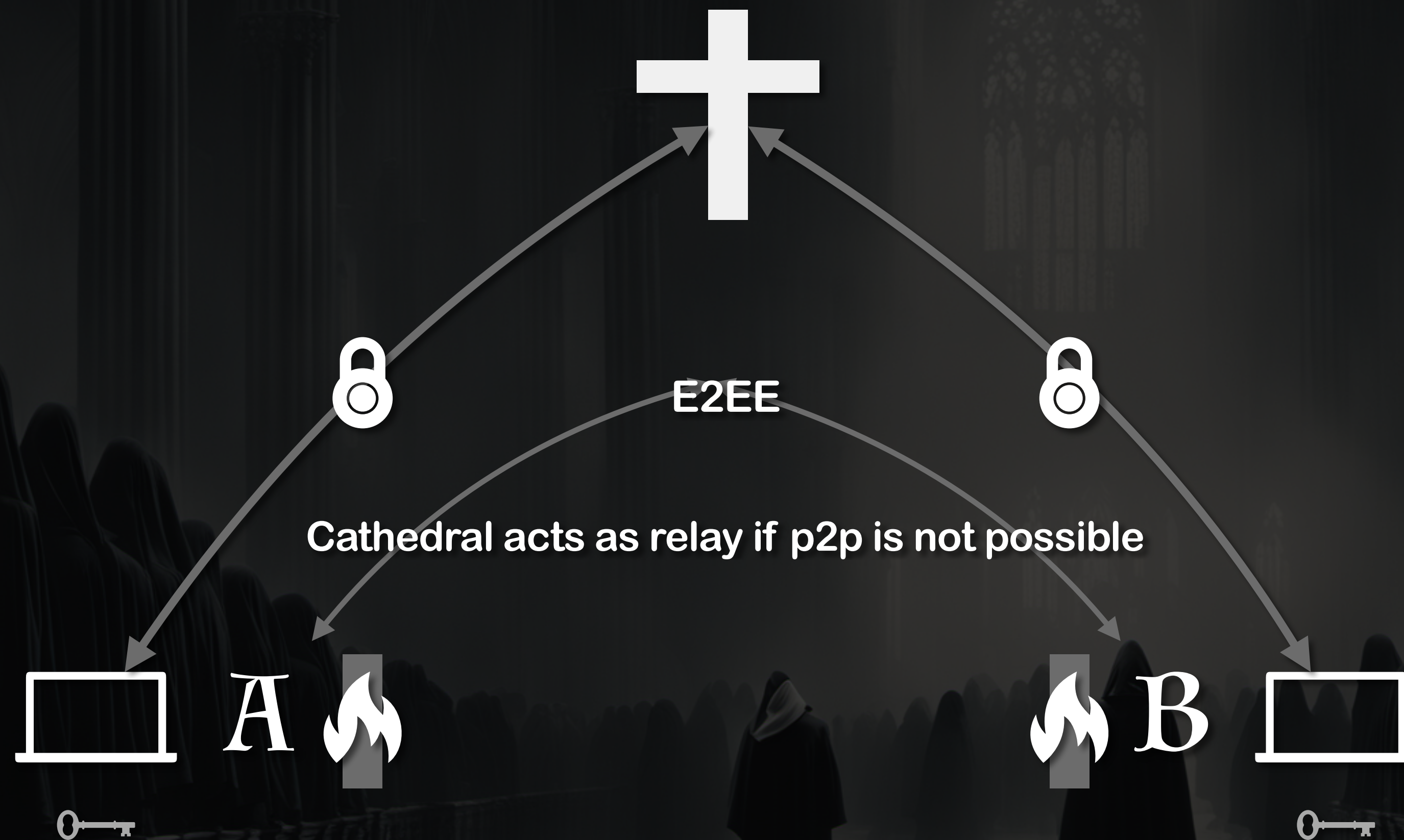
A and B now send traffic directly to each other.





# Cathedrals

Discovery





# Cathedrals

## Discovery

- Cathedrals help devices find each other.
- Cathedrals facilitate tunnel establishment.
- Your devices are reachable no matter where they are.
  - No need for firewall adjustments.
  - It just works.





# Cathedrals

## Resilience





# Cathedrals

Resilience



A

B

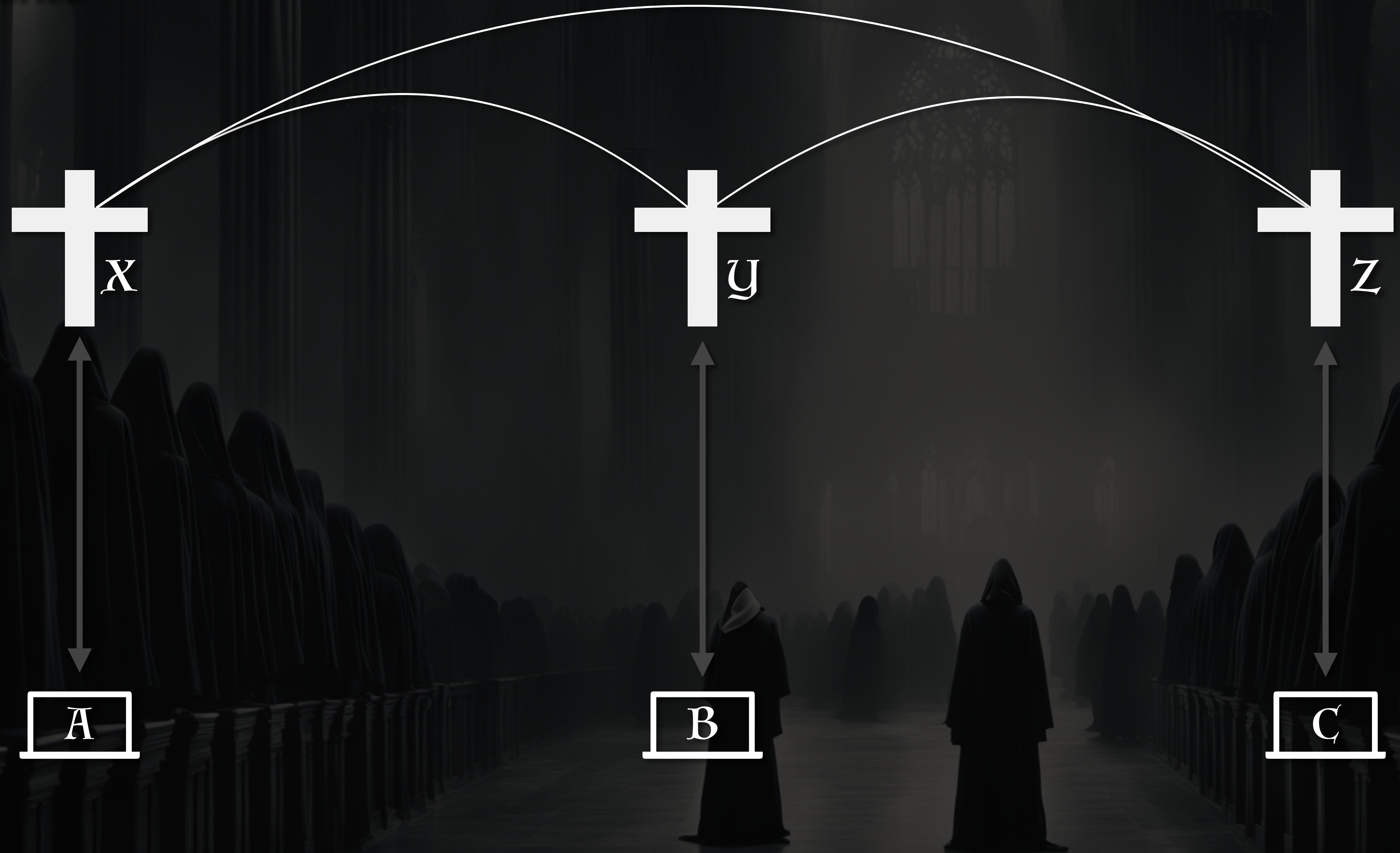
C





# Cathedrals

Resilience





# Cathedrals

Resilience





# Cathedrals

Resilience





# Cathedrals

Resilience





# Cathedrals

## Resilience

- Federated cathedrals update each other about their devices.
- Devices do not have to be talking to the same cathedral.
- Cathedrals will tell devices about other cathedrals it knows.
- Devices can failover to other cathedrals if required.





# Cathedrals

Resilience



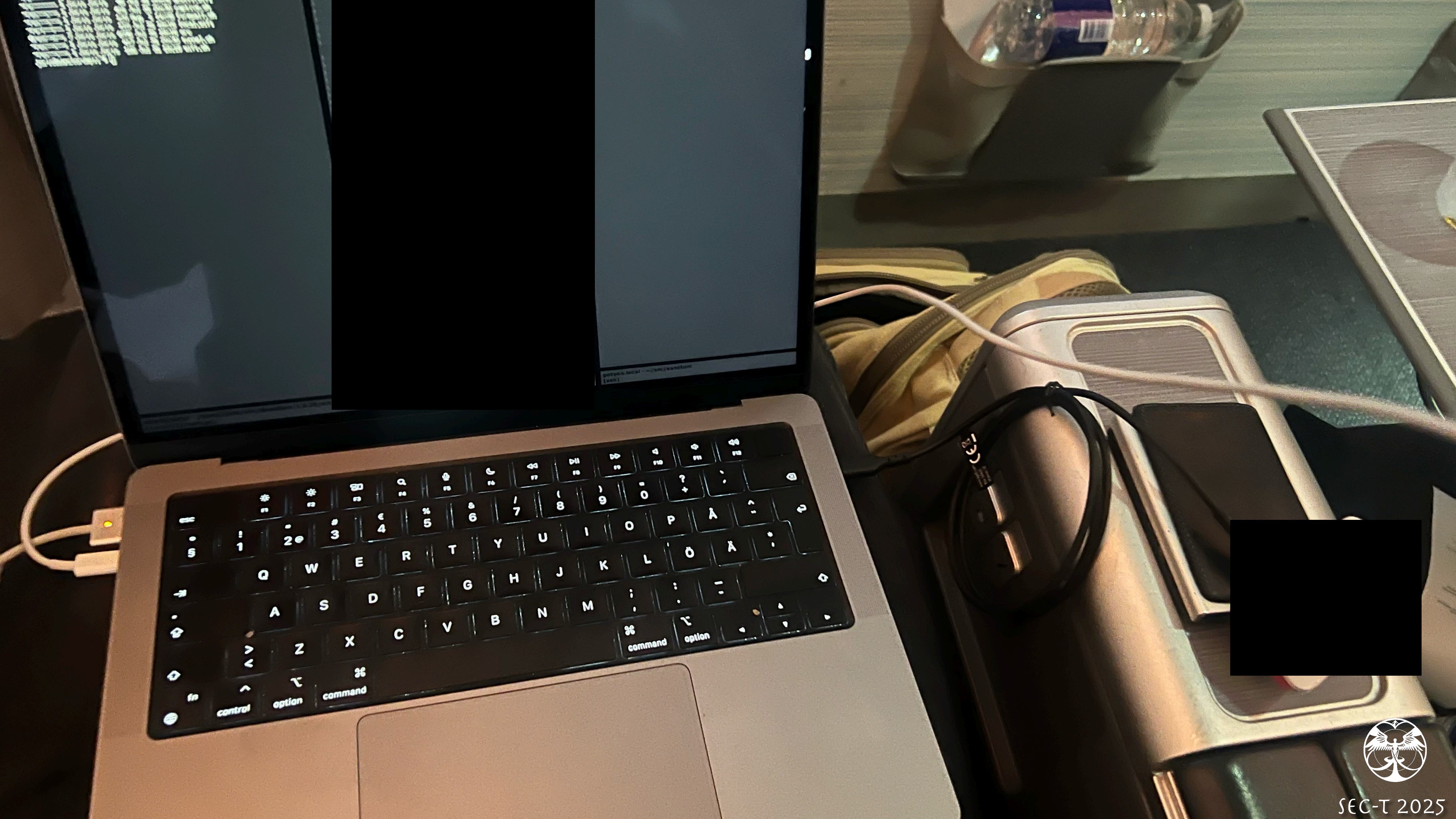


# Cathedrals

Resilience







SEC-T 2025



# Cathedrals

## Resilience

- All cathedrals must be taken offline at the same time to prevent NEW tunnels from being established.
- Established p2p tunnels are entirely unaffected.
- Almost impossible to take down.
  - Distribute cathedrals over different providers.
  - Clever automation using chef, ansible, etc.
- Time to recover.





# Cathedrals

## Key Distribution





# Cathedrals

## Key Distribution

- Cathedrals act as a key distribution point.
- Cathedrals hold encrypted shared secrets for tunnels.
  - Wrapped with unique per device Key-Encryption-Keys (KEKs).
  - Wrapped keys are called Ambries.
  - Cathedral cannot modify or read Ambries.
- Cathedrals distribute these to the correct peers when needed.





# Cathedrals

## Key Distribution

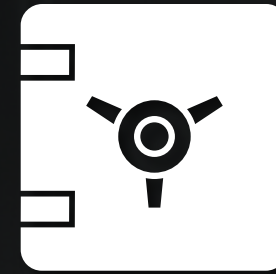
- Ambries can be updated at any time.
- Automate your key flow.
- Devices automatically rekey upon receiving a new Ambry.
- Roll out keys very quickly.





# Cathedrals

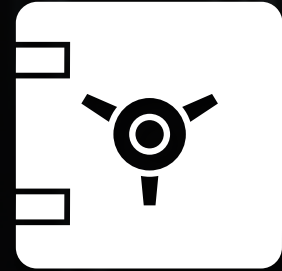
## Key Distribution





# Cathedrals

## Key Distribution

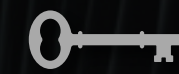


A



KEK\_A

B



KEK\_B





# Cathedrals

## Key Distribution



SS

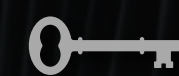


A



KEK\_A

B



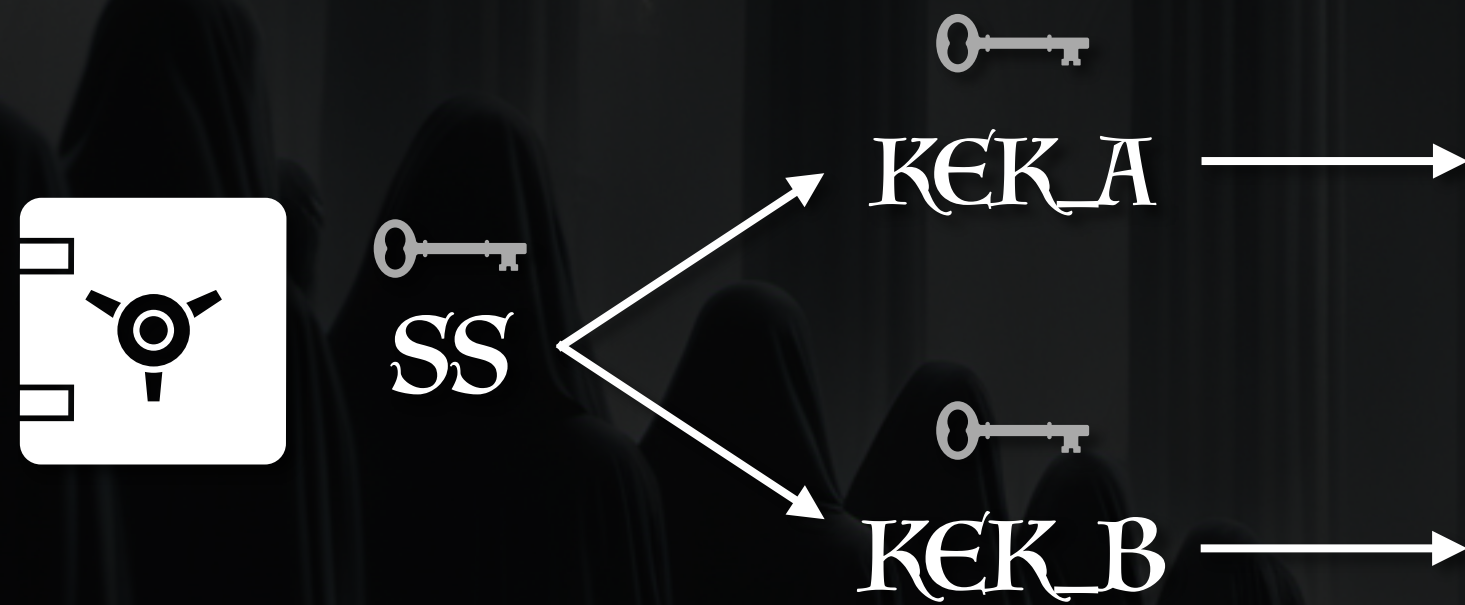
KEK\_B





# Cathedrals

## Key Distribution



A

—  
KEK\_A

B

—  
KEK\_B





# Cathedrals

## Key Distribution



A

KEK\_A

B

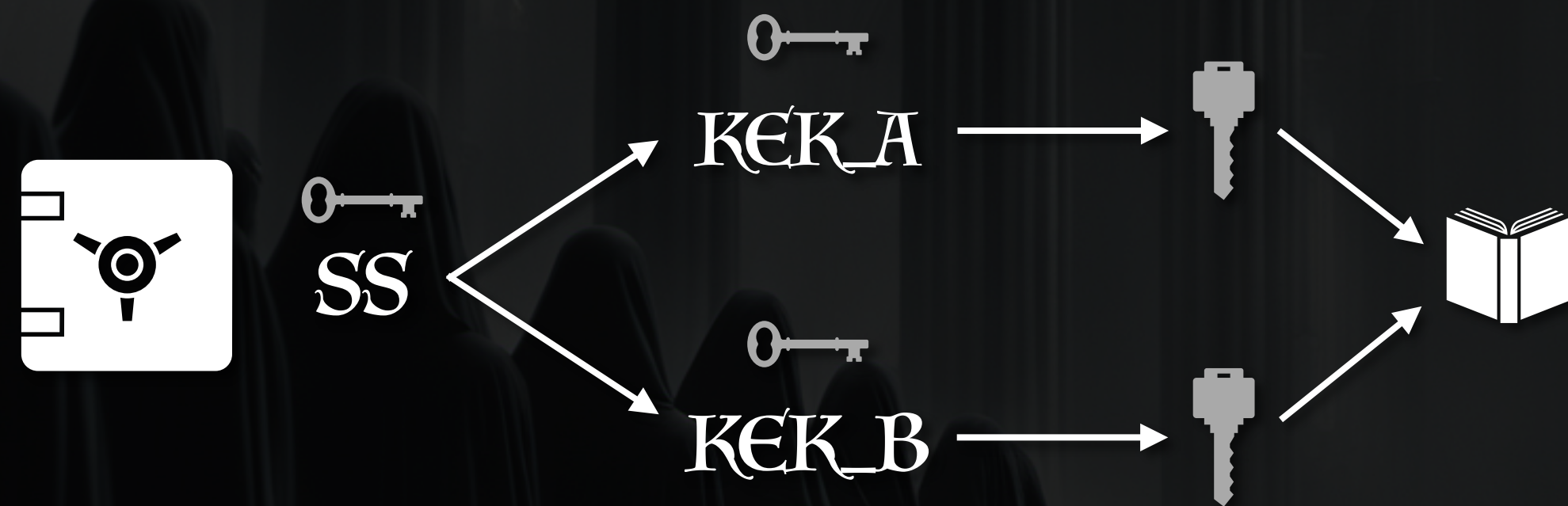
KEK\_B





# Cathedrals

## Key Distribution



Offline

A

KEK\_A

B

KEK\_B





# Cathedrals

## Key Distribution

Online



Offline

A

KEK\_A

B

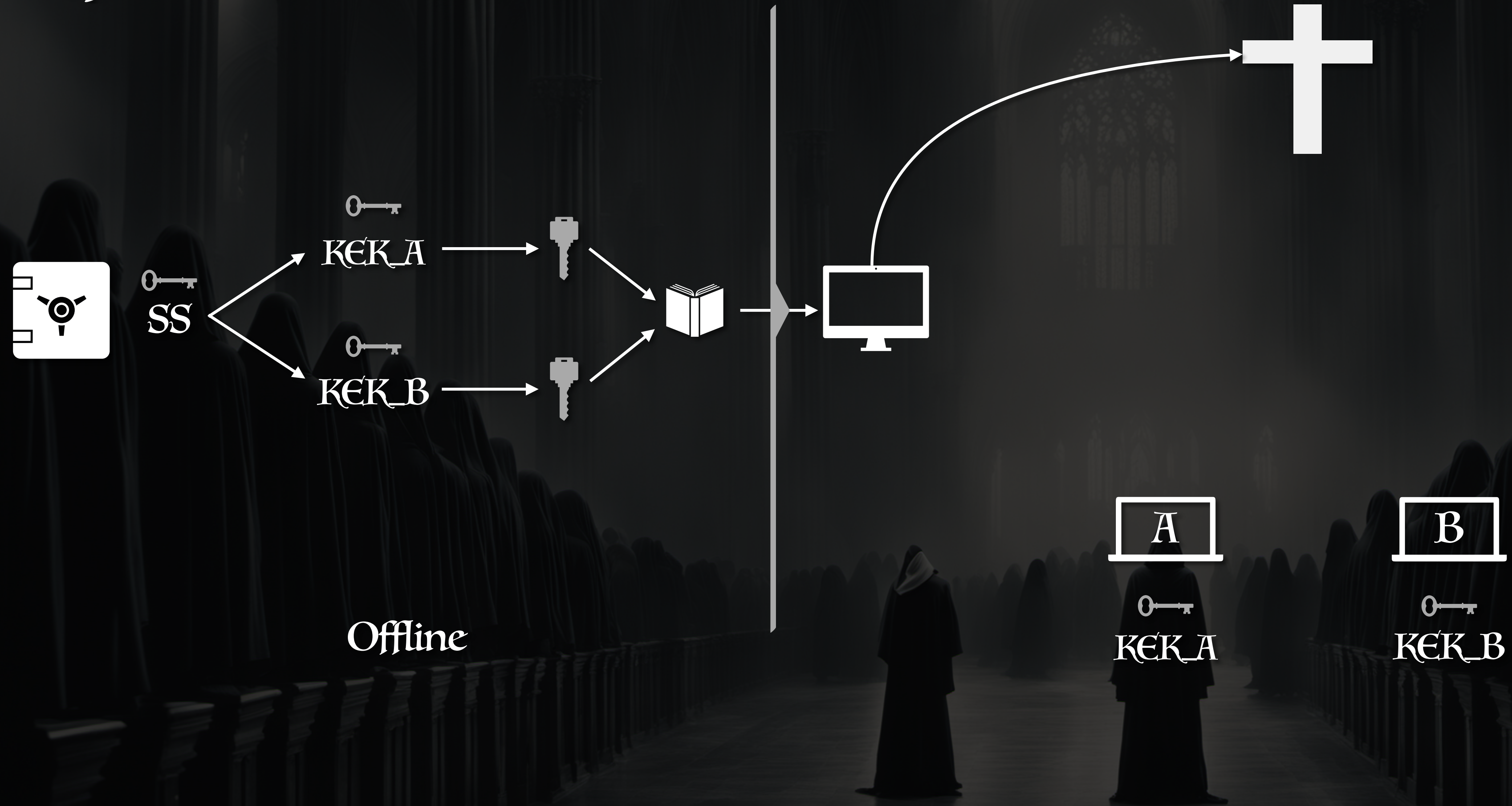
KEK\_B





# Cathedrals

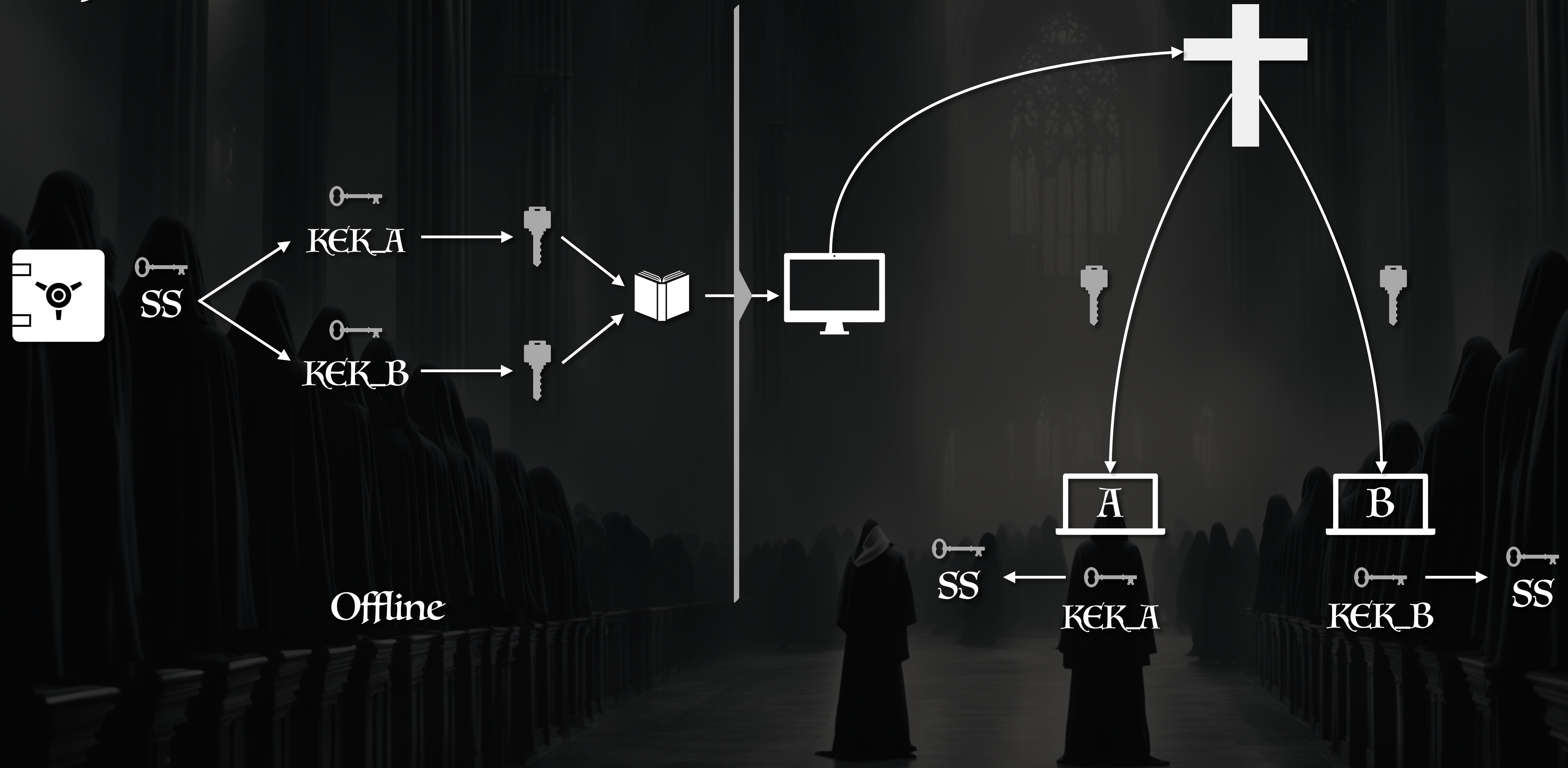
## Key Distribution





# Cathedrals

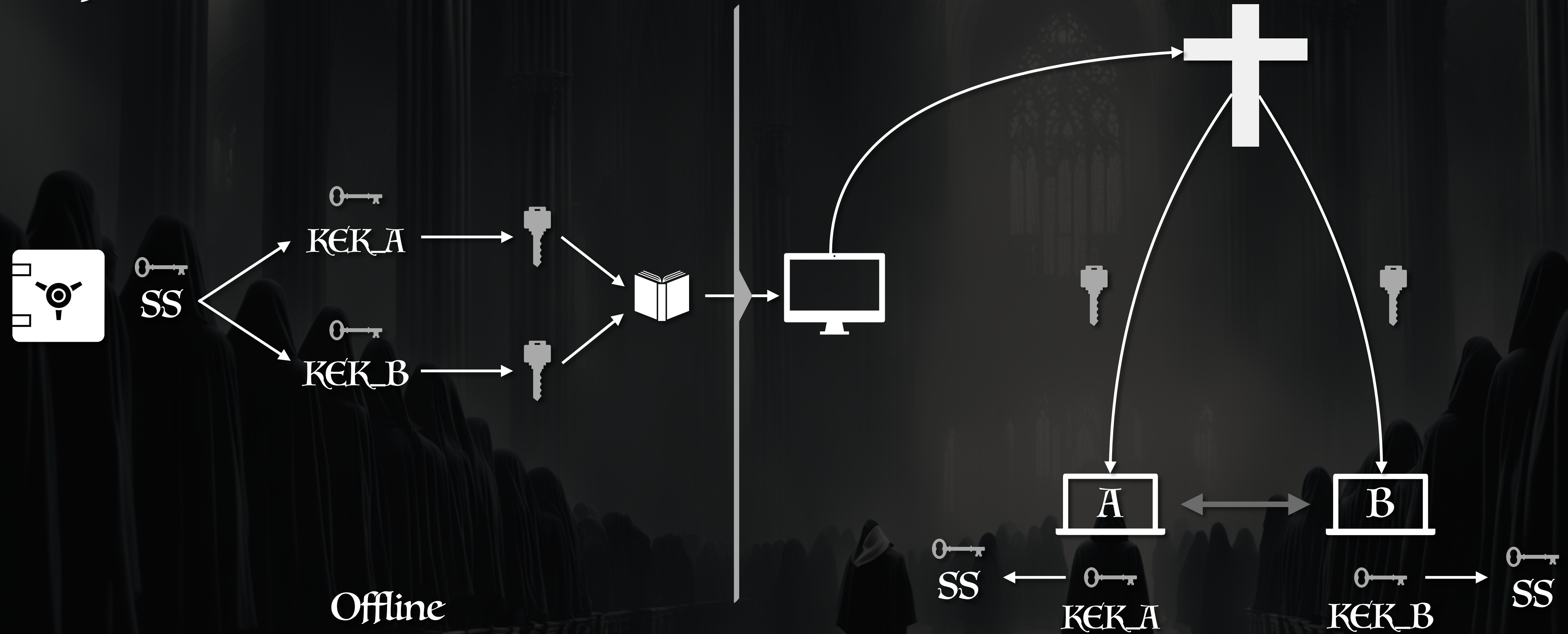
## Key Distribution





# Cathedrals

## Key Distribution





# Cathedrals

## Key Distribution

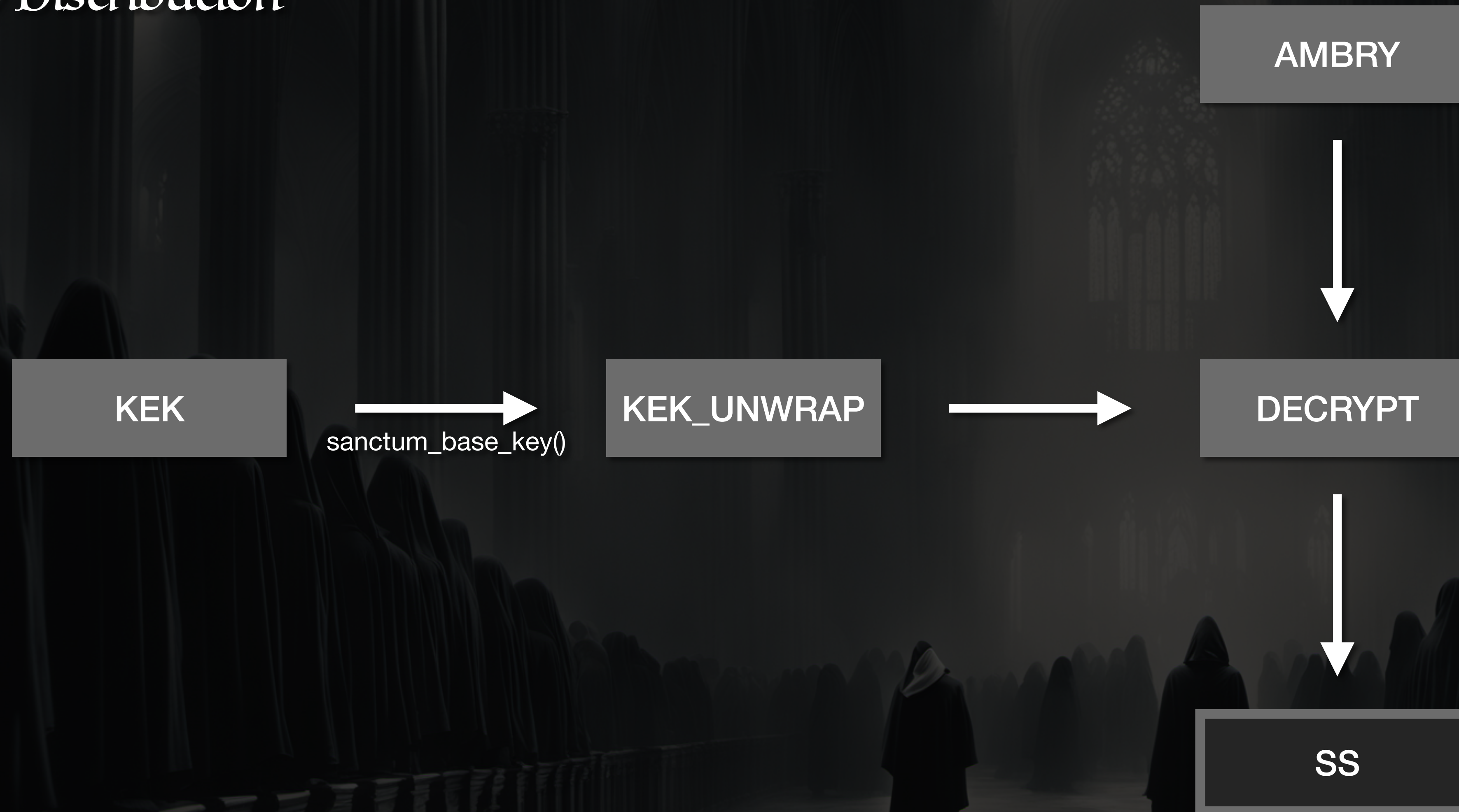
```
archael@gotyon ~ % ambry generate 0x53616e6374756d  
generating device KEKs under 53616e63747500 ... done  
deriving internal flock KEKs ... done  
archael@gotyon ~ % ambry bundle 0x53616e6374756d 0x53616e6374756d ambry.bundle  
ambry.bundle: generated 32385 tunnels, generation 0x649af776  
archael@gotyon ~ %
```





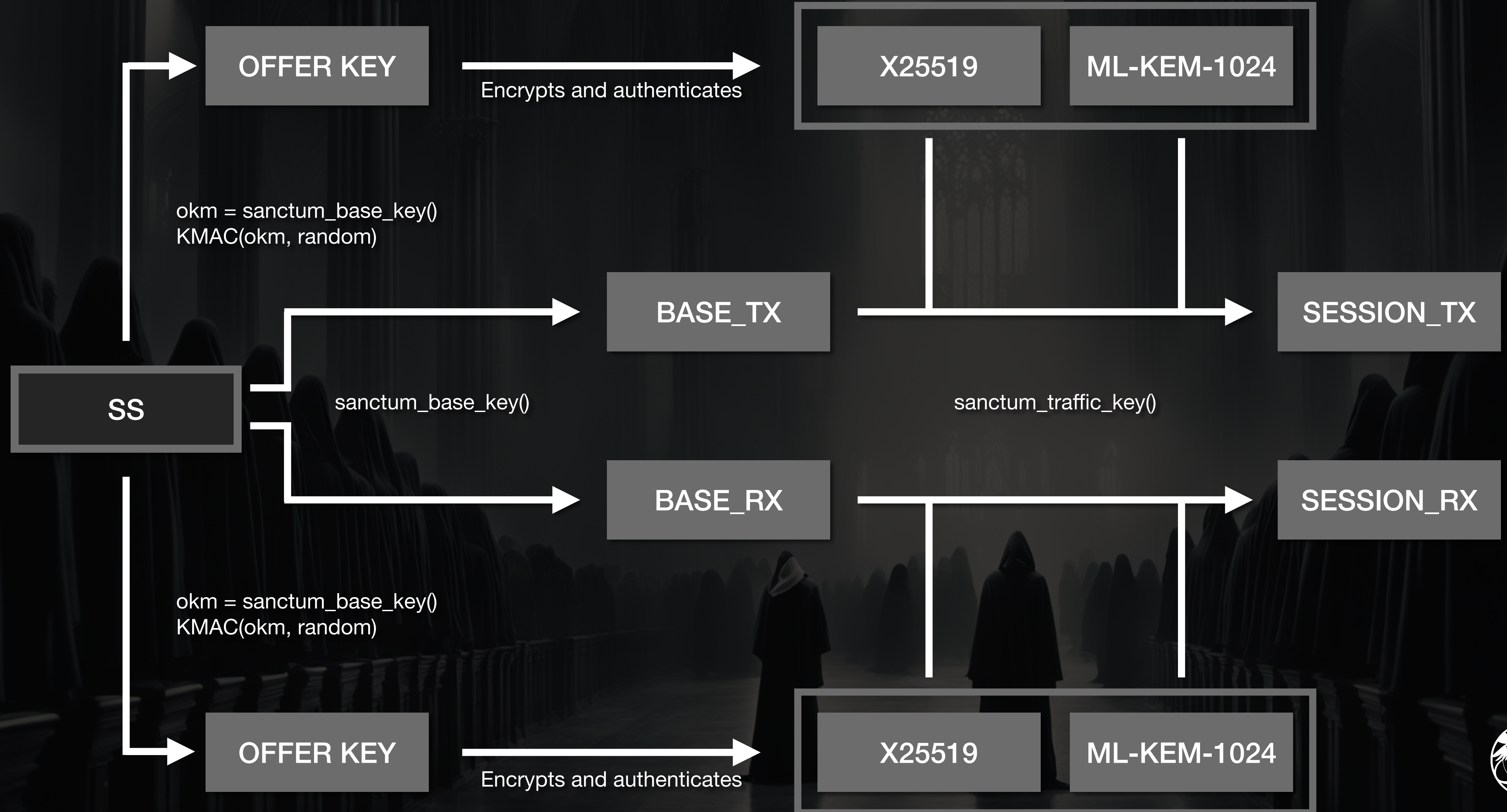
# Cathedrals

## Key Distribution





# Sanctum





# Cathedrals

## Recap

- **Discovery**
  - Find and establish tunnels to devices, no matter where they are.
- **Distributed**
  - Federate with other cathedrals to create global network.
- **Resilience**
  - As long as one cathedral survives, communication survives
  - Established p2p e2ee tunnels unaffected





# Cathedrals

Recap





# The Library



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# The Library

- libkyrka
- A complete implementation of the sanctum protocol.
- Embeddable into your application.
- Written in good old C99.
- Runs on Linux, OpenBSD, MacOS, Windows, Android, iOS.





# The Library

- Designed to be IO agonistic.
  - Tunnels over IP
  - Tunnels over Serial
  - Tunnels over USB
  - Tunnels over Discord (pls don't ban me)
  - Your imagination is the limit.





# The Library

- Designed to be IO agonistic (\*).
  - Tunnels over IP
  - Tunnels over Serial
  - Tunnels over USB
  - Tunnels over Discord (pls don't ban me)
  - Your imagination is the limit.

\* cathedrals require IP connectivity.





# The Library

- No real option for sandboxing, that is up to applications.
- Non time-critical sensitive assets masked in memory.
- Prevents easy or accidental exfiltration.
- Makes it harder on adversaries to obtain secrets.
- Does not make it impossible, but substantially raises the bar.





# The Library

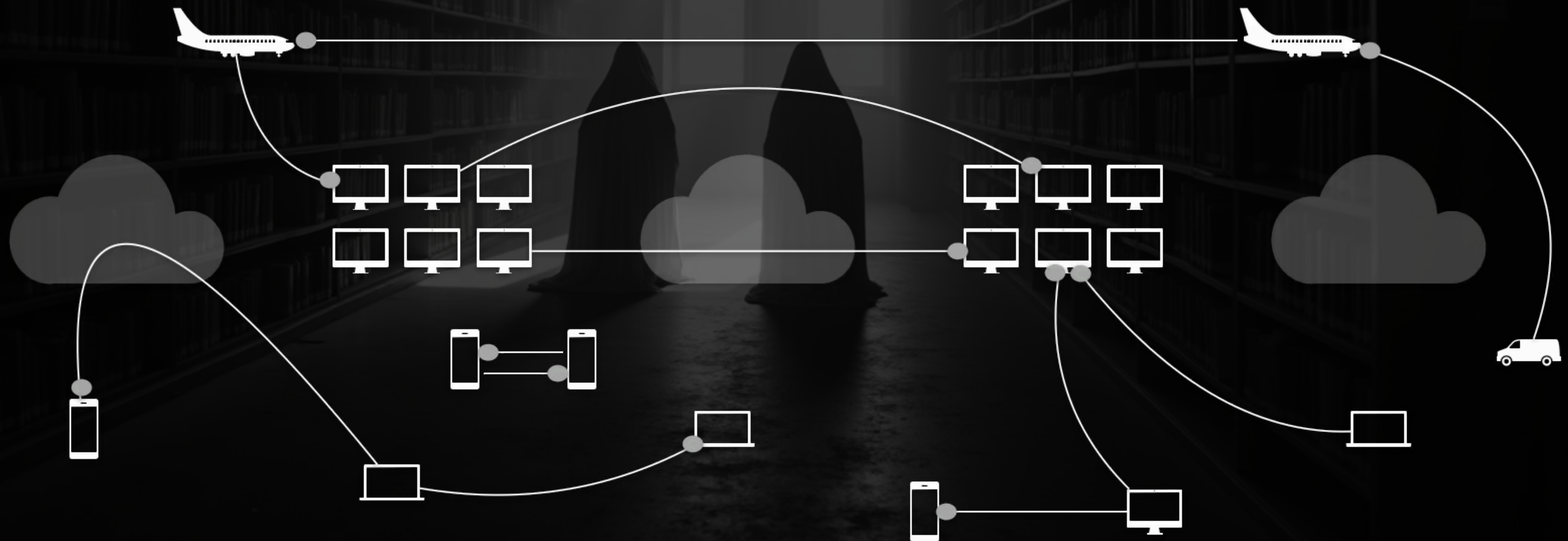
- Opens up the encrypted tunnel ecosystem to much more.
- Voice, Data, Text, Images, Inference data, MCP, etc.





# The Library

- Opens up the encrypted tunnel ecosystem to much more.
- Voice, Data, Text, Images, Inference data, MCP, etc.





# The Library

```
static struct tunnel *
tunnel_setup(void)
{
    struct tunnel          *tun;

    if ((tun = calloc(1, sizeof(*tun))) == NULL)
        fatal("calloc");

    if ((tun->fd = socket(AF_INET, SOCK_DGRAM, 0)) == -1)
        fatal("socket: %s", strerror(errno));

    if (bind(tun->fd, (const struct sockaddr *)&local, sizeof(local)) == -1)
        fatal("bind: %s", strerror(errno));

    if ((tun->ctx = kyrka_ctx_alloc(tunnel_event, tun)) == NULL)
        fatal("kyrka_ctx_alloc: failed");

    if (kyrka_heaven_ifc(tun->ctx, tunnel_plaintext, tun) == -1)
        fatal("kyrka_heaven_ifc: %d", kyrka_last_error(tun->ctx));

    if (kyrka_purgatory_ifc(tun->ctx, tunnel_ciphertext, tun) == -1)
        fatal("kyrka_purgatory_ifc: %d", kyrka_last_error(tun->ctx));

    if (kyrka_secret_load_path(tun->ctx, "secret.key") == -1)
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    if (kyrka_encap_key_load(tun->ctx, tek, sizeof(tek)) == -1)
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    return (tun);
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    return (tun);
}
```





# The Library

```
static void
tunnel_plaintext(const void *data, size_t len, u_int64_t seq, void *udata)
{
    printf("<< %.*s\n", (int)len, (const char *)data);
}

static void
tunnel_ciphertext(const void *data, size_t len, u_int64_t seq, void *udata)
{
    struct tunnel      *tun;

    tun = udata;

    if (sendto(tun->fd, data, len, 0,
               (const struct sockaddr *)&peer, sizeof(peer)) == -1)
        fatal("sendto: %s", strerror(errno));
}
```





# The Library

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static void
tunnel_plaintext(const void *data, size_t len, u_int64_t seq, void *udata)
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        fatal("sendto: %s", strerror(errno));
}
```





# The Library

```
static void
tunnel_read(int fd, KYRKA *ctx)
{
    ssize_t      ret;
    u_int8_t     pkt[1500];

    if ((ret = recv(fd, pkt, sizeof(pkt), MSG_DONTWAIT)) == -1) {
        if (errno == EWOULDBLOCK || errno == EAGAIN)
            return;
        fatal("recv: %s", strerror(errno));
    }

    if (kyrka_purgatory_input(ctx, pkt, ret) == -1 &&
        kyrka_last_error(ctx) != KYRKA_ERROR_NO_RX_KEY)
        fatal("kyrka_purgatory_input: %d", kyrka_last_error(ctx));
}
```





# The Library

```
static void
tunnel_read(int fd, KYRKA *ctx)
{
    ssize_t      ret;
    u_int8_t     pkt[1500];

    if ((ret = recv(fd, pkt, sizeof(pkt), MSG_DONTWAIT)) == -1) {
        if (errno == EWOULDBLOCK || errno == EAGAIN)
            return;
        fatal("recv: %s", strerror(errno));
    }

    if (kyrka_purgatory_input(ctx, pkt, ret) == -1 &&
        kyrka_last_error(ctx) != KYRKA_ERROR_NO_RX_KEY)
        fatal("kyrka_purgatory_input: %d", kyrka_last_error(ctx));
}
```





# The Library

- Python module included

```
ctx = libkyrka.alloc()

ctx.event_callback(event, None)
ctx.heaven_callback(heaven_recv, None)
ctx.purgatory_callback(purgatory_send, None)

try:
    with open("secret.key", "rb") as f:
        ctx.secret_load(f.read())
except Exception as e:
    print(f"error loading secret.key: {e}")
    quit()
```





# The Library

```
archael@gotyon libkyrka % PYTHONPATH=obj/python python3 examples/cathedral.py 49
3abf95a07e0c00-0x0c 493abf95a07e0c00 0c 5eb2411f 0x0c0d [REDACTED] 4500
key manage 11
event: 5 {'ambry': 654811089}
event: 3 {'reason': 'no keys'}
event: 1 {'tx': 0, 'rx': 202242488}
event: 1 {'tx': 218933906, 'rx': 202242488}
tunnel established
heaven_recv: 24 <b'Blessed sanctum, save us'> 1
event: 3 {'reason': 'key offer cleared'}
heaven_recv: 24 <b'Blessed sanctum, save us'> 2
█
```

```
archael@gotyon libkyrka % PYTHONPATH=obj/python python3 examples/cathedral.py 4
93abf95a07e0c00-0x0d 493abf95a07e0c00 0d e365d227 0x0d0c [REDACTED] 4500
key manage 11
event: 5 {'ambry': 654811089}
event: 3 {'reason': 'no keys'}
event: 1 {'tx': 0, 'rx': 218933906}
event: 1 {'tx': 202242488, 'rx': 218933906}
tunnel established
heaven_recv: 24 <b'Blessed sanctum, save us'> 1
event: 3 {'reason': 'key offer cleared'}
heaven_recv: 24 <b'Blessed sanctum, save us'> 2
█
```





# Confessions





# Confessions

- Confessions is a voice program written in C99.
  - Linux, OpenBSD, MacOS, Windows and Android.
- Uses libkyrka to establish secure tunnels to its peers.
- Fully implements the sanctum protocol and can thus failover to other cathedrals and use Ambries etc.
- All communication P2P and E2EE.
- Voice is carried over the tunnels instead of IP packets.





# Confessions

```
archael@gotyon ~ % reliquary-voice-call [REDACTED] 02
flock:[REDACTED] - src:06 - id:130c688e ([REDACTED])
starting confessions ...
capture: MacBook Pro Microphone
playback: MacBook Pro Speakers
[0x120008000] [ambry]: generation 0xf88aad6a active
[0x120008000] [peer]: exchange 'no keys'
[0x120008000] [peer]: online tx=00000000 rx=0602949c
[0x120008000] [peer]: p2p discovery [REDACTED]
[0x120008000] [peer]: online tx=020606d8 rx=0602949c
[0x120008000] [peer]: exchange 'key offer cleared'
█
```

## Confessions

Ready to communicate



DIRECT

GROUP

LOGOUT





# Confessions

- One-to-one calls.
  - Single tunnel to your peer.
- Group calls.
  - Establish unique tunnels to each participant in the group.
  - More resource demanding but works fine.
  - Don't let anyone else claim differently.





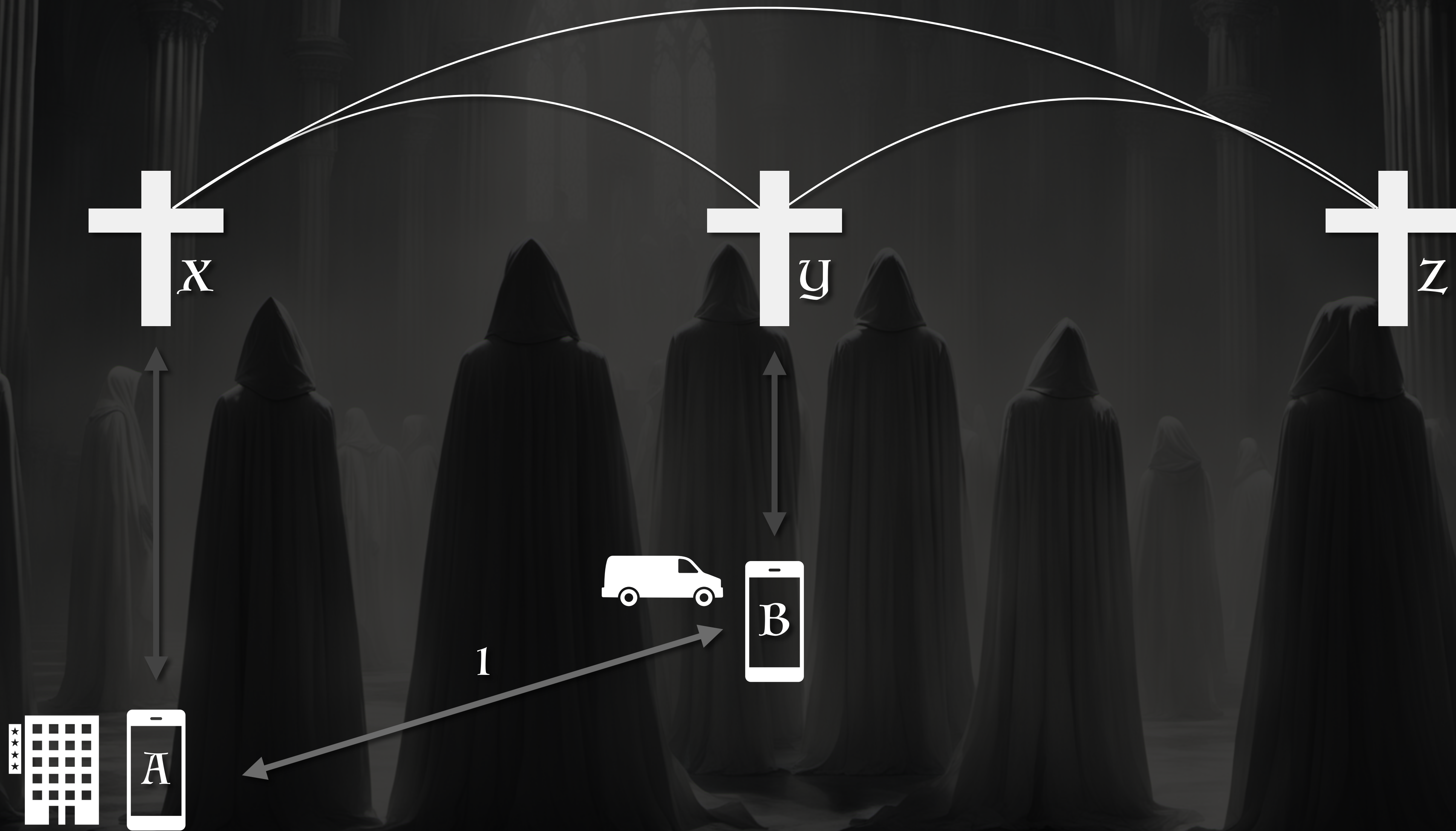
# Confessions

- Group calls make use of liturgies to auto-discover peers.
- Peers can join and leave group automatically.
- The good, any peer in your flock can join the group.
- The bad, any peer in your flock can join the group.
- Depending on use-case this is either good or bad.



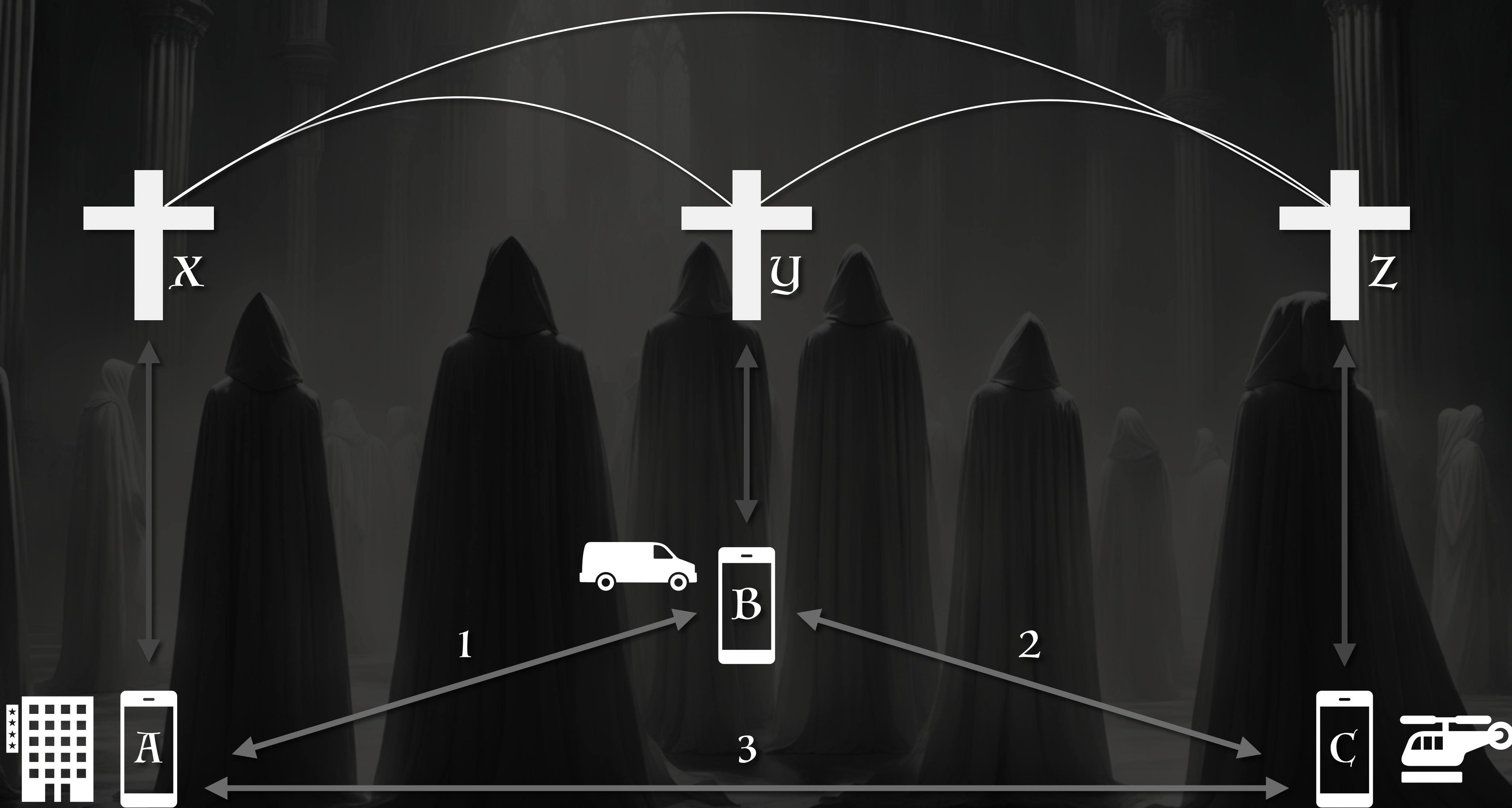


# Confessions





# Confessions





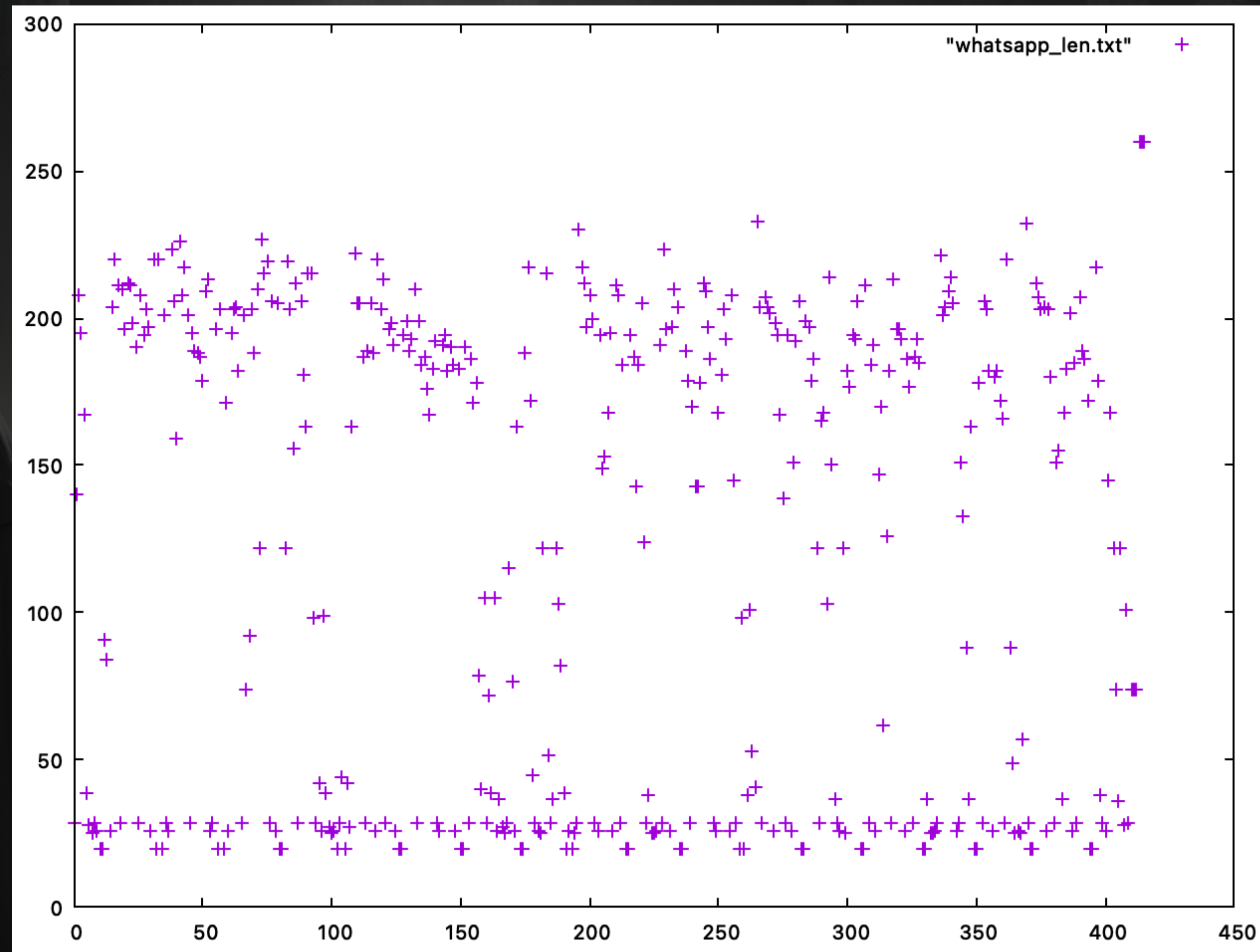
# Confessions

- Voice encoded using OPUS.
- VBR codecs (like OPUS) are problematic:
  - Length of encoded packets leak information.
- Papers from 2010 talks about being able to recover spoken words even when encrypted.
- All you need is a prerecording of a persons voice.
  - And a 2010 neural network (where are we today?)





# Confessions

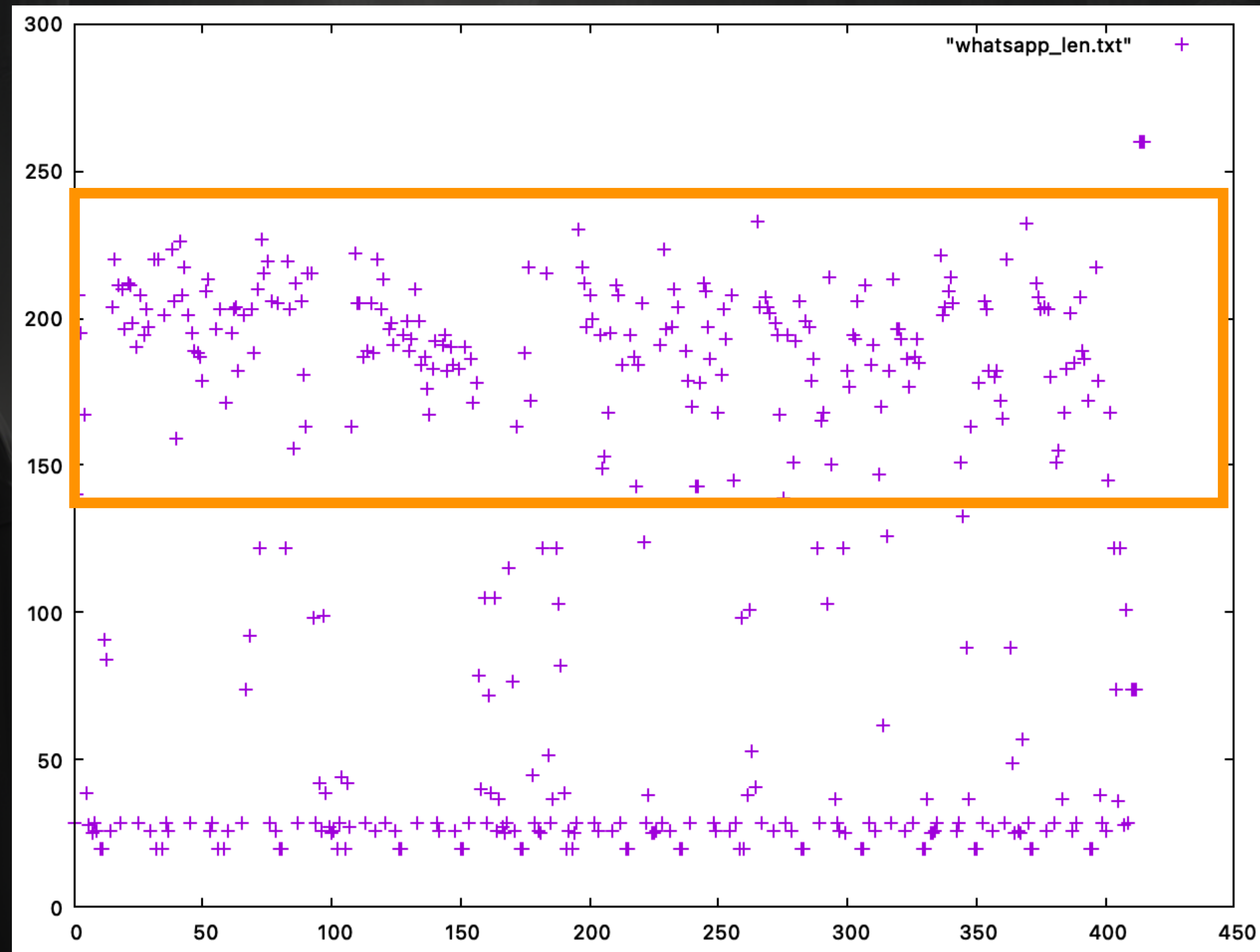


WhatsApp voice call





# Confessions

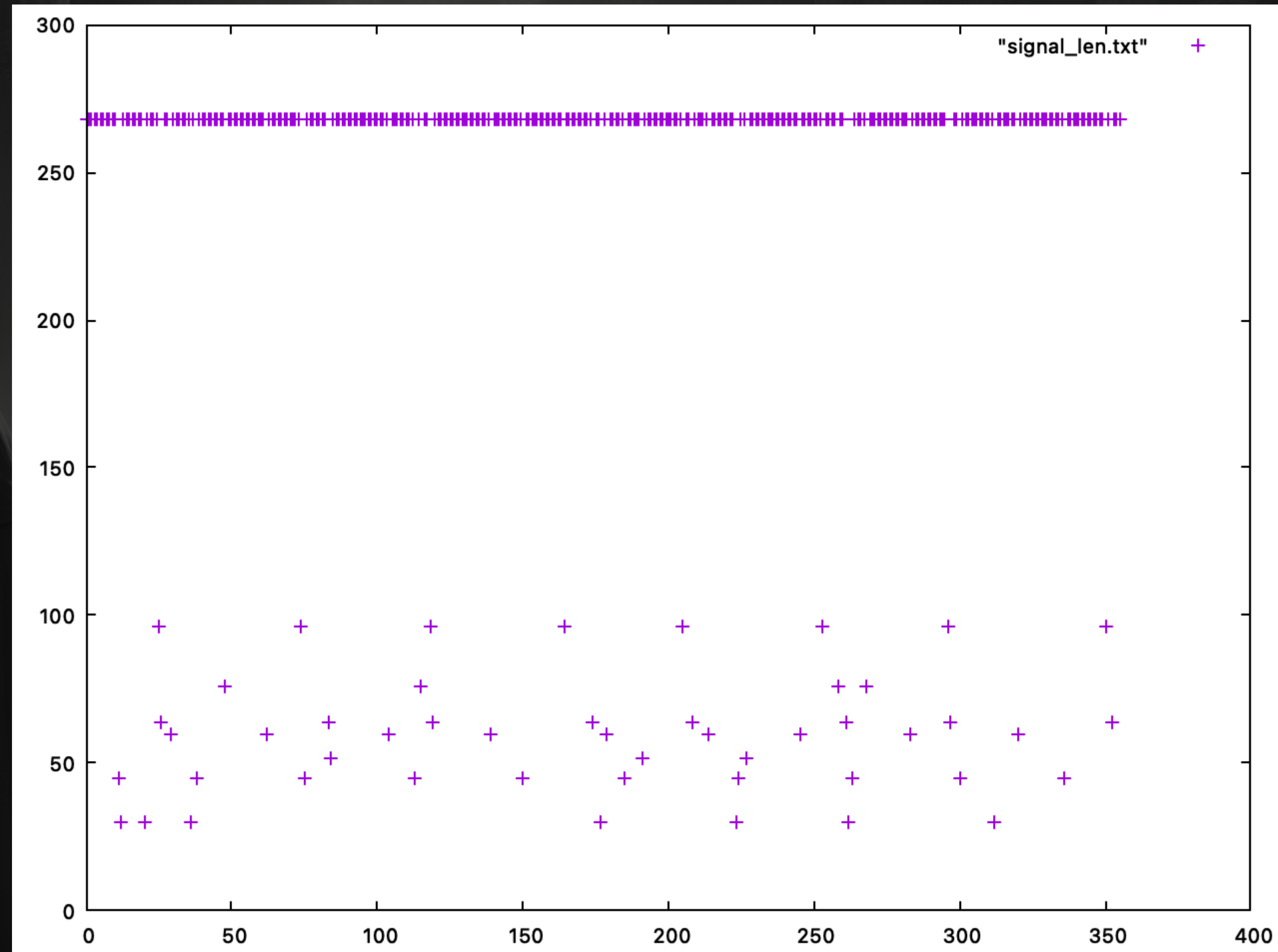


WhatsApp voice call





# Confessions

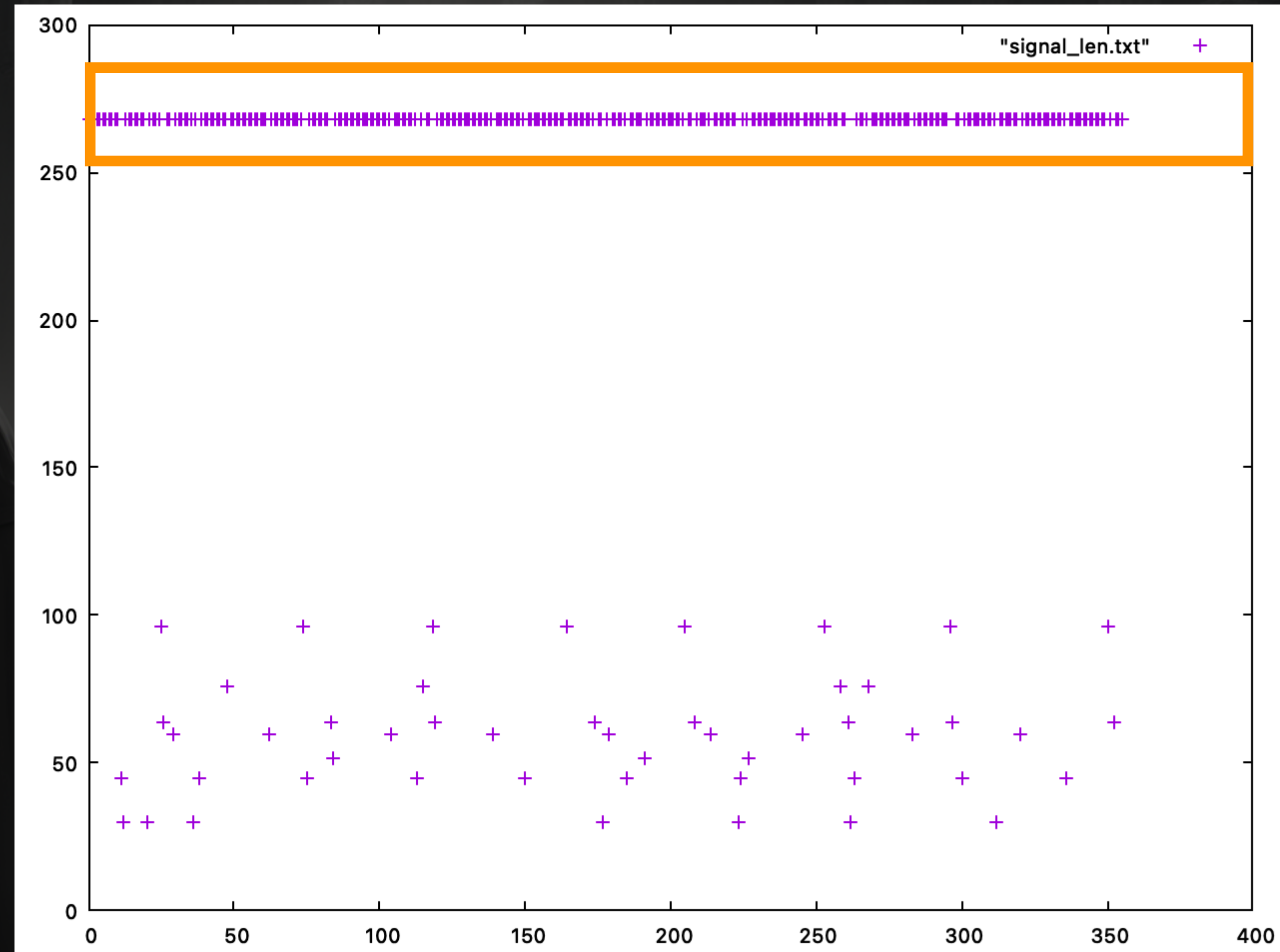


Signal voice call





# Confessions

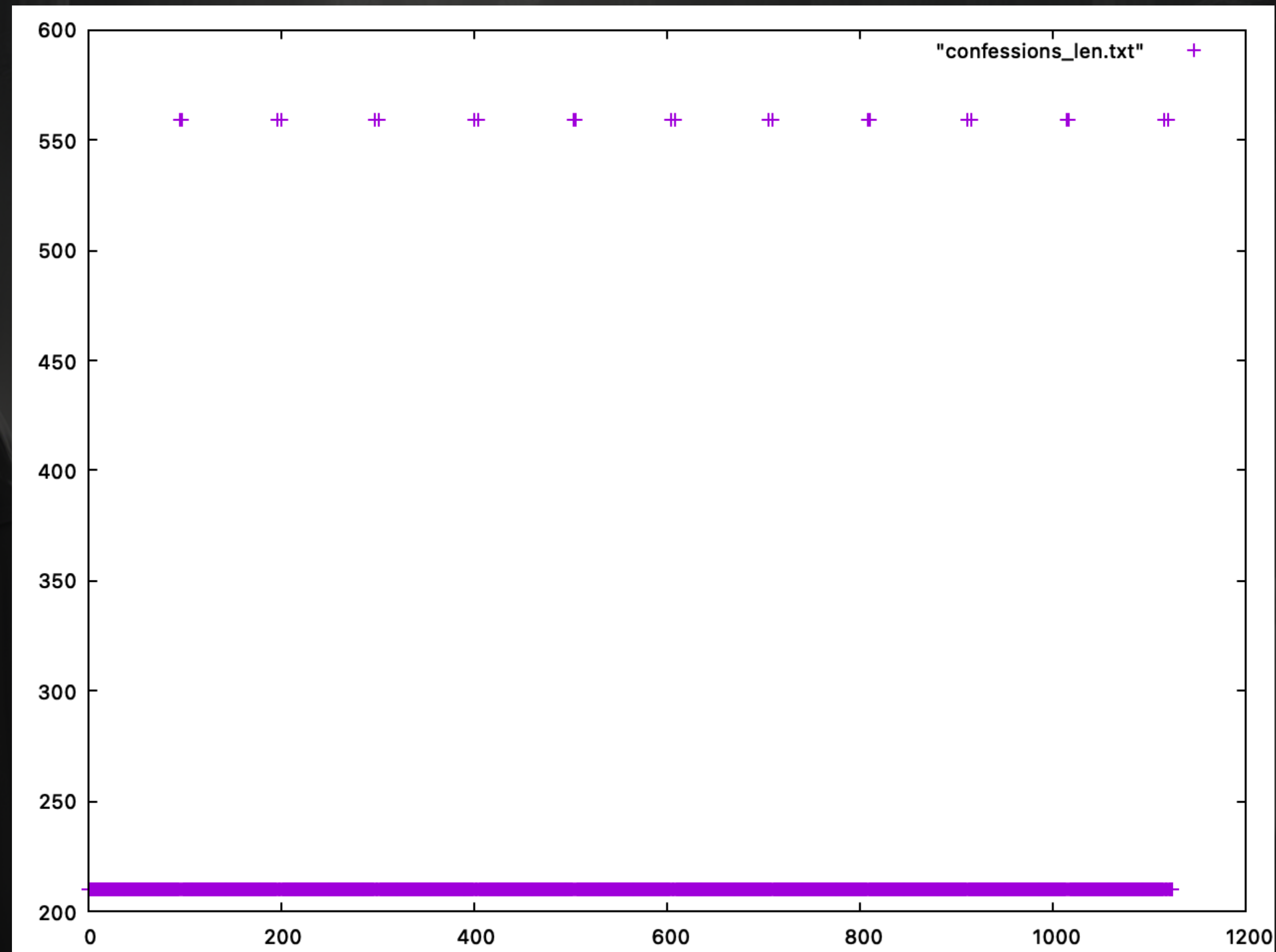


Signal voice call





# Confessions

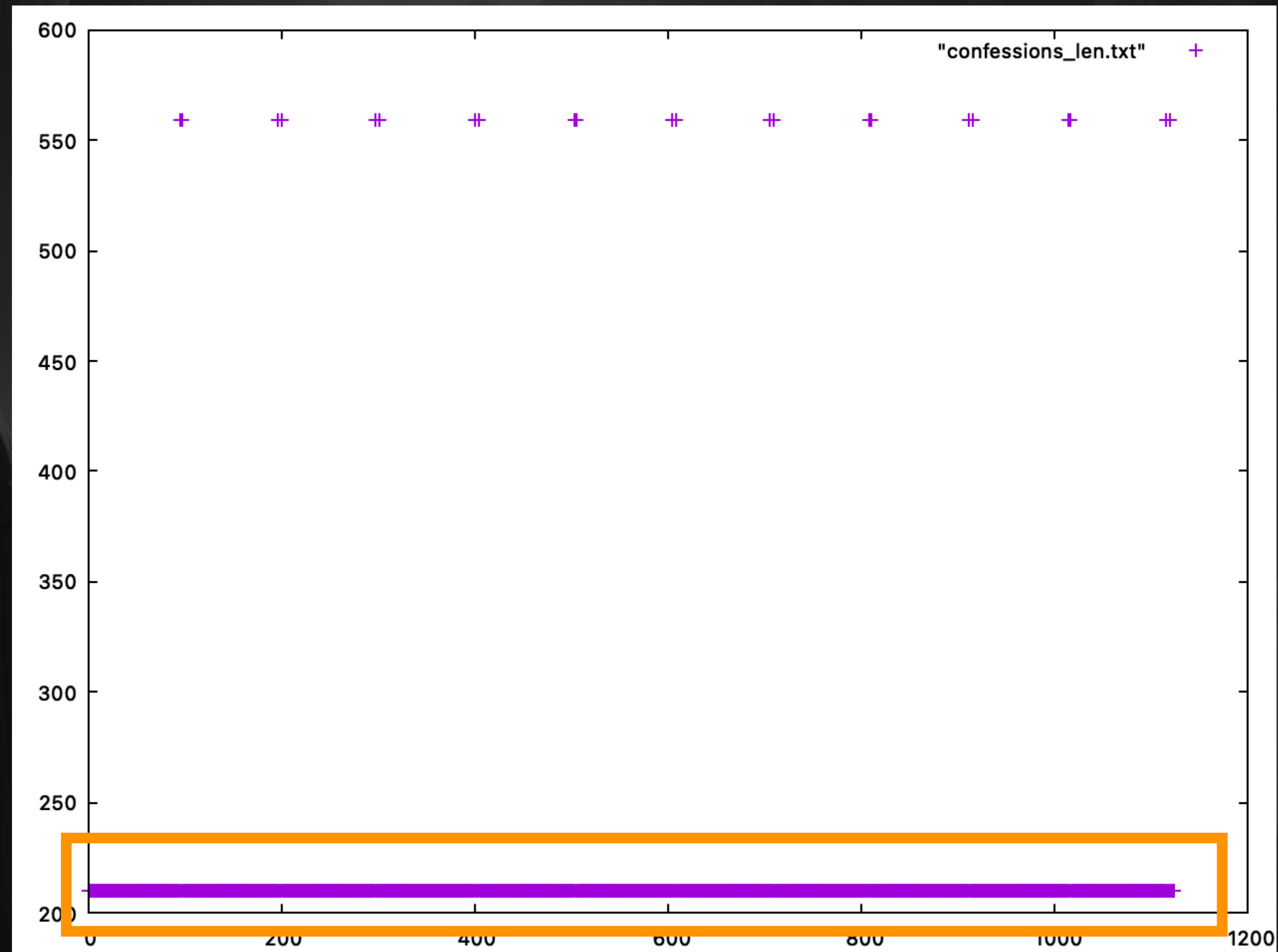


Confessions voice call





# Confessions

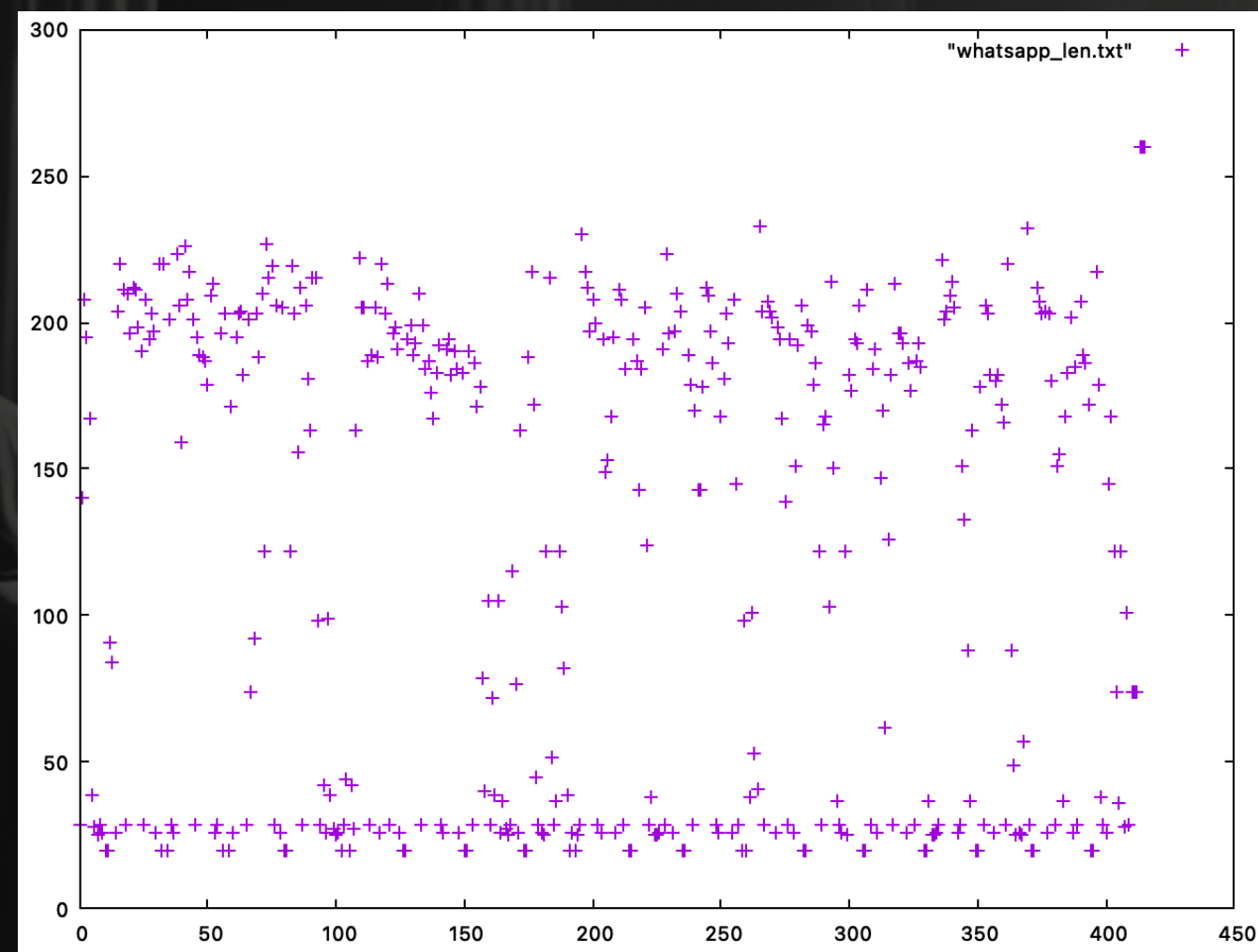


Confessions voice call

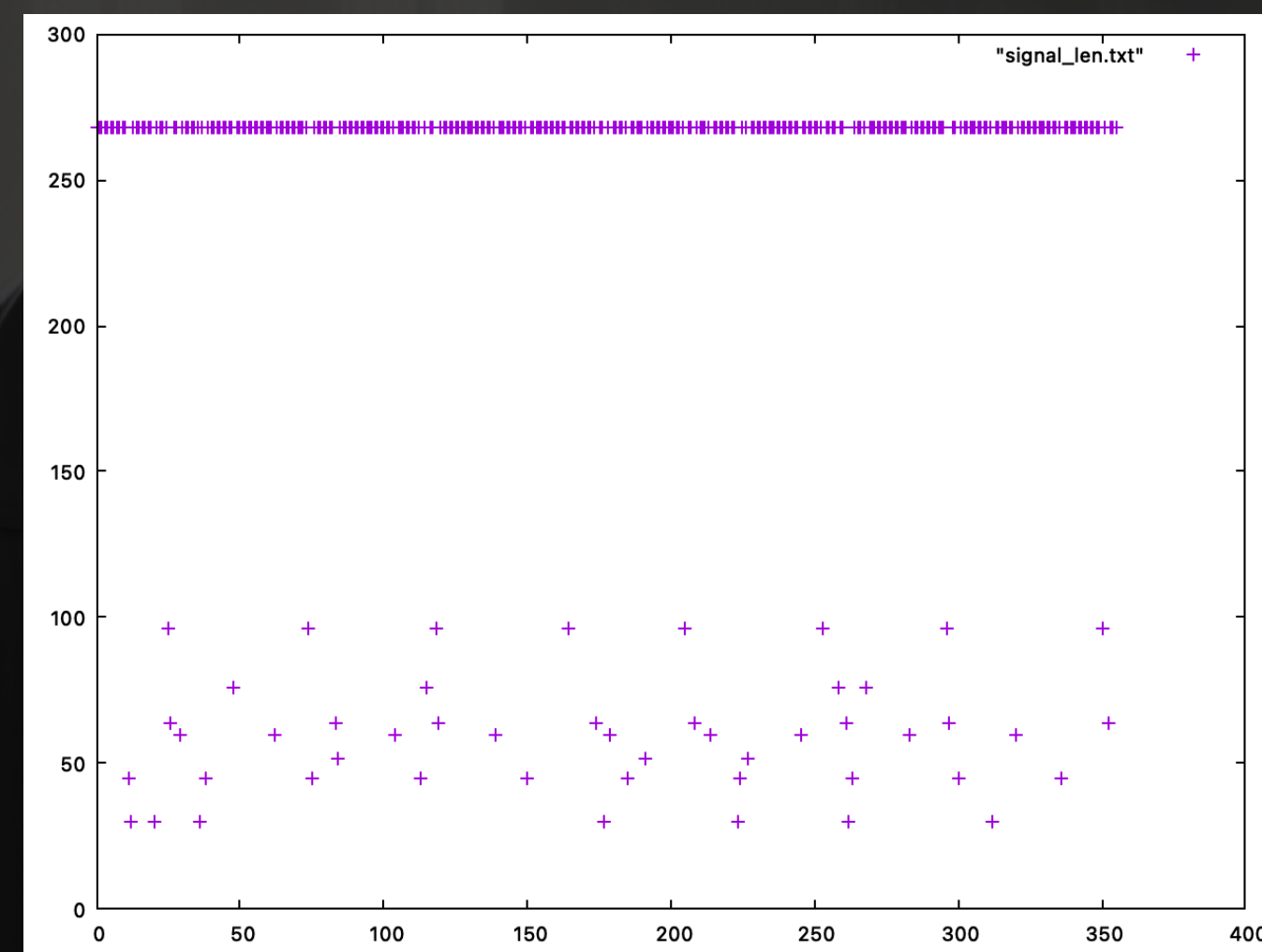




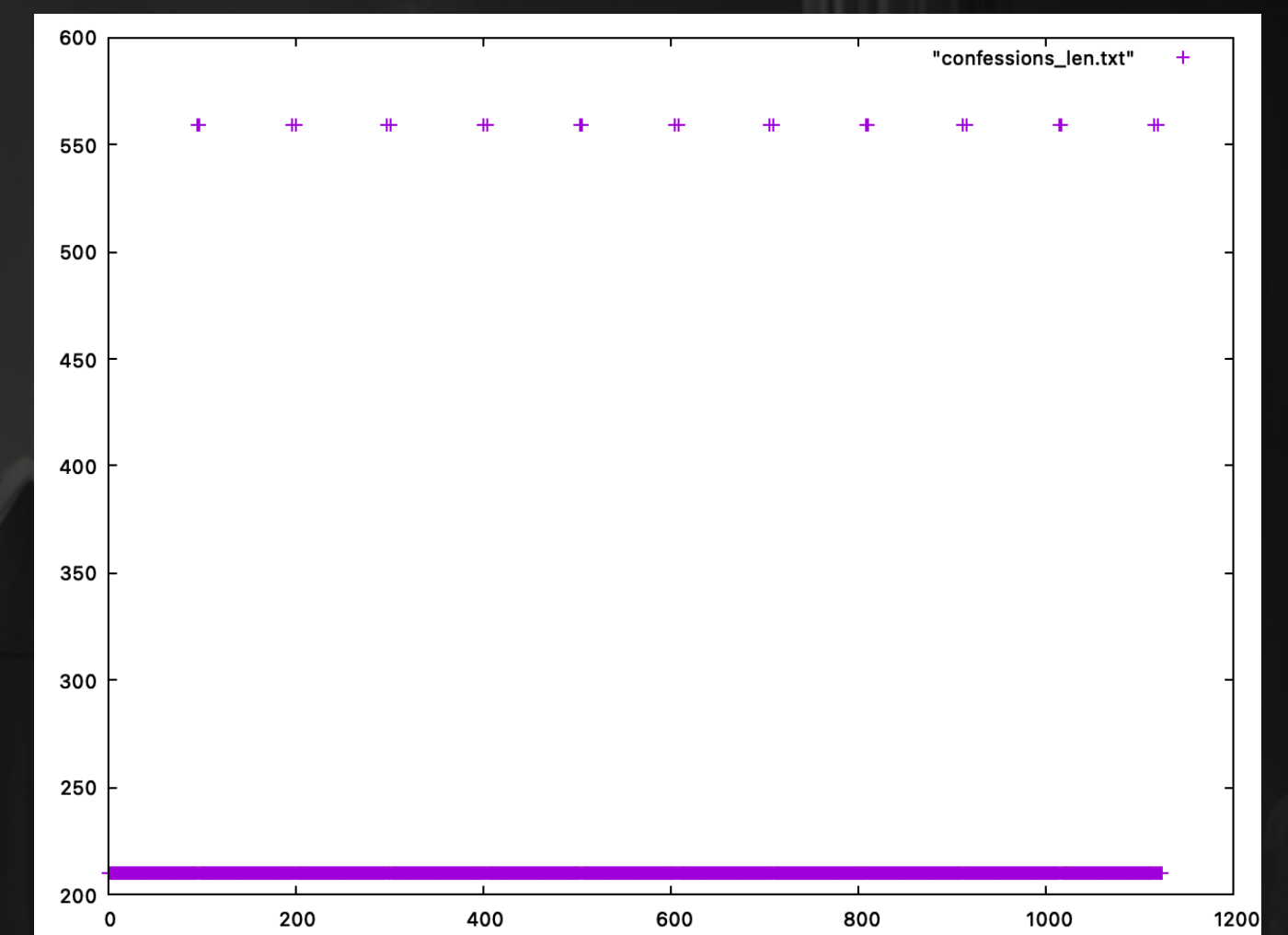
# Confessions



WhatsApp



Signal



Confessions





# Confessions

- Confessions uses fixed-size packets.
  - OPUS payload is carried inside fixed-size packets.
- DTX feature detects when someone talks.
  - If nobody is talking, packet sizes and frequency changes.
  - Also a side-channel, can distinguish when someone talks.
  - Confessions turns this off.





# Confessions

- Kind reminder that WebRTC uses OPUS by default.
- WebRTC is used everywhere for voice (browsers, apps, ...)
- You must explicitly ask for CBR in SDP by setting cbr=1.
- If not present, VBR is used.
- How many WebRTC consumers do this you think?





# Litany





# Litany

- Litany is a real-time chat program written in C++ using Qt.
  - Linux, OpenBSD, MacOS and Windows.
- Libkyrka is used to transport messages to peers.
- Text is carried instead of IP packets.





# Litany

Litany

Online

Peer 11

Offline

Peer 01

Peer 02

Peer 03

Peer 04

Peer 05

Peer 06

Peer 07

Peer 08

Peer 09

Peer 0a

Peer 0b

Peer 0c

Peer 0d

Group

JOIN GROUP

Litany - Chat with 0x11

[cathedral]: address

[cathedral]: got ambry 0x849e33dc

[exchange]: no keys

[exchange]: key offer cleared

[exchange]: no keys

[tunnel]: tx=00000000 rx=0c11100f

[tunnel]: tx=110c1a16 rx=0c11100f

[tunnel]: established

[exchange]: key offer cleared

<11> Hello Sec-T!

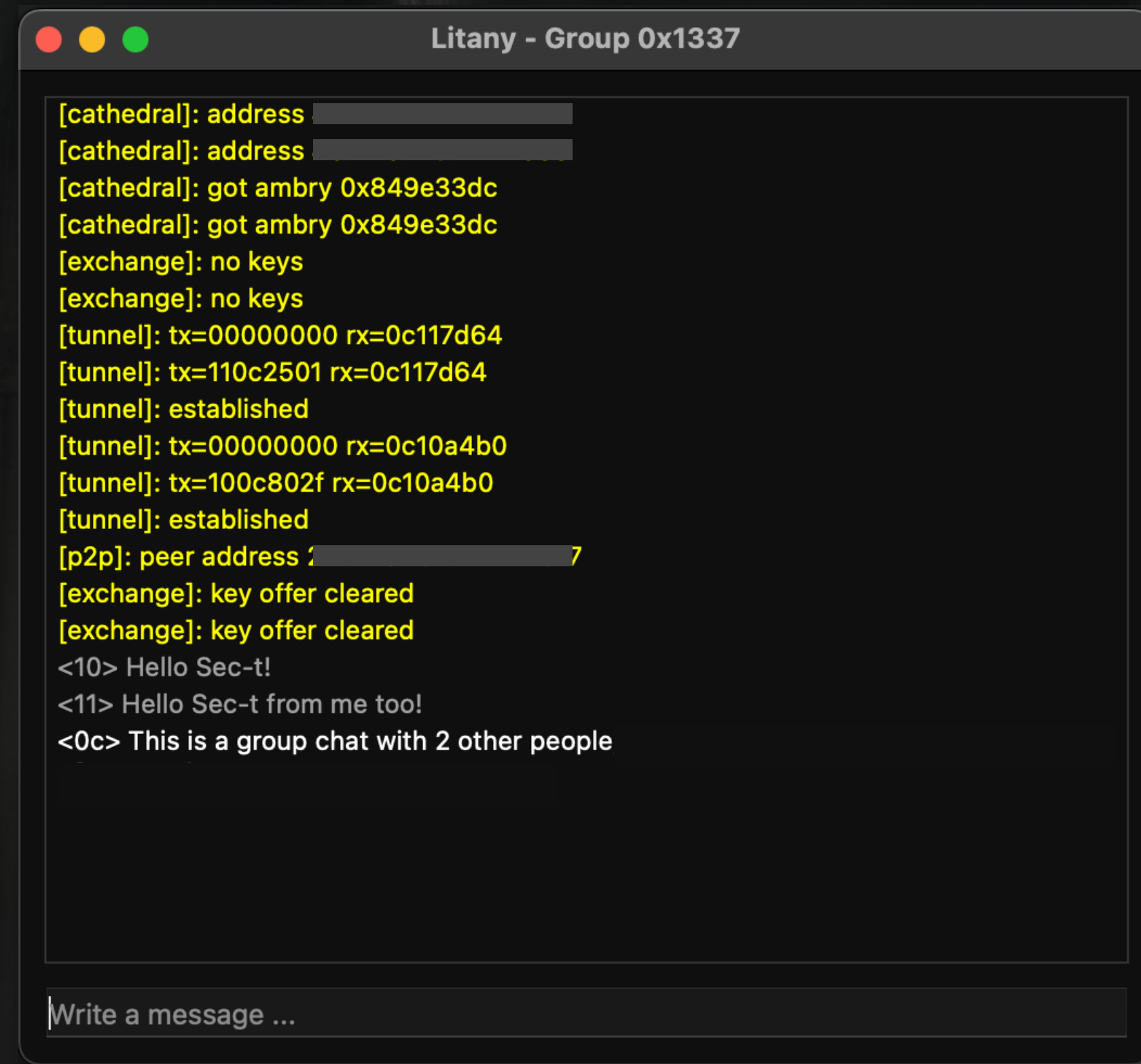
<0c> Hello stranger danger!

Write a message ...





# Litany





# Litany

- One-on-one chats
  - Direct tunnel between peers.
- Group chats
  - One unique tunnel for each peer joined into the group.
  - No complex group key establishment protocol needed.





# Litany

- Several different liturgies in different flock domains:
  - A discovery one to see who's online.
  - A signalling one to indicate if someone wants to talk to you.
  - Another discovery for open group chats.





# Litany

- Traffic analysis prevention:
  - All protocol messages are fixed-size.
  - Chat messages carried inside of these protocol messages.
- Reliable delivery of chat messages:
  - Chat messages must be ACK'd or they are periodically resent by sender.
- Quite noisy on the wire (on purpose).





# The Reliquary





# The Reliquary

- A community-driven cathedral network.
  - Multi-tenant
- Provides APIs and handy scripts:
  - Account management.
  - Create and manage flocks and devices.
  - Upload your Ambry bundles.
- Cathedrals spread over Europe.
- Relayed tunnels are capped at 25mbit/sec.





# The Reliquary

```
archael@gotyon ~ % reliquary-device-list 6442a01510d91a00 | jq
{
  "devices": [
    {
      "device_kek": "1",
      "device_cathedral_id": "36d28dec"
    },
    {
      "device_kek": "2",
      "device_cathedral_id": "c38362f2"
    },
    {
      "device_kek": "3",
      "device_cathedral_id": "9b2599ad"
    },
    {
      "device_kek": "5",
      "device_cathedral_id": "c80e1544"
    },
    {
      "device_kek": "6",
      "device_cathedral_id": "3e4cdc98"
    }
  ]
}
archael@gotyon ~ %
```





# Recap





# Recap

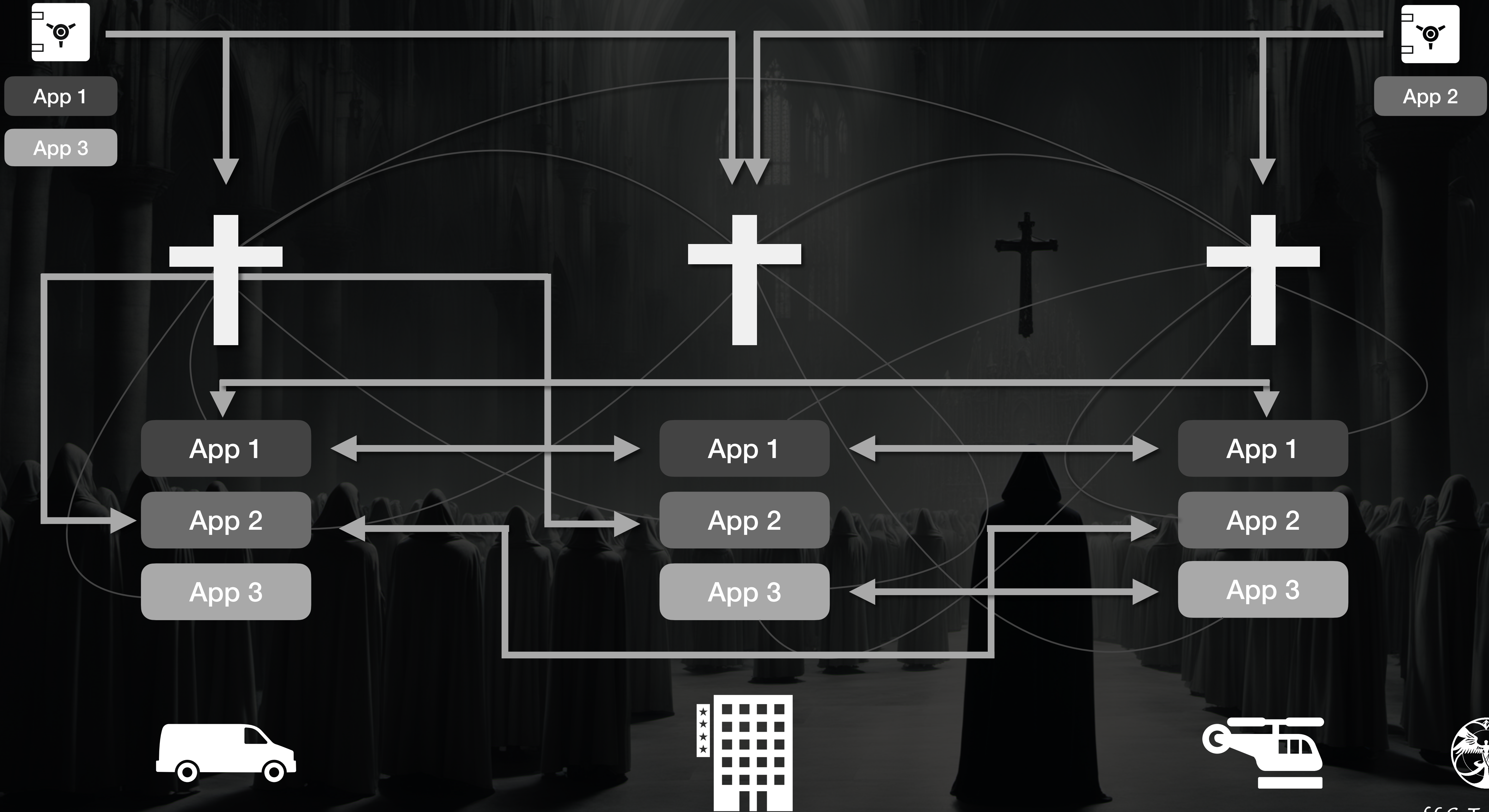
- Sanctum
  - Build highly available and truly distributed secure communication infrastructure using its cathedrals.
  - Secure key distribution.
- Libkyrka
  - Run any type of application on that infrastructure.
- Confessions and Litany
  - Voice and text without central nodes, only the cathedral infrastructure.













Recap

*As long as we can  
communicate securely*

*Everything will be fine*





<https://conclave.se>





Thank you for  
listening

