Debian / PVE How to reset forgotten root password

I didn't log into it for months. That was time to decommission this test machine but I wanted to check what was left on this PVE instance. Yes, I have to admit it. I completely forgot the password of the root account on this machine.

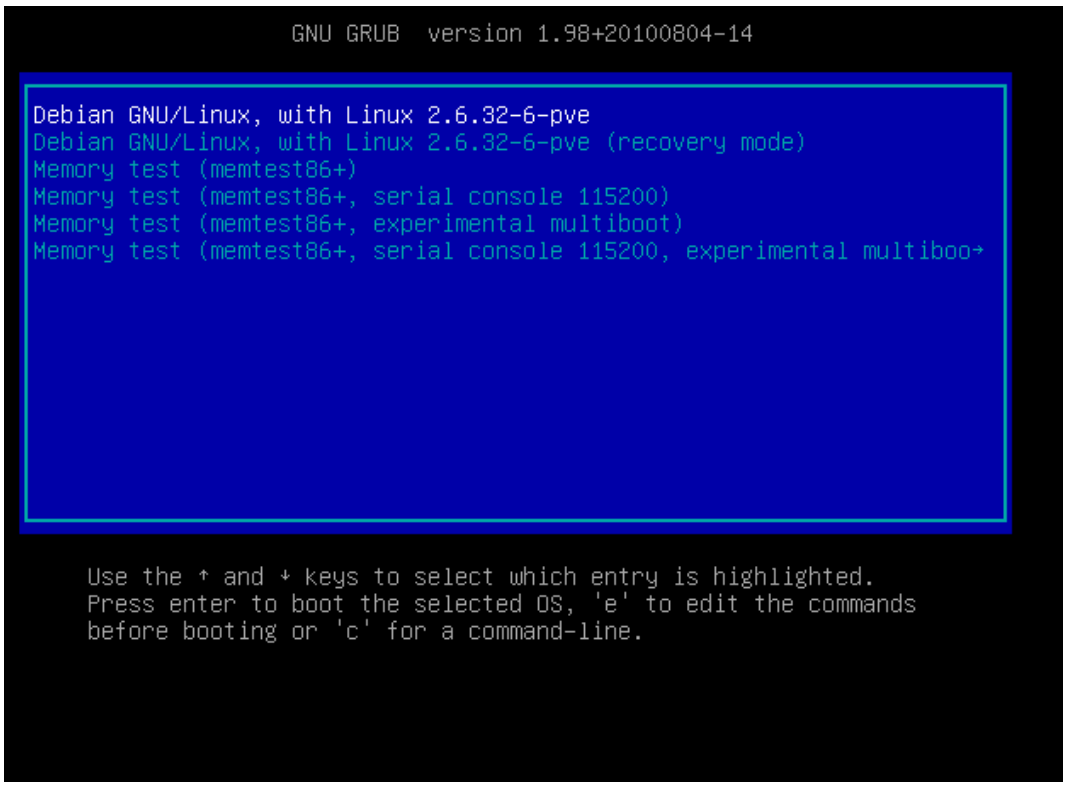
I was wondering if there was a way to recover it or reset it ! Because PVE is based on a Debian linux distribution, yes, there is a way to reset the root password and get access to your machine. This post will be really easy. Follow me !

Modifying the Boot Loader

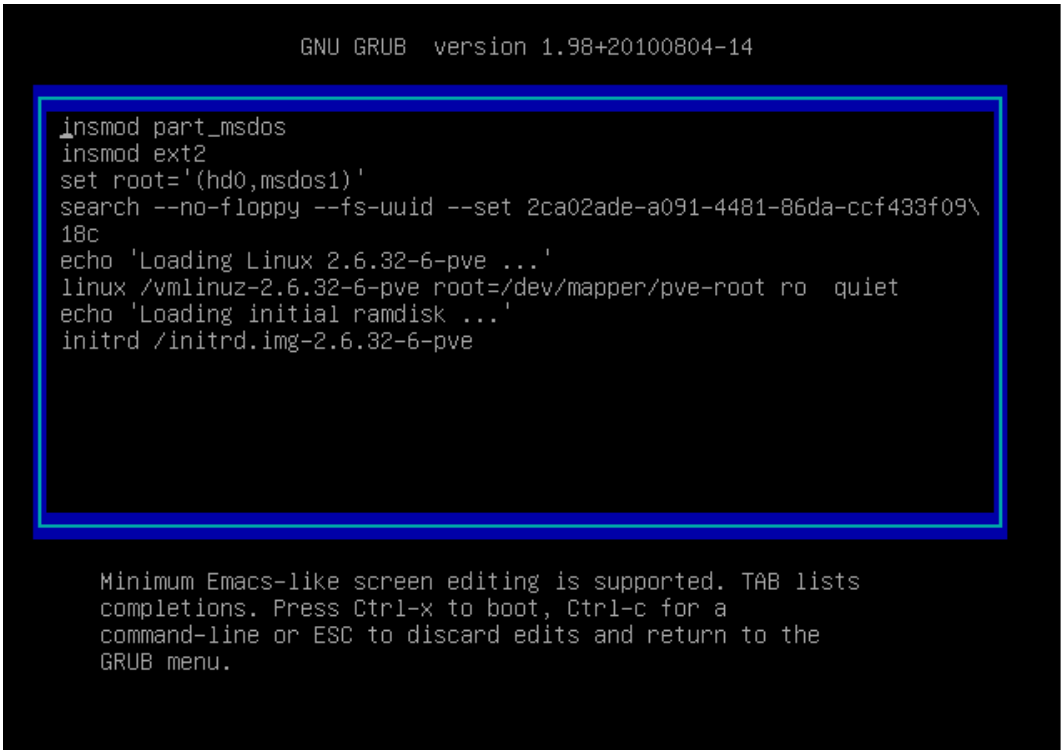
Note : This should be working on all version of PVE. I'm demonstrating the process with PVE 2.0 where the boot loader is "Grub"

You do not need to have any special tools or liveCD. In order to reset the password admin on the PVE machine, you will need to boot it and modify the boot loader so we will be booting in command prompt mode where you will be able to issue your reset password command.

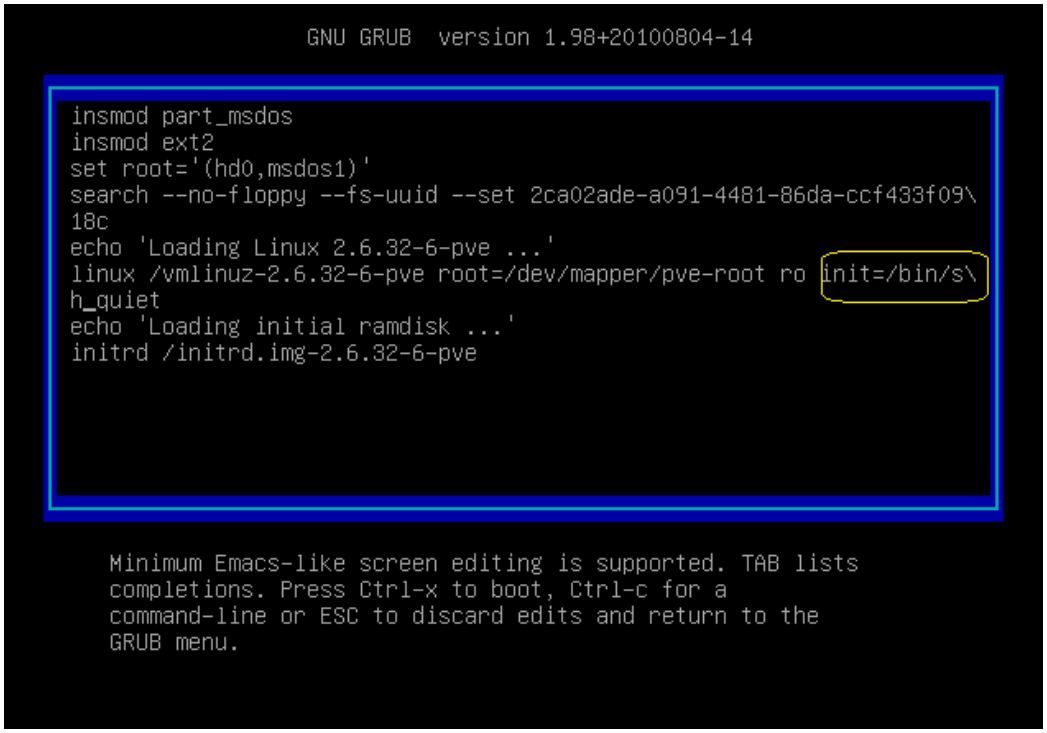
Step 1 – Boot your **PVE machine**. In the boot menu screen, you select your boot option and instead of pressing enter to proceed, you simply press "e" on your keyboard.



This will bring you to screen where you can edit the boot configuration file and modify the way the system will boot.



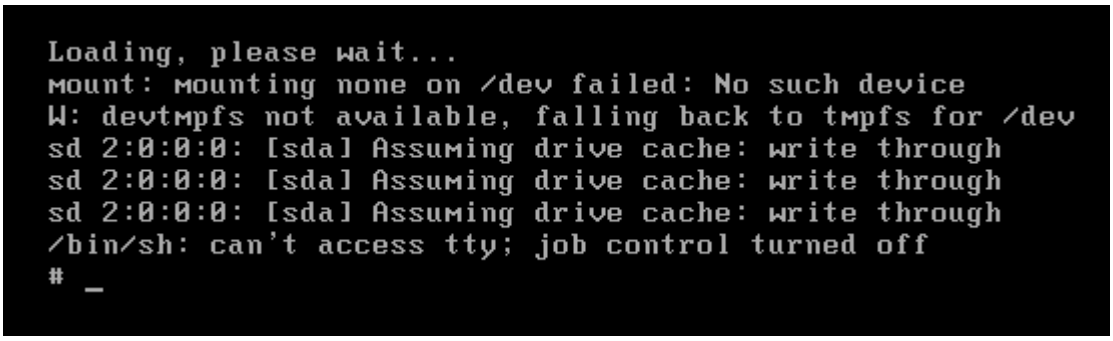
Step 2 – Append the following text at the end of the line starting with linux : **init=/bin/sh**



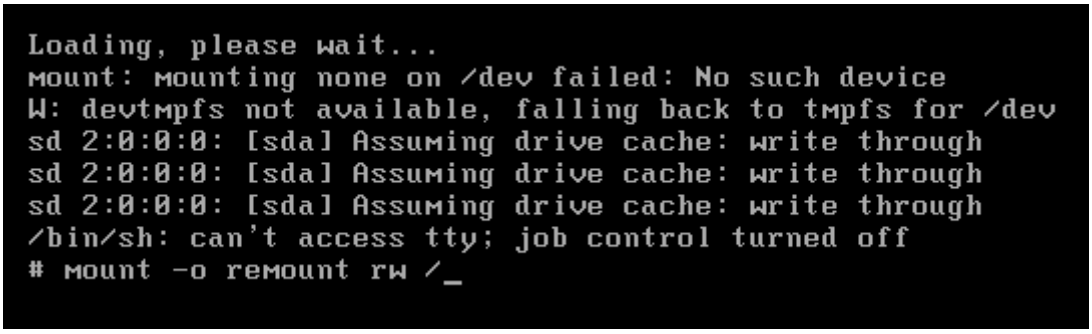
At this stage, simply press **CTRL + x** to boot your system.

Step 3 – Mount the filesystem

The system will boot in console mode. You will see something like this.

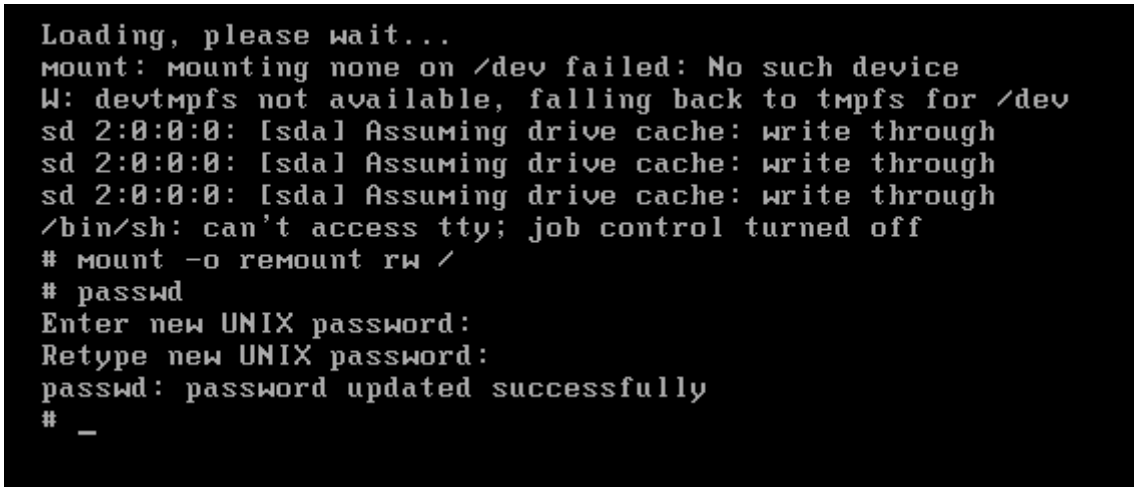


At the command line, you will have to type the following command: **`mount -o remount rw /`**



Step 4 – Reset the password for the root account.

We are almost done. In order to reset the password, you will have to digit the command **passwd.** You will be asked to enter your new password and confirm it.



When it’s done, simply reboot your system and try to login using the newly resetted password. You should be able to login into your PVE system.

Final Notes

You might want to document this procedure in case you lose your password for the root account. The PVE 2.0 has a role based model administration that should help you minimize annoyance of loosing password. I’m assuming that with the role based models, organization will define more than one full administrative account in order to have a secondary account that could be used to recover or access the system in case of problem with the root account.