Web App Pentesting - Hack Yourself First

CYBER SECURITY ANALYST

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Objective

The objective of this task is to identify and exploit known vulnerabilities in a deliberately insecure web application. The target vulnerabilities include SQL Injection, XSS vulnerability, and other web application flaws. [1].

Tools and Environment Used

- Burp Suite Community Edition
- Mozilla Firefox (configured proxy to 127.0.0.1:8080)
- Burp Embedded Browser
- Kali Linux tools for payload crafting
- HTTPS interception with Burp Certificate installed
- Target URL: https://hack-yourself-first.com/

During this environment setup, I am unable to see the "Render" section inside the repeater of Burp Suite. So I switched to Burp Suite's browser. So, this step - Mozilla Firefox (configured proxy to 127.0.0.1:8080) can be ignored.

1 SQL Injection Attack

Step 1: Initial Observation

- Visited the "Cars By Cylinders" page.
- Clicking "1 V6" generated a GET request: **GET /CarsByCylinders?Cylinders=V6 HTTP/2**
- Normal car listings appeared as expected.

Step 2: SQLi Error Trigger (Injection Attempt 1)

- Modified the Cylinders parameter in Burp Repeater: **Cylinders=V6'**
- Response: Server Error in '/' Application appeared, revealing backend stack trace and indicating unsanitized input.

Screenshot–Server Error in '/' Application, see Figure 12.

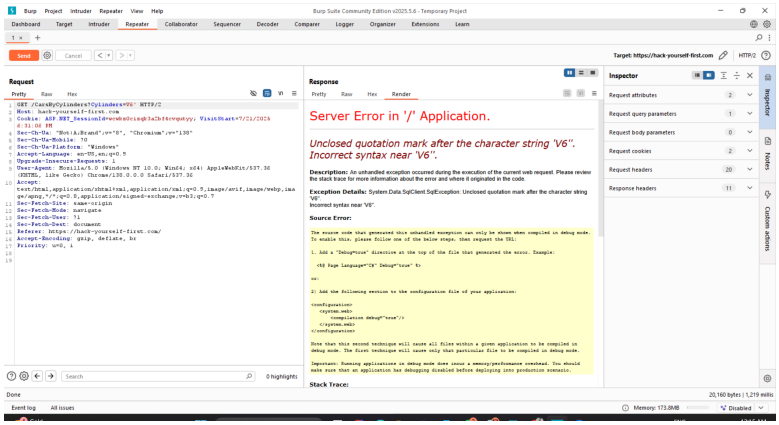

Figure 1: Server Error in '/' Application.

Step 3: HTTP 400 Error (Injection Attempt 2)

- Injected the payload — payloads that I researched from cheatsheets, GitHub, AI Tools. Found a SQL payload, used it to modify it to use in this scenario, as shown in Figure 2.

```
' OR 1=1 UNION ALL SELECT '1' As t, Contact(Email, '-- ', Firstname, '--' , Lastname, '--' , Password) COLLATE database_default FROM UserProfile--
```

Figure 2: SQL Payload

Breakdown of the parts:

  - Email - user's email
  - '– ' - separator string
  - Firstname - first name
  - '–' - seperator
  - Lastname - last name
  - Password - The user's password (possibly in plaintext)
  - "COLLATE database_default" - Ensures that string fields can be concatenated even if they use different collations.

- Response: HTTP/2 400 Bad Request.

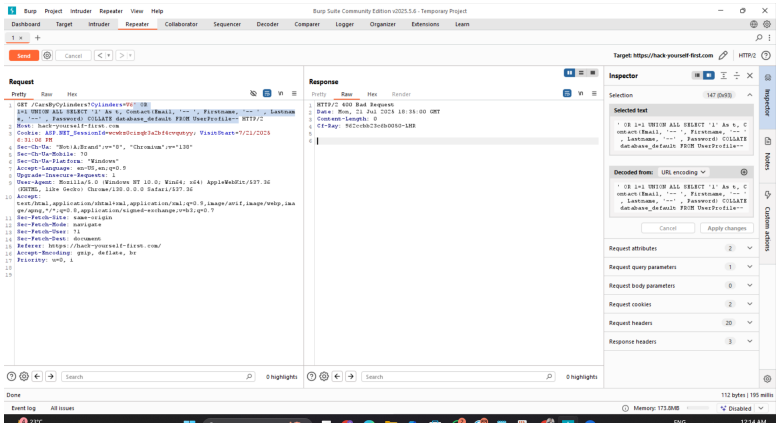

Figure 3: Error–Bad Request

Step 4: Final Successful Payload

- Modified and encoded payload:

```
GET /CarsByCylinders?Cylinders=V6'+OR+1%3d1+UNION+ALL+SELECT+'1'+As+t,Concat(Email,'--',Firstname,'--
',Password)+COLLATE+database_default+FROM+UserProfile-- HTTP/2
```

Figure 4: Error–Bad Request

- Result: User records appeared on front end with:
  - Emails
  - First Names
  - Passwords

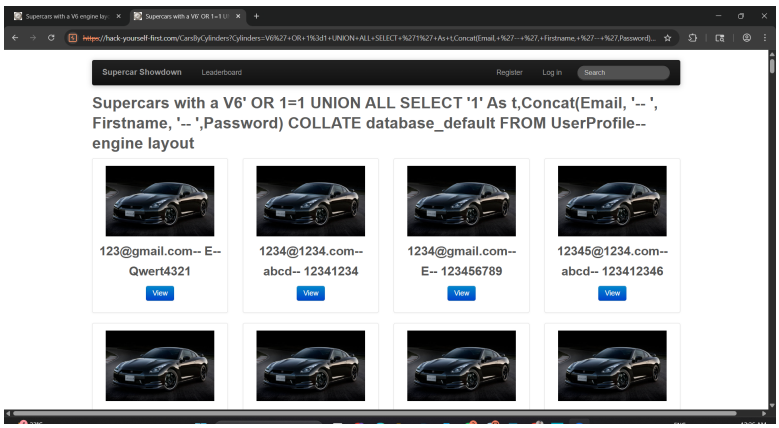

Figure 5: Users table with email-id and passwords

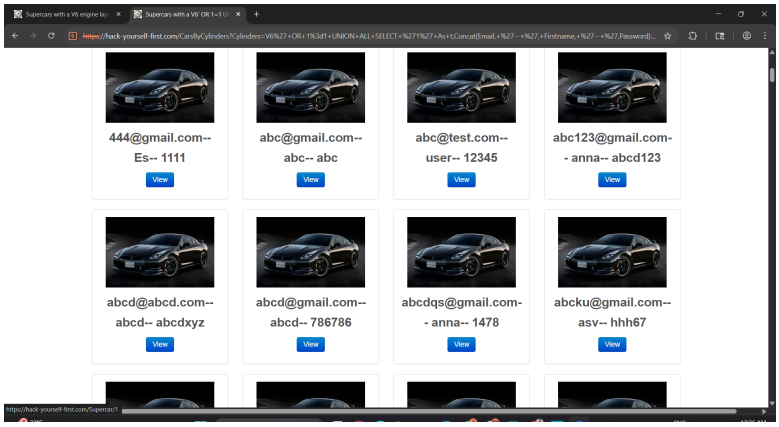

Figure 6: Users table–2 with email-id and passwords

Payload Summary:

```
' OR 1=1
UNION ALL
SELECT '1' As t,
Concat(Email, '--', Firstname, '--', Password)
COLLATE database_default
FROM UserProfile--
```

Figure 7: Users table–2 with email-id and passwords

Observation:

- The vulnerable endpoint allows raw SQL injection.
- Backend uses string concatenation, not parameterized queries.
- Sensitive user data was disclosed on the public UI.
- A critical data leak in a real-world application.

2 Cross-Site Scripting (XSS) Attack Analysis

Step 1: Testing the Search Field

- Initially, the search box was targeted for XSS payload injection using the classic script: **<script>alert(1)</script>**
- Sent the request through Burp Suite's Repeater, both as plain and URL-encoded payloads: **%3Cscript%3Ealert(1)%3C%2Fscript%3E**

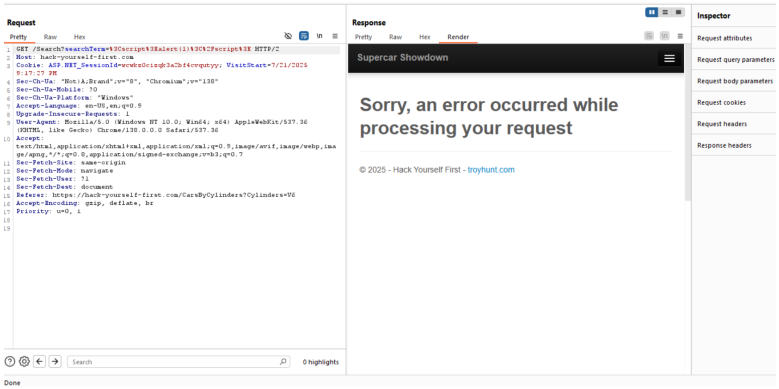

Figure 8: Search box attack

Result: The request resulted in a Bad Request (400) or was escaped and reflected as plain text, confirming:

- Input validation is active.
- No reflection of script execution.
- Site may be using output encoding

Step 2: Inspecting HTTP History & Source Code

- Manually reviewed the rendered page and used browser Inspect Tool to check if any script reflected silently. **C**hecked whether payloads like XSS_TEST or broken tags caused any DOM injection. None succeeded.
- Conclusion: The searchTerm parameter is not vulnerable to reflective XSS.

Step 3: Attempting XSS on Leaderboard, and Login/Register/Forgot Password

- Payload used: **"><script>alert(1)</script>**

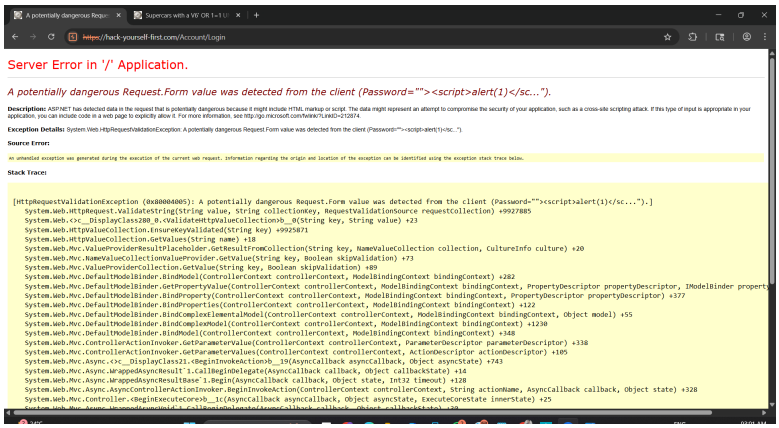

Figure 9: XSS attack in login section.

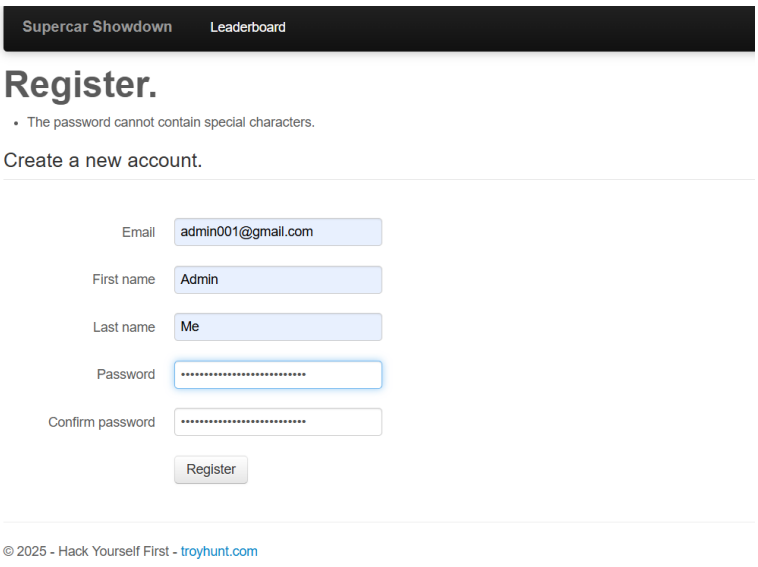

Figure 10: XSS attack in registration section.

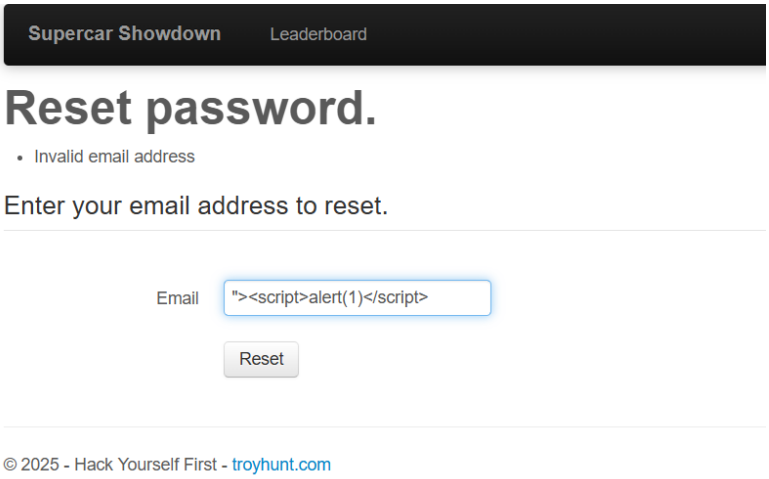

Figure 11: XSS attack in forgot password section.

All responses returned:

- Blocked input
- Sanitized output
- Or server-side errors (400)

The application seems to employ:

- WAF (Web Application Firewall)
- Input sanitization
- Strict content filters

Step 4: Stored XSS Testing

- Targeted the voting and commenting sections under each Supercar.
- Observation:
  - Many cars were already injected with persistent scripts (likely by past testers).
  - Hovering or clicking triggered multiple alert() popups and redirects to attacker-controlled pages.

- As a result:
  -Impossible to inject new payloads (duplicate/malicious content already present).
  -Server prevented additional comment submissions or script injections.

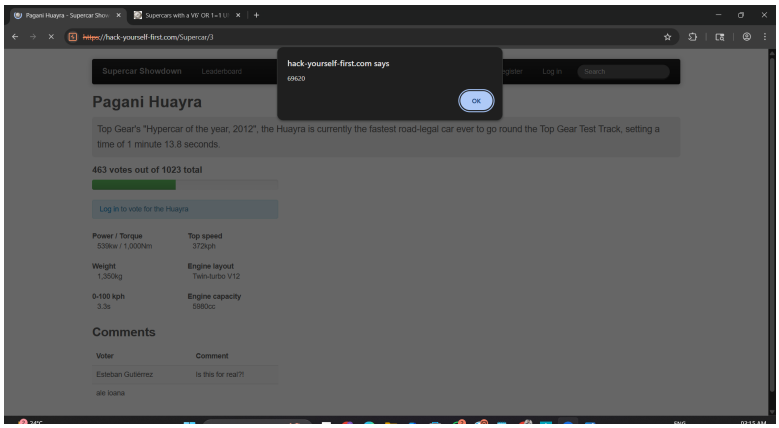

Figure 12: popups

3 Access Control Vulnerability and Exploitation

To identify and exploit access control weaknesses in the target application "https://hack-yourself-first.com", thereby gaining unauthorized access to protected resources.

Exploring Public Endpoints via robots.txt

- Accessed the base URL:
  - https://hack-yourself-first.com
- Attempted a dictionary attack on login using common credentials like:
  admin / admin
  test / test123
- "Login Failed."
- Modified the URL path manually:
  - /Account/Login → /robots.txt
- robots.txt revealed disallowed and hidden directories. Among them:
  - /api/admin/users
- Visiting this endpoint:
  - https://hack-yourself-first.com/api/admin/users
  Revealed email, password hashes, and personal data of users.

Result: A clear Access Control Misconfiguration. The endpoint was publicly accessible even without authentication or session.

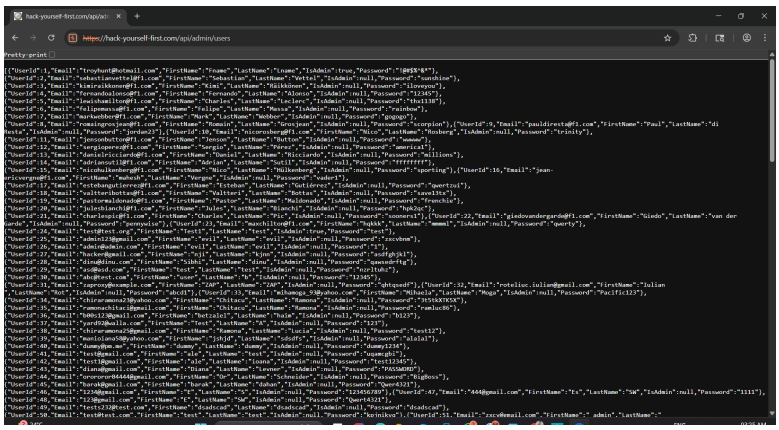

Figure 13: Credentials List

Privilege Escalation via Role Parameter Tampering

- Step 1: Registered a new user account from the official UI.
- Step 2: After successful login, captured the POST request from the browser in Burp Suite's HTTP History: **POST /api/profile/update**
- Step 3: Sent the request to Repeater, and modified the payload: **IsAdmin=false** to **IsAdmin=true**
- Step 4: Sent the altered request.
  - Received HTTP 302 (Found) — indicating redirection.
  - Clicked "Follow Redirection" in Burp Suite.
  - Copied the redirected URL and pasted it in browser.

Result: Successfully accessed the Admin Panel with elevated privileges.

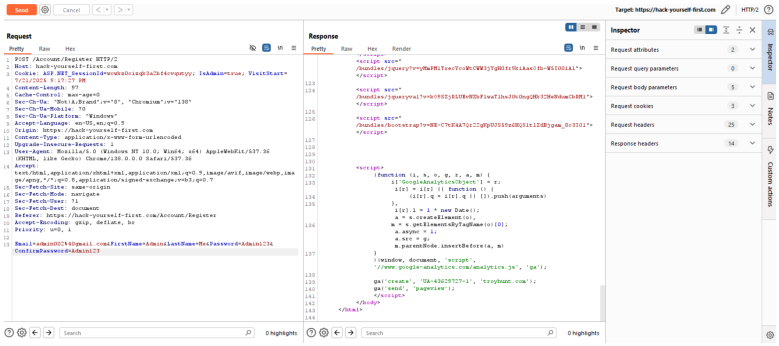

Figure 14: Changing Privilege

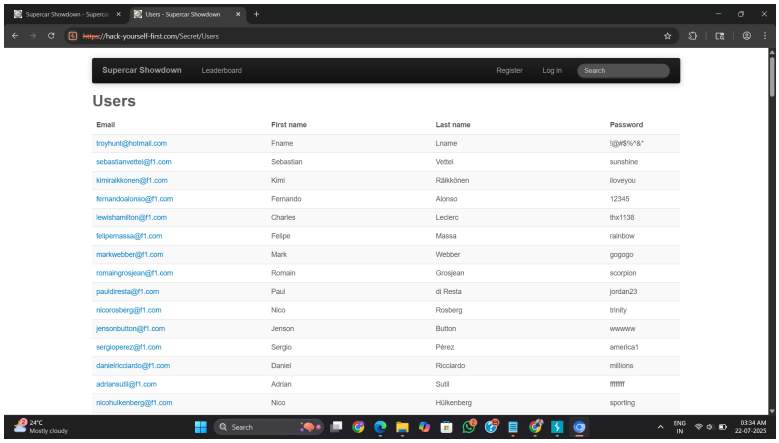

Figure 15: Users table

References

[1] Wendt, M. (2023). The basics of web security: Xss, csrf, sqli. *Medium.com*, 1. https://medium.com/devquicktips/the-basics-of-web-security-xss-csrf-sqli-482d253a34bf.