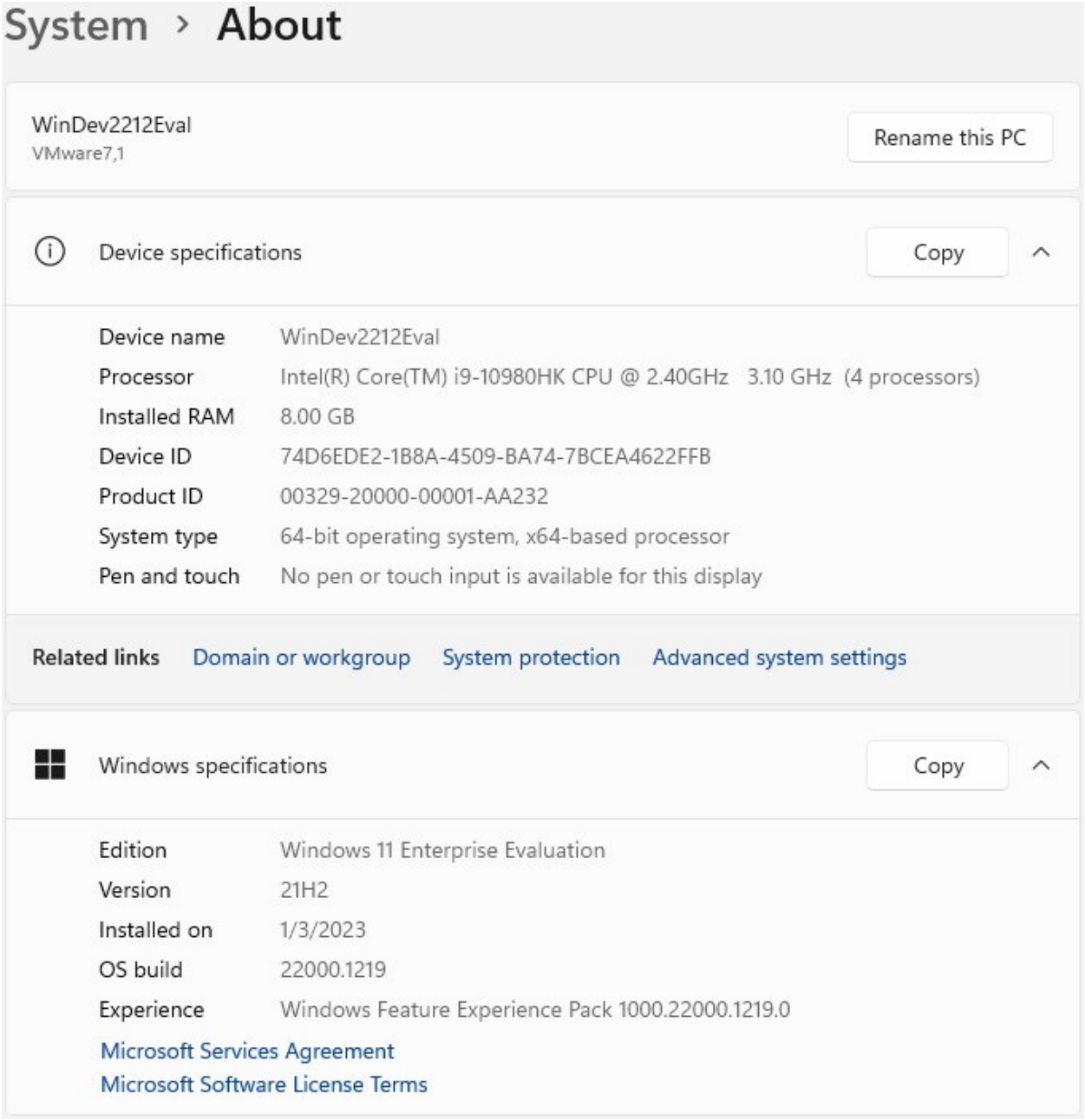
Downloaded a fresh developer's evaluation vm from Microsoft https://aka.ms/windev_VM_vmware

Powered up as Windows 11 Pro vm in VMware Workstation 17 Pro but made no changes yet.

*NOTE – A simple hardware tweak or two goes a long way: Bumping the RAM to 8GB with 70-80GB storage and 2 NICs really streamlined everything. (Everything from installation to malware analysis was faster, plus deleting a NIC (the one set to NAT) after all your tools download feels way easier to me than reconfiguring the same NIC as well as your vm network adapter in the OS)



Downloaded FLAREv4 from source to the vm https://github.com/mandiant/flare-vm/archive/refs/tags/v4.zip

Decompressed and digested everything in the Readme.md instructions. Just do it. **Shameless shout out to the FLARE team for these hints; saved me some major time and headache!**

```
> **Note:** FLARE VM should ONLY be installed on a virtual machine!

* Prepare a Windows 10+ virtual machine
  * FLARE VM has been tested on [Windows 10 1809
  x64](https://developer.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-edge/tools/vms/) and `20H2`
  * We recommend:
    * Avoiding usernames containing a space or other special characters
    * Using a disk capacity of at least 70-80 GB and memory of at least 2 GB
  * Disable Windows Updates (at least until installation is finished)
    * https://www.windowscentral.com/how-stop-updates-installing-automatically-windows-10
  * Disable Tamper Protection and any Anti-Malware solution (e.g., Windows Defender), preferably
  via Group Policy.
    * Disabling Tamper Protection
      *
      https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/prevent-changes-to-security-settings-with-tamper-
      protection-31d51aaa-645d-408e-6ce7-8d7f8e593f87
      *
      https://www.tenforums.com/tutorials/123792-turn-off-tamper-protection-windows-defender-antivi
      rus.html
    * Disabling Windows Defender
      *
      https://stackoverflow.com/questions/62174426/how-to-permanently-disable-windows-defender-real
      -time-protection-with-gpo
      * https://www.windowscentral.com/how-permanently-disable-windows-defender-windows-10
      * https://github.com/jeremybeaume/tools/blob/master/disable-defender.ps1
* Take a VM snapshot so you can always revert to a state before FLARE VM installation
* Open a `PowerShell` prompt as administrator
* Download the installation script
[`installer.ps1`](https://raw.githubusercontent.com/mandiant/flare-vm/main/install.ps1) to your
desktop
  * `(New-Object
  net.webclient).DownloadFile('https://raw.githubusercontent.com/mandiant/flare-vm/main/install.ps1
  ',"$([Environment]::GetFolderPath("Desktop"))\install.ps1")`
* Unblock the installation script by running:
  * `Unblock-File .\install.ps1`
* Enable script execution by running:
  * `Set-ExecutionPolicy Unrestricted`
* Finally, execute the installer script as follow:
  * `.\install.ps1`
    * You can also pass your password as an argument: `.\install.ps1 -password <password>`
```

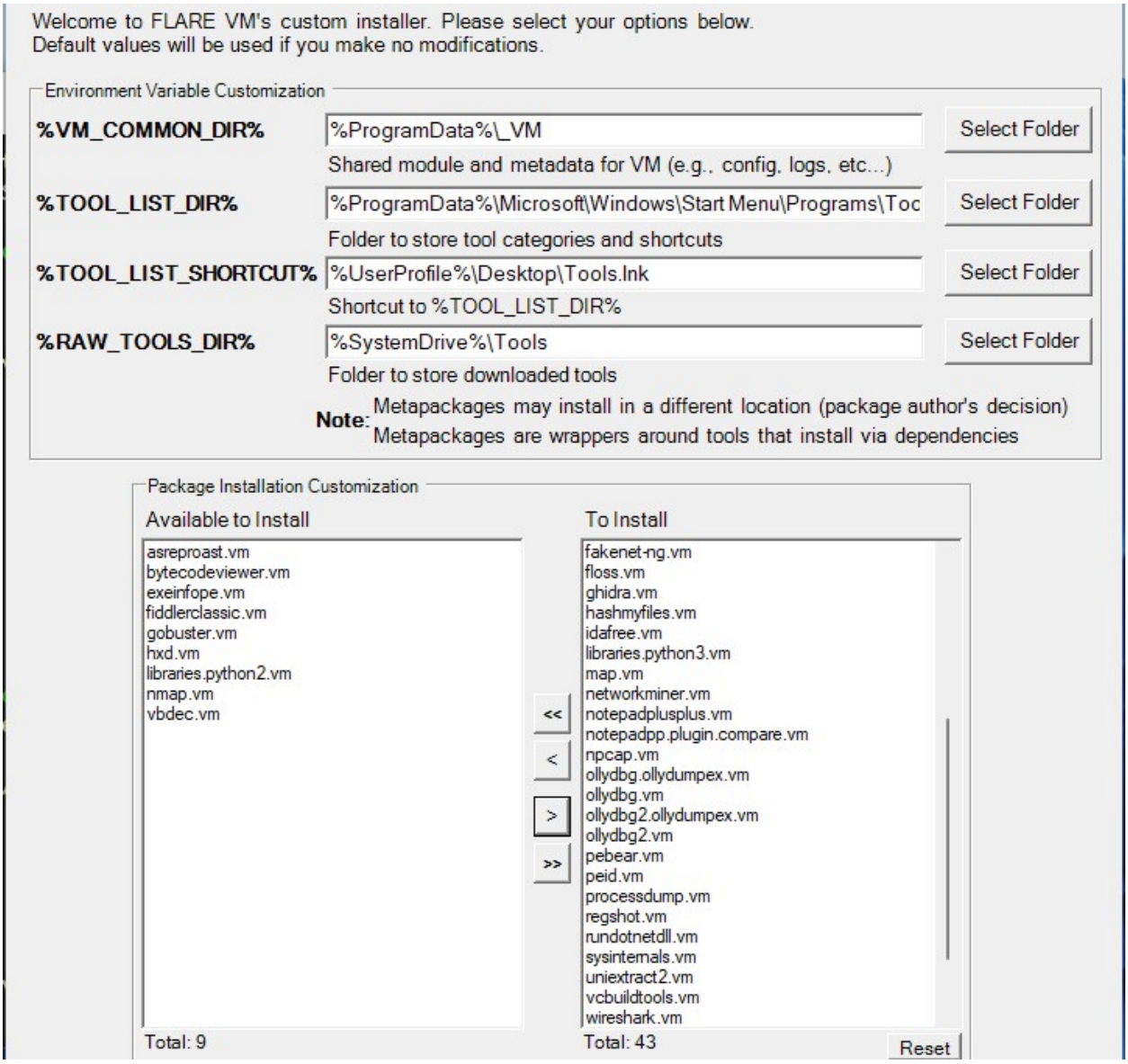
Historically in PoSH, pushing “Set-ExecutionPolicy Unrestricted” as Administrator would get the script unblocked, but this time I had to scope the change to “Set-ExecutionPolicy -Scope CurrentUser Unrestricted” before it works.

To summarize steps taken against Defender via the more detailed Stack Overflow thread:

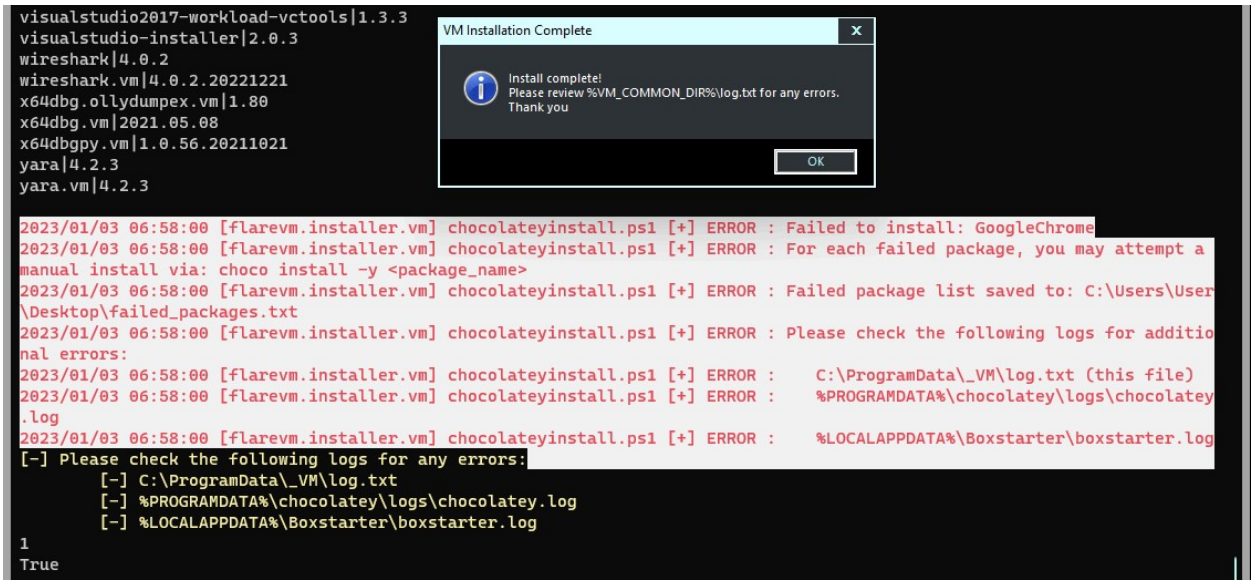
1. Disabled Resource Monitor
2. Disabled Tamper Protection
3. Enabled GPO “Turn off Real-time Protection” & rebooted
4. Enabled GPO “Turn off Microsoft Defender Antivirus” & rebooted
5. Verified DWORD “DisableAntiSpyware” value set to “1” (I previously turned it off in GUI)

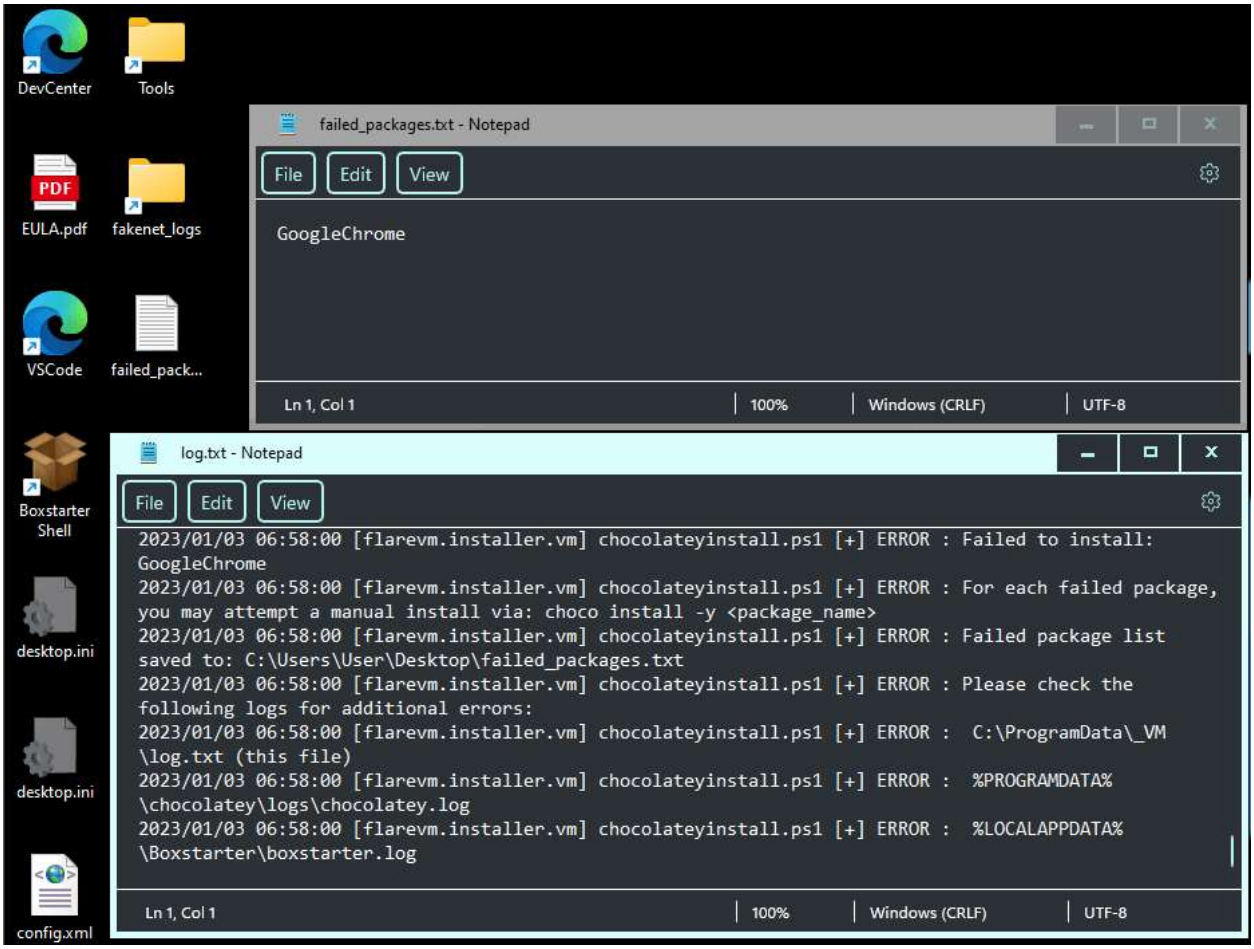
```
PS C:\Users\User\Downloads\flare-vm-4\flare-vm-4> .\install.ps1

Security warning
Run only scripts that you trust. While scripts from the internet can be useful, this script can potentially harm your
computer. If you trust this script, use the Unblock-File cmdlet to allow the script to run without this warning
message. Do you want to run C:\Users\User\Downloads\flare-vm-4\flare-vm-4\install.ps1?
[D] Do not run  [R] Run once  [S] Suspend  [?] Help (default is "D"): r
[+] Checking if script is running as administrator...
        [+] Running as administrator
[+] Checking if execution policy is unrestricted...
        [+] Execution policy is unrestricted
[+] Checking if Windows Defender Tamper Protection is disabled...
        [+] Tamper Protection is disabled
[+] Checking if Windows Defender service is disabled...
        [+] Defender is disabled
[+] Checking to make sure Operating System is compatible...
        [!] Windows version 22000 has not been tested. Tested versions: 17763, 19042
        [+] You are welcome to continue, but may experience errors downloading or installing packages
[-] Do you still wish to proceed? (Y/N): y
```

At last, the install script will fully engage and present you with a GUI for granular control of tool packages:



Let it ride and address any errors after you get the handy logs. Of course, I am not reporting a bug for Chrome. Just go get it!





It was only after all of this that I downloaded PeStudio <https://www.winitor.com/download> and MalCat <https://malcat.fr/latest/malcat_win64_lite.zip> to round out my ideal setup. I also decided to expand my investigative scope with Maltego <https://www.maltego.com/downloads/> for some OSINT-ing.

The only big tasks left were:

1. Snapshot
2. Remove bloatware
3. Disable autoruns such as Cortana
4. Tighten privacy settings
5. Disable the NAT'd NIC so I'm officially Host-only
6. Reboot
7. Finally, Snapshot my baseline system.

Happy hunting!