

# KeyGenMe V3 — Reverse Engineering Write-up

Crackme: <https://crackmes.one/crackme/691f53d32d267f28f69b7f62>

Author: Coder\_90

Platform	Difficulty	Quality	Arch	Language
Windows	3.0	4.0	x86-64	C/C++

Write-up by: SenorGPT

Tools used: CFF Explorer, x64dbg

## Cover Snapshot

Status: Complete

Goal: Document a clean path from initial recon → locating key-check logic → validation/reversal strategy → keygen implementation.

## KeyGenMe V3 — Reverse Engineering Write-up

Cover Snapshot

1. Executive Summary

2. Target Overview

2.1 UI Screens

Regular Execution

Wrong Answer Provided

About Button Pressed

3. Tooling & Environment

4. Static Recon

4.1 PE Headers

4.2 Imports

4.3 Early Hypotheses

5. Dynamic Analysis

5.1 Baseline Run

5.2 String-Driven Entry

6. Key Parsing: `strtoul`

7. Drawing Board

8. Inputting a Smaller Number

8.1 Post Solution Conclusion
9. Changing the Name Field
10. The New Found Code
11. Writing the Key Generator - Reversing the Transformation Logic
11.1 utils.py
11.2 keygen.py
11.2.0 Constants
11.2.1 Even Transformation
11.2.2 Odd Transformation
11.2.3 Common Transformation
11.2.4 Constant Transformation
11.2.5 Putting It All Together
11.2.6 Using keygen.py
12. Trying Out Different Name Inputs
12.1 senorgpt
12.2 crackmes.one
12.3 Coder_90
13. Turning it Into an Executable
14. Conclusion
14.1 Key Findings
14.2 Solution Approach
14.3 What Made This Crackme Interesting/Challenging
14.4 Lessons Reinforced
14.4.1 Start with String References
14.4.2 Dynamic Analysis Complements Static Analysis
14.4.3 Understanding Calling Conventions
14.4.4 Bit-Level Precision Matters
14.4.5 Document as You Go
14.4.6 The Value of Stepping Back
14.4.7 Reverse Engineering is Iterative
15. New things learned
15.1 Finding References to a Selected Address in x64dbg
15.2 Bit Shifting & Rotating
15.2.1 Bit Shifting
15.2.2 Bit Rotation
15.2.3 Why These Operations Matter

## 1. Executive Summary

This document captures my reverse-engineering process for **KeyGenMe V3**. The target appears to be a simple Win32 GUI application with a Name + Key input and a "CHECK KEY" button.

I successfully:

- Performed basic static reconnaissance.
  - Surveyed imports.
  - Confirmed there appears to be no anti-debugging measures (or so I hope).
  - Located strings associated with success & failure dialogs.
  - Begun stepping into the key-check path.
- 

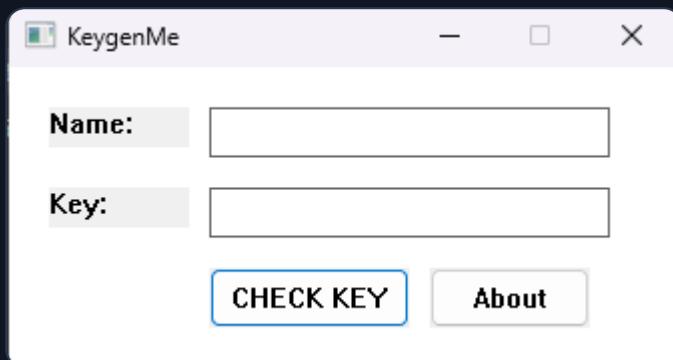
## 2. Target Overview

The application is a Win32 GUI crackme with:

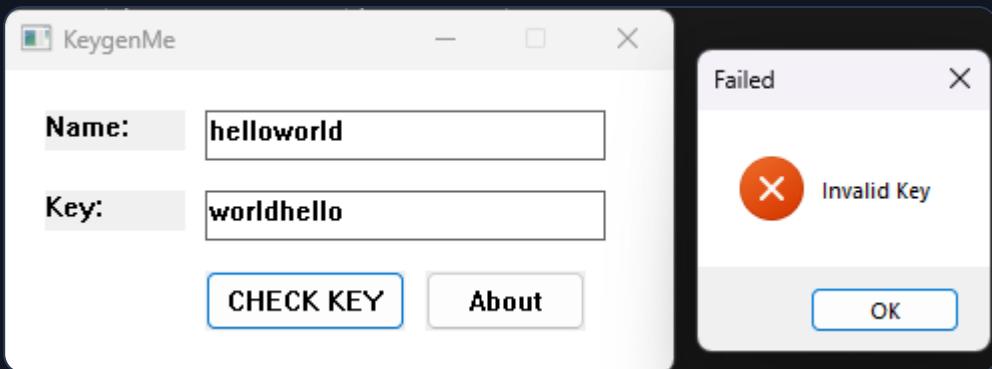
- **Inputs:** Name, Key
- **Primary action:** "CHECK KEY"
- **Feedback:** Message boxes labelled *Failed/Success* with text such as *Invalid Key* and *Access Granted!*

### 2.1 UI Screens

#### Regular Execution



## Wrong Answer Provided



## About Button Pressed



## 3. Tooling & Environment

- **Static inspection:** CFF Explorer
- **Dynamic analysis:** x64dbg
- **OS:** Windows 11

## 4. Static Recon

### 4.1 PE Headers

I started by loading the PE (Portable Executable) into **CFF Explorer** to sanity-check basic headers and verify that the file did not appear packed, encrypted, or heavily obfuscated.

KeyGenMe.exe										
Name	Virtual Size	Virtual Address	Raw Size	Raw Address	Reloc Address	Linenumbers	Relocations N...	Linenumbers ...	Characteristics	
Byte[8]	Dword	Dword	Dword	Dword	Dword	Dword	Word	Word	Dword	
.text	000031A6	00001000	00003200	00000400	00000000	00000000	0000	0000	60000020	
.rdata	0000163C	00005000	00001800	00003600	00000000	00000000	0000	0000	40000040	
.data	00378380	00007000	00378000	00004E00	00000000	00000000	0000	0000	C0000040	
.pdata	00000264	00380000	00000400	0037CE00	00000000	00000000	0000	0000	40000040	
.tls	00000010	00381000	00000200	0037D200	00000000	00000000	0000	0000	C0000040	
.rsrc	00000A80	00382000	00000C00	0037D400	00000000	00000000	0000	0000	40000040	
.reloc	00000070	00383000	00000200	0037E000	00000000	00000000	0000	0000	42000040	

## 4.2 Imports

I then reviewed the import directory to understand what APIs might be involved in validation, UI, or protection.

KeyGenMe.exe						
Module Name	Imports	OFTs	TimeDateStamp	ForwarderChain	Name RVA	FTs (IAT)
szAnsi	(nFunctions)	Dword	Dword	Dword	Dword	Dword
api-ms-win-crt-priv...	2	000057E0	00000000	00000000	000062A6	00005AD0
api-ms-win-crt-stdi...	4	000057F8	00000000	00000000	000062C8	00005AE8
api-ms-win-crt-run...	16	00005820	00000000	00000000	000062E8	00005B10
api-ms-win-crt-tim...	1	000058A8	00000000	00000000	0000630A	00005B98
api-ms-win-crt-utili...	2	000058B8	00000000	00000000	00006329	00005BA8
api-ms-win-crt-stri...	2	000058D0	00000000	00000000	0000634B	00005BC0
api-ms-win-crt-con...	1	000058E8	00000000	00000000	0000636C	00005BD8
USER32.dll	19	000058F8	00000000	00000000	0000638E	00005BE8
GDI32.dll	12	00005998	00000000	00000000	00006399	00005C88
KERNEL32.dll	12	00005A00	00000000	00000000	000063A3	00005CF0
WINMM.dll	1	00005A68	00000000	00000000	000063B0	00005D58
api-ms-win-crt-env...	1	00005A78	00000000	00000000	000063BA	00005D68
api-ms-win-crt-hea...	4	00005A88	00000000	00000000	000063E0	00005D78
api-ms-win-crt-mat...	1	00005AB0	00000000	00000000	000063FF	00005DA0
api-ms-win-crt-mul...	1	00005AC0	00000000	00000000	0000641E	00005DB0

Jumping into the most familiar and interesting module, **KERNEL32.DLL**.

OFTs	FTs (IAT)	Hint	Name
Qword	Qword	Word	szAnsi
000000000000614A	000000000000614A	0000	DeleteCriticalSection
0000000000006162	0000000000006162	0000	EnterCriticalSection
000000000000617A	000000000000617A	0000	GetLastError
000000000000618A	000000000000618A	0000	GetModuleHandleA
000000000000619E	000000000000619E	0000	GetStartupInfoA
00000000000061B0	00000000000061B0	0000	InitializeCriticalSection
00000000000061CC	00000000000061CC	0000	LeaveCriticalSection
00000000000061E4	00000000000061E4	0000	SetUnhandledExceptionFilter
0000000000006202	0000000000006202	0000	Sleep
000000000000620A	000000000000620A	0000	TlGetValue
0000000000006218	0000000000006218	0000	VirtualProtect
000000000000622A	000000000000622A	0000	VirtualQuery

Even though I noticed functions such as **VirtualProtect**, **VirtualQuery**, and **GetModuleHandleA**, I did not see any obvious or clear signs of anti-debugging.

## 4.3 Early Hypotheses

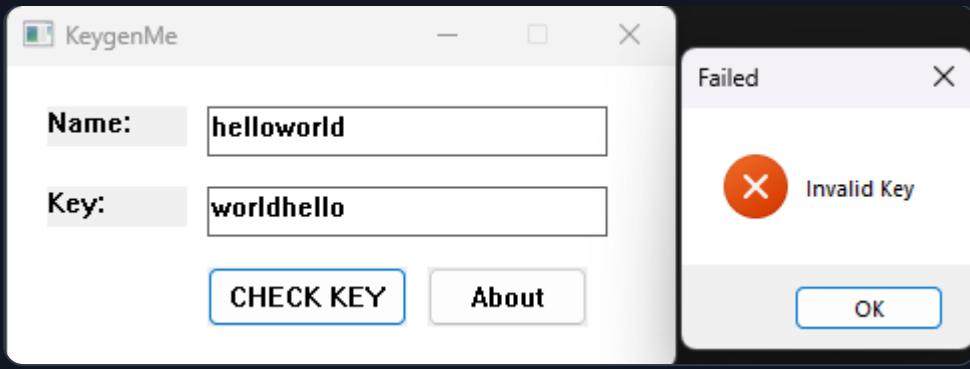
What I've gathered thus far:

1. Simple Win32 GUI with Name + Key + "CHECK KEY".
2. Message box caption: Failed, text: Invalid Key.
3. Probably no anti-debugging protection, hopefully...
4. About button that shows a pretty cool looking looping scrolling message.

## 5. Dynamic Analysis

### 5.1 Baseline Run

I ran the CTF under **x64dbg** and confirmed that the application appears to start normally and run without any anti-debug triggers.



## 5.2 String-Driven Entry

I searched for string references within the module for likely anchors:

- "Name:"
- "Key:"
- "CHECK KEY"
- "Invalid Key"
- "Access Granted!"
- "Failed"
- "Success"

Address	Disassembly	String Address	String
00007FF7776413CB	mov rax,qword ptr ds:[7FF777645020]	00007FF777645020	"&\"MZX"
00007FF7776416EF	lea rax,qword ptr ds:[7FF777645147]	00007FF777645147	"Verdana"
00007FF777641A0F	lea rdx,qword ptr ds:[7FF7776450F4]	00007FF7776450F4	"KeygenMe v3.0\n\nCoded by:\nCoder_90\nGreets to:\nAll Reverse Engineers\n\nKeep Coding!"
00007FF777641A4B	lea rax,qword ptr ds:[7FF77764514F]	00007FF77764514F	"NAME"
00007FF777641AAF	lea r8,qword ptr ds:[7FF777645156]	00007FF777645156	"Name;"
00007FF777641AFC	lea rdi,qword ptr ds:[7FF77764515C]	00007FF77764515C	"EDIT"
00007FF777641B57	lea r8,qword ptr ds:[7FF777645162]	00007FF777645162	"Key;"
00007FF777641BEE	lea rsi,qword ptr ds:[7FF777645167]	00007FF777645167	"BUTTON"
00007FF777641BFS	lea r8,qword ptr ds:[7FF77764516E]	00007FF77764516E	"CHECK KEY"
00007FF777641C1F	lea rax,qword ptr ds:[7FF777645173]	00007FF777645173	"KEYGEN"
00007FF777641D00	lea rdx,qword ptr ds:[7FF7776451A9]	00007FF7776451A9	"AboutWndClass"
00007FF777641D07	lea r8,qword ptr ds:[7FF777645178]	00007FF777645178	"About"
00007FF777641E23	lea rdx,qword ptr ds:[7FF77764517E]	00007FF77764517E	"Access Granted!"
00007FF777641E2A	lea r8,qword ptr ds:[7FF77764518E]	00007FF77764518E	"Success"
00007FF777641E3C	lea rdx,qword ptr ds:[7FF777645196]	00007FF777645196	"Invalid Key"
00007FF777641E43	lea r8,qword ptr ds:[7FF7776451A7]	00007FF7776451A7	"Failed"
00007FF777641E5F	lea rax,qword ptr ds:[7FF7776451A7]	00007FF7776451A7	"KGCLASS_SIMPLE"
00007FF777641F3	lea rax,qword ptr ds:[7FF7776451A9]	00007FF7776451A9	"AboutWndClass"
00007FF777641FE3	lea rdx,qword ptr ds:[7FF7776451B7]	00007FF7776451B7	"KGCLASS_SIMPLE"
00007FF777641FEA	lea r8,qword ptr ds:[7FF7776451C6]	00007FF7776451C6	"KeygenMe"
00007FF77764210A	lea rdx,qword ptr ds:[7FF7776451D8]	00007FF7776451D8	"runtime error %d\n"
00007FF777642703	lea rax,qword ptr ds:[7FF777645248]	00007FF777645248	"Argument domain error (DOMAIN)"
00007FF77764270C	lea rax,qword ptr ds:[7FF777645261]	00007FF777645261	"Argument singularity (SING)"
00007FF77764271F	lea rax,qword ptr ds:[7FF777645267]	00007FF777645267	"Argument range error (OVERFLOW)"
00007FF777642720	lea rax,qword ptr ds:[7FF7776452A3]	00007FF7776452A3	"Partial loss of significance (LOSS)"
00007FF77764273B	lea rax,qword ptr ds:[7FF7776452C8]	00007FF7776452C8	"Total loss of significance (TLOSS)"
00007FF777642749	lea rax,qword ptr ds:[7FF7776452EB]	00007FF7776452EB	"The result is too small to be represented (UNDERFLOW)"
00007FF777642757	lea rax,qword ptr ds:[7FF777645321]	00007FF777645321	"Unknown error"
00007FF7776427AE	lea rdx,qword ptr ds:[7FF77764532F]	00007FF77764532F	"_matherrr(): %s in %s(%g, %g) (retval=%g)\n"
00007FF7776427C0	mov rdx,qword ptr ds:[7FF77764532D]	00007FF77764532D	"_MKErr()
00007FF7776427C6	lea rcx,qword ptr ds:[7FF77764535A]	00007FF77764535A	" Unknown pseudo relocation protocol version %d.\n"
00007FF7776427C8	lea rcx,qword ptr ds:[7FF77764538C]	00007FF77764538C	" Unknown pseudo relocation bit size %d.\n"
00007FF777642AE1	lea rcx,qword ptr ds:[7FF77764538E]	00007FF77764538E	"%d bit pseudo relocation at %p out of range, targeting %p, yielding the value %p.\n"
00007FF777642B99	lea rdx,qword ptr ds:[7FF777645409]	00007FF777645409	"Mingw-w64 runtime failure:\n"
00007FF777642D7B	lea rdx,qword ptr ds:[7FF777645481]	00007FF777645481	"Address %p has no image-section"
00007FF777642E59	lea rcx,qword ptr ds:[7FF777645499]	00007FF777645499	" VirtualQuery failed for %d bytes at address %p"
00007FF777642F5F	lea rax,qword ptr ds:[7FF7776454A4]	00007FF7776454A4	" VirtualProtect failed with code 0x00"
00007FF77764304F	mov rax,qword ptr ds:[7FF777645500]	00007FF777645500	"&\"MZX"
00007FF7776436E7	mov rax,qword ptr ds:[7FF777645502]	00007FF777645502	"&\"MZX"
00007FF7776437B9	mov rax,qword ptr ds:[7FF777645502]	00007FF777645502	"&\"MZX"
00007FF77764381A	mov rax,qword ptr ds:[7FF777645502]	00007FF777645502	"&\"MZX"
00007FF777643893	mov rax,qword ptr ds:[7FF777645502]	00007FF777645502	"&\"MZX"
00007FF777643954	mov rax,qword ptr ds:[7FF777645502]	00007FF777645502	"&\"MZX"
00007FF777643959	mov rax,qword ptr ds:[7FF777645502]	00007FF777645502	"&\"MZX"
00007FF777643A28	mov rax,qword ptr ds:[7FF777645502]	00007FF777645502	"&\"MZX"

Double-clicking 'Invalid Key' led me into a block that appears to be part of the success & failure branching.

```

00007FF777641DED BF 55555555 mov edi,55555555
00007FF777641DF2 B9 DECODEDE mov ecx,DEACODE
00007FF777641DF7 31D2 xor edx,edx
00007FF777641DF9 0FAFD2 imul edx,edx
00007FF777641DFC 89D0 mov eax,edx
00007FF777641DFE C1E0 08 shr eax,8
00007FF777641E01 29D0 sub eax,edx
00007FF777641E03 C1C7 1D rol edi,1D
00007FF777641E06 01CF add edi,ecx
00007FF777641E08 31C7 xor edi,eax
00007FF777641E0A 48:8D8C24 60010000 lea rcx,qword ptr ss:[rsp+160]
00007FF777641E12 31D2 xor edx,edx
00007FF777641E14 41:B8 10000000 mov r8d,10
00007FF777641E1A E8 911F0000 call <JMP.&strtoul>
00007FF777641E1B 39C7 cmp edi,eax
00007FF777641E21 75 19 jne keygenme.7FF777641E3C
00007FF777641E23 48:8D15 54330000 lea rdx,qword ptr ds:[7FF77764517E]
00007FF777641E2A 4C:8D05 5D330000 lea r8,qword ptr ds:[7FF77764518E]
00007FF777641E31 48:89F1 mov rcx,rsi
00007FF777641E34 41:B9 40000000 mov r9d,40
00007FF777641E3A EB 17 jmp keygenme.7FF777641E53
00007FF777641E3C 48:8D15 53330000 lea rdx,qword ptr ds:[7FF777645196]
00007FF777641E43 4C:8D05 58330000 lea r8,qword ptr ds:[7FF7776451A2]
00007FF777641E44 48:89F1 mov rcx,rsi
00007FF777641E4D 41:B9 10000000 mov r9d,10
00007FF777641E53 E8 D8200000 call keygenme.7FF777643F30
00007FF777641E58 31C0 xor eax, eax
00007FF777641E5A 0F28B424 60020000 movaps xmm6,xmmword ptr ss:[rsp+260]
00007FF777641E62 48:81C4 78020000 add rsp,278
00007FF777641E69 5B pop rbx
00007FF777641E6A 5F pop rdi
00007FF777641E6B 5E pop rsi
00007FF777641E6C 41:5E pop r14
00007FF777641E6E C3 ret

```

load the key into RCX  
endptr = NULL  
base 10  
call strtol  
compare expected value vs converted number  
00007FF77764517E:"Access Granted!"  
00007FF77764518E:"Success"  
40: 'a'  
00007FF777645196:"Invalid Key"  
00007FF7776451A2:"Failed"

I set a breakpoint just above this block and triggered it via the “CHECK KEY” button to step through the surrounding logic.

## 6. Key Parsing: `strtoul`

I encountered a call that resolves to:

`<JMP.&strtoul>`

`strtoul` is a standard C runtime (CRT) function used to parse strings into unsigned long integers:

```
unsigned long strtoul(const char *nptr, char **endptr, int base);
```

It seems that it calls `strtoul`, then compares the `EDI` register against the `EAX` register. Which on x86 Windows Calling Convention is the return value from a function - in our case, `strtoul`.

Registers:

- `RCX` = `nptr` (user input string)
- `RDX` = `endptr` (often `NULL`)
- `R8D` = `base`

From our assembly we can see this exact setup:

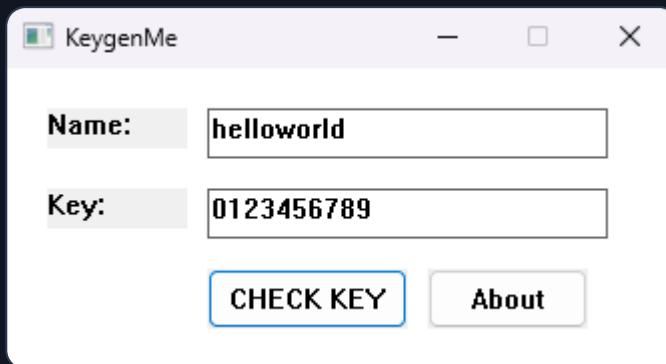
00007FF777641E0A	48:8D8C24 60010000	lea rcx,qword ptr ss:[rsp+160]	load the key into RCX
00007FF777641E12	31D2	xor edx,edx	endptr = NULL
00007FF777641E14	41:B8 10000000	mov r8d,10	base 10
00007FF777641E1A	E8 911F0000	call <JMP.&strtoul>	call strtol
00007FF777641E1F	39C7	cmp edi,eax	compare expected value vs converted number
00007FF777641E21	75 19	jne keygenme.7FF777641E3C	

At the `RIP` register in the photo; `RDI` register is `00000000AD40C7E8` and `RAX` is `0000000000000000`.

Evidently, it appears that the `RDI` register is holding the encoded target key value (or at least I assume it is).

The reason for `RAX` register being zero here is because with base 10, the key `worldhello` (the key that I supplied) is not a number. If `strtoul` is unable to perform a conversion then it will return zero.

Resuming code execution, I change my key from `worldhello` to `0123456789`.



Hitting `CHECK KEY` and breaking at my breakpoint I see the following register values:

<code>RAX</code>	<code>00000000FFFFFFFF</code>
<code>RBX</code>	<code>0000000000000000</code>
<code>RCX</code>	<code>0000000000000000</code>
<code>RDX</code>	<code>0000000000000000</code>
<code>RBP</code>	<code>0000000113D9F2B8</code>
<code>RSP</code>	<code>0000000113D9EE50</code>
<code>RSI</code>	<code>0000000000890A34</code>
<code>RDI</code>	<code>00000000AD40C7E8</code>

`0xFFFFFFFF` (4294967295) is the classic `strtoul` overflow/error return (ULONG\_MAX). Which is definitely strange because I am `86.798%` sure that `0123456789` should *NOT* overflow in base `10`.

Here I realized my mistake... because it is in fact not base `10`.

It's loading `0x10` into the `R8` register which is hexadecimal for `16`... So that means the actually base is `16`.

Regardless, I don't think that input should be overflowing in either base.

My next plan of action is to see if maybe the `thunk` for `strtoul` got overwritten.

```

00007FFC2BDC4750 < 48:895C24 08    mov qword ptr ss:[rsp+8],rbx
00007FFC2BDC4755 55                  push rbp
00007FFC2BDC4756 48:8BEC            mov rbp,rs
00007FFC2BDC4759 48:83EC 70       sub rsp,70
00007FFC2BDC475D 33C0              xor eax,eax
00007FFC2BDC475F 3905 47460E00   cmp dword ptr ds:[7FFC2BEA8DAC ],eax
00007FFC2BDC4765 48:8945 C0       mov qword ptr ss:[rbp-40],rax
00007FFC2BDC4769 8845 D0       mov byte ptr ss:[rbp-30],al
00007FFC2BDC476C 8845 E8       mov byte ptr ss:[rbp-18],al
00007FFC2BDC476F 8845 F0       mov byte ptr ss:[rbp-10],al
00007FFC2BDC4772 8845 F8       mov byte ptr ss:[rbp-8],al
00007FFC2BDC4775 ✓ 75 10      jne ucrtbase.7FFC2BDC4787
00007FFC2BDC4777 OF1005 1A290E00 movups xmm0,xmmword ptr ds:[7FFC2BEA7098]
00007FFC2BDC477E C645 E8 01     mov byte ptr ss:[rbp-18],1
00007FFC2BDC4782 F3:0F7F45 D8     movdqu xmmword ptr ss:[rbp-28],xmm0
00007FFC2BDC4787 48:8940 B0     mov qword ptr ss:[rbp-50],rcx
00007FFC2BDC4788 48:8955 B8     mov qword ptr ss:[rbp-48],rdx
00007FFC2BDC478F 48:85D2     test rdx,rdx
00007FFC2BDC4792 ✓ 74 03      je ucrtbase.7FFC2BDC4797
00007FFC2BDC4794 48:890A     mov qword ptr ds:[rdx],rcx
00007FFC2BDC4797 45:33C9     xor r9d,r9d
00007FFC2BDC479A 48:8D55 B0     lea rdx,qword ptr ss:[rbp-50]
00007FFC2BDC479E 48:8D4D C0     lea rcx,qword ptr ss:[rbp-40]
00007FFC2BDC47A2 E8 39110000   call ucrtbase.7FFC2BDC58E0
00007FFC2BDC47A7 48:8D4D C0     lea rcx,qword ptr ss:[rbp-40]
00007FFC2BDC47AB 8BD8     mov ebx,eax
00007FFC2BDC47AD E8 CE27FCFF   call ucrtbase.7FFC2BD86F80
00007FFC2BDC47B2 8BC3     mov eax,ebx
00007FFC2BDC47B4 48:889C24 80000000 mov rbx,qword ptr ss:[rsp+80]
00007FFC2BDC47BC 48:83C4 70     add rsp,70
00007FFC2BDC47C0 5D          pop rbp
00007FFC2BDC47C1 C3          ret
00007FFC2BDC47C2 CC          ...

```

Everything appears to be legit. Back to the drawing board.

## 7. Drawing Board

So, what I've learned here is; The key is meant to be a base-16 string, not an alphanumeric phrase. But obviously, this doesn't appear to be true *OR* I am missing something.

The two only two roads that I can see currently are:

1. Input a smaller number.

A signed 32 bit integer has a maximum value of `2,147,483,647` whilst an unsigned long 32bit integer has a maximum value of `4,294,967,295`.

My input of `0123456789` translates to a decimal value of `4,886,718,345`.

That's just a bit above both.

2. Maybe there is some trickery involved that I am not seeing and the actual base being used is base `2`. This would explain the overflow/error return. Or maybe again, the number is just too large which is causing the overflow.

I also started to wonder how the `Name` field plays into this, maybe that is how the `RDI` register is being set?

## 8. Inputting a Smaller Number

Inputting 012345 into the Key field yields RAX register being 0000000000012345 after the strtoul call.

RAX	00000000000012345
RBX	00000000000000000
RCX	0000000113D9EE00
RDX	00000000000000000
RBP	0000000113D9F2B8
RSP	0000000113D9EE50
RSI	000000000890A34
RDI	0000000AD40C7E8

Now thinking, both inputs of 0123456789 and worldhello are 10 characters long.

My next attempt is to input world as the key...

RAX	00000000000000000
RBX	00000000000000000
RCX	0000000113D9EE00
RDX	0000000000000000F
RBP	0000000113D9F2B8
RSP	0000000113D9EE50
RSI	000000000890A34
RDI	0000000AD40C7E8

and the result of EAX register is 00000000 (during the cmp edi, eax instruction).

## 8.1 Post Solution Conclusion

Reading back through this write-up it became clear to me why as to why I was having so many issues during reverse engineering these assembly instructions. The hint was that it was converting it with base 16 (hexadecimal) and storing it in the EAX register. Meaning, it had a maximum width of 8 characters long (8 bytes / 32 bits) and only accepted values 0,1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,A,B,C,D,E,F.

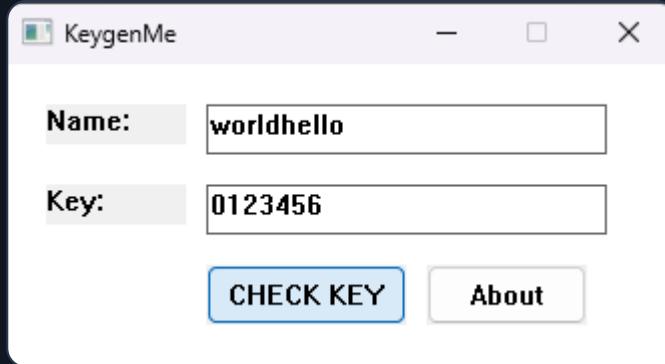
Hence why world caused EAX register to be 00000000 (characters w, o, r, and l are not valid base 16 values).

## 9. Changing the Name Field

At this point I am wondering if the RDI register that it is comparing against is being determined by the Name input field. I could try to scroll up in the assembly and find from where the RDI register is being assigned.

Although for now, I am going to change it from helloworld to worldhello and

see if the RDI register is still 00000000AD40C7E8 after the strtoul call.

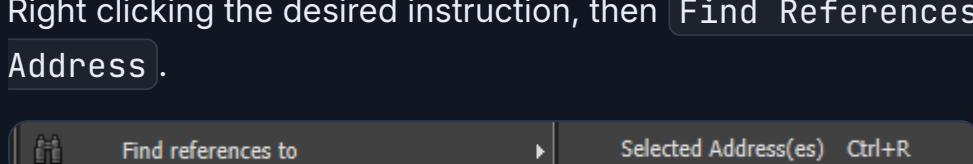


Yes! It appears that the RDI register that the key is being compared against IS being determined by the Name input field.

RAX	00000000000123456
RBX	0000000000000000
RCX	0000000113D9EE00
RDX	0000000000000000
RBP	0000000113D9F288
RSP	0000000113D9EE50
RSI	000000000890A34
RDI	0000000E3F6C497

After some playing around, I deduced that there is more code running prior to the code block I have already found.

Right clicking the desired instruction, then Find References To -> Selected Address .



There seems to be a lot going on here. Time to figure it out!

On an unrelated note, it turns out all I had to do to get here was scroll up a little bit from where first breakpoint...

```

00007FF777641CAB 41:B8 00010000 | mov r8d,100
00007FF777641CB1 E8 3A220000 | call <JMP.&GetWindowTextA>
                                48:89F9 | mov rcx,rdi
                                E8 E2200000 | call <JMP.&strlen>
                                44:0FB64424 60 | movzx r8d,byte ptr ss:[rsp+60]
                                45:84C0 | test r8b,r8b
                                je keygenme.7FF777641DED
                                neg eax
                                mov ecx,DEADCODE
                                mov edi,55555555
                                xor edx,edx
                                jmp keygenme.7FF777641D00
                                nop dword ptr ds:[rax],eax
                                rol edi,c
                                xor edi,r8d
                                add edi,90F01234
                                mov r8d,ecx
                                add r8d,edx
                                lea ecx,qword ptr ds:[r8+rax]
                                xor ecx,r8d
                                xor edi,ecx
                                movzx r8d,byte ptr ss:[rsp+rdx+61]
                                inc rdx
                                test r8b,r8b
                                je keygenme.7FF777641DF9
                                movzx r8d,r8b
                                test r8b,i
                                je keygenme.7FF777641CEO
                                rol edi,1D
                                add edi,r8d
                                add edi,E5D4C3B3
                                jmp keygenme.7FF777641CEC
                                movaps xmm6,xmmword ptr ss:[rsp+260]
                                add rsp,278
                                pop rbx
                                pop rdi
                                pop rsi
                                pop r14
                                jmp <JMP.&NtDllDefWindowProc_A>
                                lea rdx,qword ptr ss:[rsp+60]
                                mov rsi,rcx
                                call <JMP.&GetWindowRect>
                                mov eax,dword ptr ss:[rsp+68]
                                mov ecx,dword ptr ss:[rsp+6C]
                                mov edx,dword ptr ss:[rsp+60]
                                mov r8d,dword ptr ss:[rsp+64]
                                sub eax,edx
                                mov r9d,eax
                                add r9d,FFFFFED4
                                shr r9d,1F
                                lea edi,qword ptr ds:[rax+r9]
                                add edi,FFFFFED4
                                rdi:"helloworld"
00007FF777641CE0 48:FFC2 45:84C0 | OF84 EC000000
                                45:0FB6C0 41:F6C0 01
                                74 C9 C1C7 1D
                                44:01C7 81C7 B3C3D4E5
                                EB C7 OF28B424 60020000
                                48:81C4 78020000
                                5B
                                5F
                                5E
                                41:5E
                                E9 F2200000
                                48:8D5424 60
                                48:89CE
                                E8 95210000
                                8B4424 68
                                8B4C24 6C
                                8B5424 60
                                44:8B4424 64
                                29D0
                                41:89C1
                                41:81C1 D4FEFFFF
                                41:C1E9 1F
                                42:8D3C08
                                81C7 D4FEFFFF
                                rdi:"helloworld"
00007FF777641D01 48:84C0
00007FF777641D04 45:84C0
00007FF777641D07 45:0FB6C0
00007FF777641D0D 41:F6C0 01
00007FF777641D11 74 C9 C1C7 1D
00007FF777641D15 44:01C7 81C7 B3C3D4E5
00007FF777641D17 41:89C1
00007FF777641D1A 42:8D3C08
00007FF777641D1D 81C7 D4FEFFFF
00007FF777641D23 41:89C1
00007FF777641D25 41:89C1
00007FF777641D2D 41:89C1
00007FF777641D34 41:89C1
00007FF777641D35 41:89C1
00007FF777641D36 41:89C1
00007FF777641D37 41:89C1
00007FF777641D39 41:89C1
00007FF777641D3E 41:89C1
00007FF777641D43 41:89C1
00007FF777641D46 41:89C1
00007FF777641D48 41:89C1
00007FF777641D4F 41:89C1
00007FF777641D53 41:89C1
00007FF777641D57 41:89C1
00007FF777641D5C 41:89C1
00007FF777641D5E 41:89C1
00007FF777641D61 41:89C1
00007FF777641D68 41:89C1
00007FF777641D6C 41:89C1
00007FF777641D70 41:89C1
                                rdi:"helloworld"

```

## 10. The New Found Code

Off the bat I notice the hardcoded values that stand out to me; `DEADCODE` and `55555555`.

B9 DECOADDE	mov ecx,DEADCODE
BF 55555555	mov edi,55555555

I also mentally note that they are both 8 characters long. Not sure that this matters...

So it seems that the encoding function works one character at a time.

If the character is even then it takes an even branch, otherwise it takes the odd branch.

SO, this indicates a loop structure.... I assume (and verified) that the loop iteration is dependent on the length of the `Name` input.

<code>call &lt;JMP.&amp;strlen&gt;</code>	get the length of 'Name' input into RAX register
<code>movzx r8d,byte ptr ss:[rsp+60]</code>	move the first character of 'Name' into R8 register
<code>test r8b,r8b</code>	zero check

This code portion seems to be in charge on encoding the `Name` input per each character.

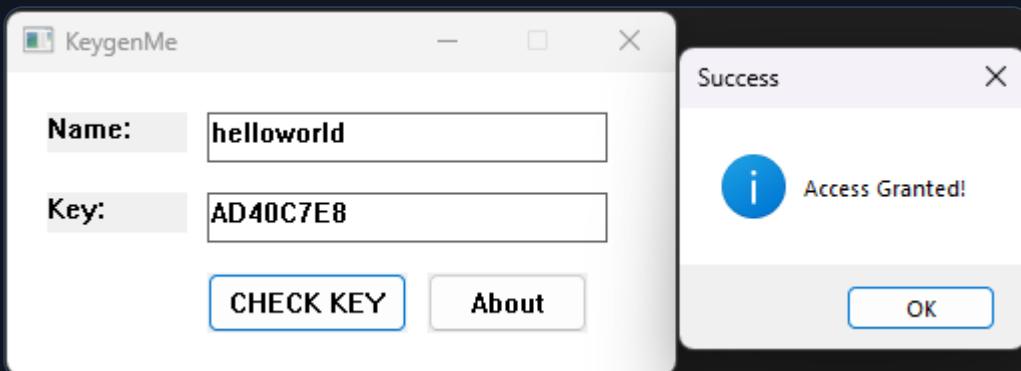
<code>C1C7 0C</code>	<code>rol edi,0C</code>	even case code start
<code>44:31C7</code>	<code>xor edi,8d</code>	
<code>81C7 3412F090</code>	<code>add edi,90F01234</code>	
<code>41:89C8</code>	<code>mov r8d,ecx</code>	
<code>41:01D0</code>	<code>add r8d,edx</code>	
<code>41:8D0C00</code>	<code>lea ecx,qword ptr ds:[r8+rax]</code>	
<code>44:31C1</code>	<code>xor edi,8d</code>	
<code>31CF</code>	<code>xor edi,ecx</code>	
<code>44:0FB64414 61</code>	<code>movzx r8d,byte ptr ss:[rsp+rdx+61]</code>	
<code>48:FFC2</code>	<code>inc rdx</code>	increment loop index (RDX register)
<code>45:84C0</code>	<code>test r8b,r8b</code>	check if we reached the end of 'Name' input
<code>0F84 EC000000</code>	<code>je keygenme.7FF777641DF9</code>	jump if zero (jumps to strtoul code part)
<code>45:0FB6C0</code>	<code>movzx r8d,r8b</code>	r8 starts as first character of 'Name' input (then increments through)
<code>41:F6C0 01</code>	<code>test r8b,1</code>	check if 0 bit is even or odd (0/1)
<code>74 C9</code>	<code>je keygenme.7FF777641CE0</code>	if 0 (even) jump to even case code
<code>C1C7 1D</code>	<code>rol edi,1D</code>	odd case code start
<code>44:01C7</code>	<code>add edi,r8d</code>	
<code>81C7 B3C3D4E5</code>	<code>add edi,E5D4C3B3</code>	
<code>EB C7</code>	<code>jmp keygenme.7FF777641CEC</code>	

Which is then followed by a consistent transformation.

<code>0FAFD2</code>	<code>imul edx,edx</code>
<code>89D0</code>	<code>mov eax,edx</code>
<code>C1E0 08</code>	<code>shl eax,8</code>
<code>29D0</code>	<code>sub eax,edx</code>
<code>C1C7 1D</code>	<code>rol edi,1D</code>
<code>01CF</code>	<code>add edi,ecx</code>
<code>31C7</code>	<code>xor edi,eax</code>

The end result is the key value that it is being compared against from the `Key` input.

To test this, let's try to input `AD40C7E8` as the `Key` for `Name = helloworld`.



Very nice! This means that I am on the right track.

## 11. Writing the Key Generator - Reversing the Transformation Logic

The first thing that I did was whip up some Python code to mimic the assembly instructions that I noticed were being used; `rol`, `neg`, `shl`, `imul`:

## 11.1 utils.py

```
def mask(value: int, width: int = 32) -> int:
    """
    Mask value to fit within a width-bit word.
    Returns the low 'width' bits of value, truncating higher bits.
    """
    _mask = (1 << width) - 1
    return value & _mask


def to_signed(x: int, width: int) -> int:
    """
    Convert unsigned value to signed within a fixed bit width.
    Interprets the value as two's complement signed integer.
    """
    x = mask(x, width)
    sign = 1 << (width - 1)
    return x - (1 << width) if (x & sign) else x


def to_unsigned(x: int, width: int) -> int:
    """
    Convert value to unsigned within a fixed bit width.
    Returns the low 'width' bits, treating as unsigned.
    """
    return mask(x, width)


def imul_low(a: int, b: int, width: int = 32) -> int:
    """
    Simulate 2/3-operand IMUL:
    result = low 'width' bits of (signed(a) * signed(b))
    """
    sa = to_signed(a, width)
    sb = to_signed(b, width)
    prod = sa * sb
    return to_unsigned(prod, width)


def neg(value: int, width: int = 32) -> int:
    """
    Two's complement negation within a fixed bit width.
    Equivalent to x86 NEG on a width-bit register.
    """
    sign = 1 << (width - 1)
    return value ^ sign
```

```

"""
mask = (1 << width) - 1
value &= mask
return (-value) & mask # same as (0 - value) & mask


def shl(value: int, shift: int, width: int = 32) -> int:
    """
    Shift-left value by shift within a width-bit word.
    Equivalent to x86 SHL on a width-bit register.
    """
    mask = (1 << width) - 1
    return (value << shift) & mask


def rol(value: int, shift: int, width: int = 32) -> int:
    """Rotate-left value by shift within a width-bit word."""
    mask = (1 << width) - 1

    shift %= width
    if shift == 0:
        return value & mask

    value &= mask
    return ((value << shift) | (value >> (width - shift))) & mask

```

If any of this doesn't click at first, don't worry, it didn't for me either. Here is a broken down explanation of the `rol` function implementation that should help understanding the code.

```

def rol(value: int, shift: int, width: int = 32) -> int:
    """Rotate-left value by shift within a width-bit word."""

    # shift 0001 to the left by `width` and then subtract 1 to obtain a hex value
    # of 0xF* where F is repeated `width` amount
    # IE:   = 0001 << 32
    #       = 1 0000 0000 0000 0000 0000 0000 0000
    # -1   = 1111 1111 1111 1111 1111 1111 1111 1111
    # a mask is usually a number with 1s where you want to keep bits
    mask = (1 << width) - 1

    # rotating by the width (or any multiple of it) does nothing
    # also guarantees 0 <= shift < width
    shift %= width

```

```

if shift == 0:
    # enforce width-bit register
    return value & mask

# enforce width-bit register
value &= mask

# Standard rotate-left: (value << shift) | (value >> (width - shift))
# (value << shift) - left rotate the bits by `shift` amount
# (value >> (width - shift))) - grab the bits that would `fall off` the left
side
# OR used to clean combine left shifted main body and wrapped around bits
# mask the final result to ensure 32-bit output
return ((value << shift) | (value >> (width - shift))) & mask

```

Hopefully that helps clear things up a little bit.

## 11.2 keygen.py

I then put my effort into decoding the even and odd code branches.

Depending on the input characters, the code would either branch to an even transformation or an odd transformation.

IE: `h = 0x68 = EVEN`.

After the unique even/odd transformation, followed a transformation that both code paths took.

Finally, there was a constant transformation regardless of the user input `Name` that happened after the loop encoding.

The even and odd code branches each only had three unique transformations.

### 11.2.0 Constants

```

CONST_1 = 0x55555555
CONST_2 = 0xDEADC0DE

```

## 11.2.1 Even Transformation

C1C7 0C 44:31C7 81C7 3412F090	rol edi, C xor edi,r8d add edi,90F01234
-------------------------------------	---

```
def mix_even(char, acc, seed, index, rax):          # keygenme
0x7FF777641CE0
    acc = utils.rol(acc, 0xC)                         # rol edi, C
    acc ^= char                                       # xor edi, r8d
    acc += 0x90F01234                                 # add edi, 0x90F01234
(7FF777641CE6)

    acc = utils.mask(acc)

    acc, seed = mix_both(acc, seed, index, rax)        # 7FF777641CEC
return acc, seed
```

## 11.2.2 Odd Transformation

C1C7 1D 44:01C7 81C7 B3C3D4E5	rol edi,1D add edi,r8d add edi,E5D4C3B3
-------------------------------------	---

```
def mix_odd(char, acc, seed, index, rax):          # keygenme
0x7FF777641D17
    acc = utils.rol(acc, 0x1D)                        # rol edi, 0x1D
    acc += char                                       # add edi, r8d
    acc += 0xE5D4C3B3                                # add edi, 0xE5D4C3B3

    acc = utils.mask(acc)

    acc, seed = mix_both(acc, seed, index, rax)        # jmp
keygenme.7FF777641CEC
return acc, seed
```

### 11.2.3 Common Transformation

After each unique branch (even/odd), the branches then use the same logic for the rest of the transformation.

41:89C8	mov r8d,ecx
41:01D0	add r8d,edx
41:8D0C00	lea ecx,qword ptr ds:[r8+rax]
44:31C1	xor ecx,r8d
31CF	xor edi,ecx

```
def mix_both(acc, seed, index, rax): # keygenme
    0x7FF777641CEC
        r8 = seed # mov r8d, ecx
        r8 += index # add r8d, edx

        seed = utils.mask(r8 + rax) # lea ecx, qword ptr
        ds:[r8+rax]
        seed ^= r8 # xor ecx, r8d
        acc ^= seed # xor edi, ecx

    return acc, seed
```

### 11.2.4 Constant Transformation

Which is then all followed by a constant transformation which is *NOT* dependent on the user input **Name** field. This final transformation only happens *AFTER* the transformation loop exits.

0FAFD2	imul edx,edx
89D0	mov eax,edx
C1E0 08	shl eax,8
29D0	sub eax,edx
C1C7 1D	rol edi,1D
01CF	add edi,ecx
31C7	xor edi,eax

## 11.2.5 Putting It All Together

```

        seed = utils.mask(r8 + rax)                                # lea ecx, qword ptr
ds:[r8+rax]
        seed ^= r8                                              # xor ecx, r8d
        acc ^= seed                                             # xor edi, ecx

        return acc, seed

def mix_odd(char, acc, seed, index, rax):                      # keygenme
0x7FF777641D17
        acc = utils.rol(acc, 0x1D)                               # rol edi, 0x1D
        acc += char                                            # add edi, r8d
        acc += 0xE5D4C3B3                                      # add edi, 0xE5D4C3B3

        acc = utils.mask(acc)

        acc, seed = mix_both(acc, seed, index, rax)             # jmp
keygenme.7FF777641CEC
        return acc, seed

def encode_name_input():                                       #
keygen.0x7FF777641D0D
        rax = utils.mask(len(NAME_INPUT))                      # call <JMP.&strlen>
        rax = utils.neg(rax)                                    # neg eax
        acc = CONST_1                                         # mov edi, 55555555
        seed = CONST_2                                         # mov ecx, DEADCODE

        # loop logic
        for index, char in enumerate(NAME_INPUT):            # movzx r8d, r8b
            if (ord(char) % 2 == 0):                          # test r8b, 1
                acc, seed = mix_even(                         # je
keygenme.7FF777641CE0
                    ord(char), acc, seed, index, rax
                )
            else:
                acc, seed = mix_odd(                         # 7FF777641D17
                    ord(char), acc, seed, index, rax
                )

        # print('CHAR: ', char, ' | EDI: ', hex(acc).upper())

        return acc, seed

```

```

def encode_name_input_part_two():
    edi, ecx = encode_name_input()                                     # 7FF777641D0D

    edx = utils.imul_low(len(NAME_INPUT), len(NAME_INPUT))      # imul edx, edx
    eax = edx                                                       # mov eax, edx
    eax = utils.shl(eax, 8)                                         # shl eax, 0x08
    eax = utils.mask(eax - edx)                                     # sub eax, edx

    edi = utils.rol(edi, 0x1D)                                       # rol edi, 1D
    edi = utils.mask(edi + ecx)                                     # add edi, ecx
    edi = utils.mask(edi ^ eax)                                     # xor edi, eax

    print('EDI: ', utils.phex(edi), ' | EAX: ', utils.phex(eax), ' | ECX: ',
utils.phex(ecx))

    return edi, ecx


def main():
    edi, ecx = encode_name_input_part_two()

if __name__ == "__main__":
    main()

```

I excluded the code where I have spiced it up a bit to accept user input - instead of a hardcoded `Name` - as well as command line variables.

## 11.2.6 Using `keygen.py`

To use the key generator, there are two options:

1. Run the `keygen.py` file normally, it will prompt for input.

```

PS C:\Users\david\Desktop\crackmes.one\Coder_90 - KeyGenMeV3\keygen> py keygen.py
Enter Name: helloworld

```

Which upon clicking enter will display the key:

EDI: 0XAD40C7E8		EAX: 0X639C		ECX: 0X3A
KEY IS: AD40C7E8				

2. Run the `keygen.py` file with a command line argument.

```
PS C:\Users\david\Desktop\crackmes.one\Coder_90 - KeyGenMeV3\keygen> py keygen.py "helloworld"
```

Which upon execution will display the key:

```
NAME: helloworld  
EDI: 0XAD40C7E8 | EAX: 0X639C | ECX: 0X3A  
KEY IS: AD40C7E8
```

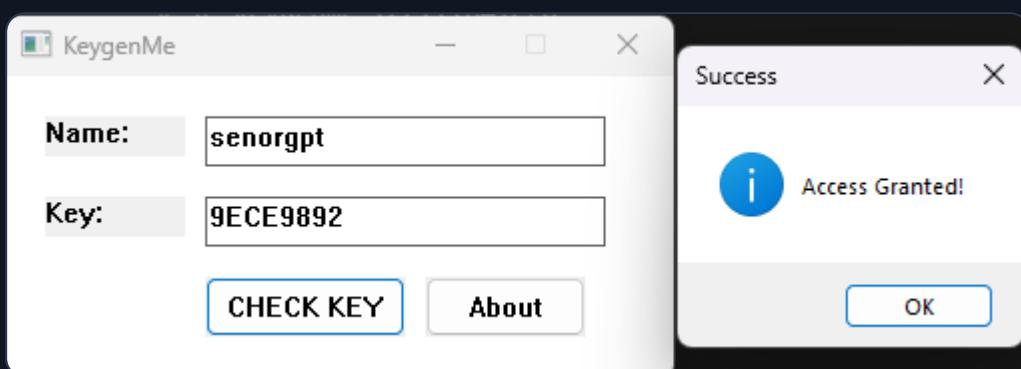
3. Repeat steps 1) OR 2) with executable KeyGenMeV3 - keygen.exe .

## 12. Trying Out Different Name Inputs

Time to have some fun and bask in the hard work by testing out different Name inputs to ensure our key generator is 100%.

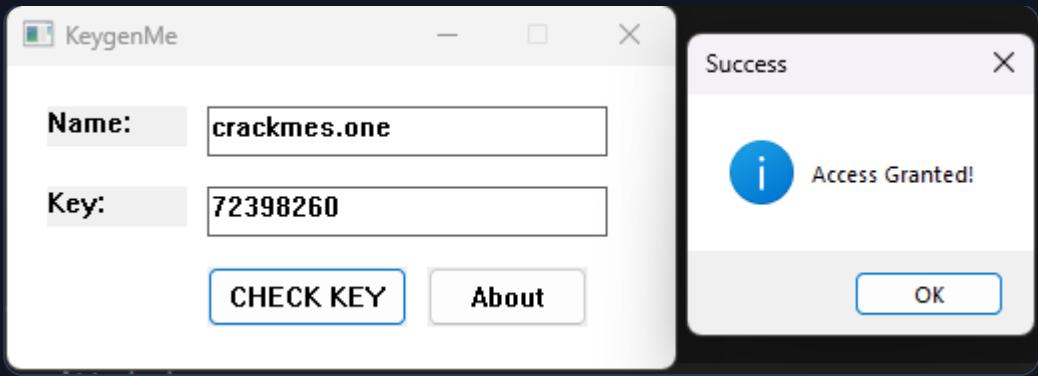
### 12.1 senorgpt

```
PS C:\Users\david\Desktop\crackmes.one\Coder_90 - KeyGenMeV3\keygen> py keygen.py "senorgpt"  
NAME: senorgpt  
EDI: 0X9ECE9892 | EAX: 0X3FC0 | ECX: 0X8  
KEY IS: 9ECE9892
```



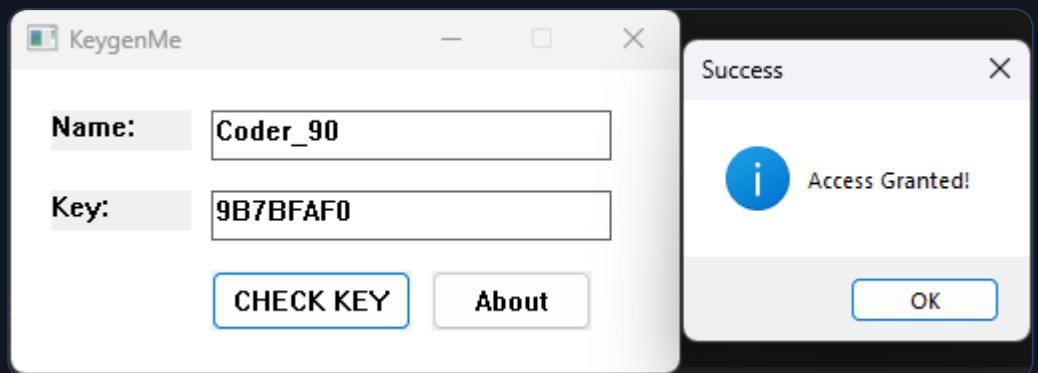
### 12.2 crackmes.one

```
PS C:\Users\david\Desktop\crackmes.one\Coder_90 - KeyGenMeV3\keygen> py keygen.py "crackmes.one"  
NAME: crackmes.one  
EDI: 0X72398260 | EAX: 0X8F70 | ECX: 0X7C  
KEY IS: 72398260
```



## 12.3 Coder\_90

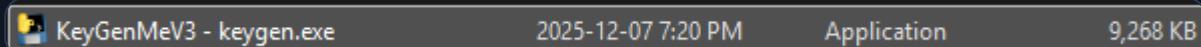
```
PS C:\Users\david\Desktop\crackmes.one\Coder_90 - KeyGenMeV3\keygen> py keygen.py "Coder_90"
NAME: Coder_90
EDI: 0XB7BFAF0 | EAX: 0X3FC0 | ECX: 0X8
KEY IS: 9B7BFAF0
```



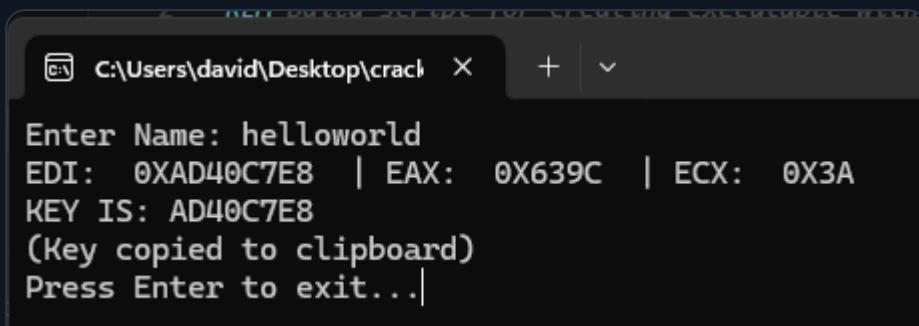
All test cases passed successfully! 😊

## 13. Turning it Into an Executable

I decided to spruce it up a bit more, turned it into an executable as well as copied the **Key** value into the clipboard for Q.O.L. (Quality of Life) purposes.



Double clicking the executable (just like running the `keygen.py` file):



Running the executable via command line arguments:

```
PS C:\Users\david\Desktop\crackmes.one\Coder_90 - KeyGenMeV3\keygen\dist> & '.\KeyGenMeV3 - keygen.exe' "helloworld"
NAME: helloworld
EDI: 0XAD40C7E8 | EAX: 0X639C | ECX: 0X3A
KEY IS: AD40C7E8
(Key copied to clipboard)
```

## 14. Conclusion

This reverse engineering journey through **KeyGenMe V3** provided an excellent opportunity to practice both static and dynamic analysis techniques on a Windows x86-64 binary. The crackme presented an interesting algorithmic challenge that required careful tracing of execution flow and understanding of low-level bit manipulation operations.

It also happened to be my first key generator, which is always exciting.

### 14.1 Key Findings

The validation algorithm follows a structured approach:

- 1. Input Processing:** The crackme accepts two inputs—a `Name` and a `Key`. The `Key` is parsed using `strtoul`.
- 2. Name Transformation:** The `Name` input undergoes a complex transformation process:
  - Each character is processed based on whether its ASCII value is even or odd
  - Even characters** (`h = 0x68`): Use `R0L` by `0xC`, `XOR` with character, then `add 0x90F01234`
  - Odd characters:** Use `R0L` by `0x1D`, `add` character, then `add 0xE5D4C3B3`
  - Both paths converge to a common transformation involving seed manipulation
  - A final constant transformation applies regardless of input, incorporating the `Name` length squared
- 3. Key Validation:** The transformed `Name` value is compared against the parsed `Key` value. If they match, access is granted.

**4. Algorithm Implementation:** The solution required implementing several x86 assembly instruction equivalents in Python:

- `ROL` (Rotate Left) for circular bit rotation
- `SHL` (Shift Left) for logical bit shifting
- `IMUL` (Signed Multiply) with proper two's complement handling
- `NEG` (Negate) for two's complement negation
- Bit masking operations to enforce 32-bit register width

## 14.2 Solution Approach

The keygen implementation (`keygen.py`) successfully replicates the exact transformation logic found in the binary:

- Mimics the even & odd branching logic
- Applies the same constants and transformations
- Produces valid keys for any given `Name` input
- Includes both interactive and command-line interfaces

The complete solution, including the keygen implementation is available in the `keygen/` directory and successfully generates valid keys for any `Name` input.

## 14.3 What Made This Crackme Interesting/Challenging

Several aspects of this crackme made it both interesting and educational:

### 1. The Base-16 Red Herring

Initially, discovering that the key was parsed as base-16 (hexadecimal) seemed straightforward, but the overflow behavior with `strtoul` created confusion.

### 2. The Even/Odd Branching Logic

The algorithm's use of character parity (even/odd ASCII values) to determine transformation paths was clever. This created a non-linear mapping where similar characters could produce vastly different intermediate values.

### 3. Complex Bit Manipulation

The heavy reliance on bit rotation operations (`ROL` by 0xC and 0x1D) required understanding how circular bit operations work and how to implement them correctly in high-level languages. The combination of rotations, XORs, and additions created a mixing function that was non-trivial to reverse without understanding the exact sequence.

### 4. The Two-Phase Transformation

The algorithm's structure—first processing each character with even/odd branching, then applying a constant transformation based on the Name length—meant that simply understanding one part wasn't enough. The final transformation incorporating the length squared added another layer that needed to be discovered and replicated.

### 5. First Keygen Experience

As my first keygen implementation, this crackme provided an excellent learning opportunity. It wasn't so difficult that I found it to be discouraging, but still complex enough to require careful attention to detail and investment of quite a bit of time. The careful attention to detail really shined when translating the assembly operations to Python. Maintaining exact bit-level precision was something new for me.

## 14.4 Lessons Reinforced

This crackme taught and reinforced several important reverse engineering principles:

### 14.4.1 Start with String References

Using string-driven analysis ("Invalid Key", "Access Granted!") provided immediate entry points into the validation logic.

### 14.4.2 Dynamic Analysis Complements Static Analysis

While static analysis (CFF Explorer) helped understand the binary structure, dynamic analysis (x64dbg) was essential for understanding the actual algorithm flow. Watching register values change in real-time and tracing the execution path made the transformation logic much clearer.

#### **14.4.3 Understanding Calling Conventions**

Recognizing that `strtoul` follows the x64 calling convention (RCX, RDX, R8 for parameters, RAX for return) helped interpret the assembly correctly. Fundamental knowledge for understanding how functions are called and how to trace their parameters and return values.

#### **14.4.4 Bit-Level Precision Matters**

When implementing the keygen, every bit operation had to be exact. Understanding two's complement arithmetic, proper masking for 32-bit operations, and the difference between shift and rotate operations was crucial. Small errors in bit manipulation would produce incorrect keys, usually due to a failure of masking to the correct width during certain operations.

#### **14.4.5 Document as You Go**

Keeping track of register values, transformation constants, and code addresses throughout the analysis made it much easier to piece together the complete algorithm later. Screenshots and notes were invaluable when reconstructing the logic.

#### **14.4.6 The Value of Stepping Back**

When stuck on an issue, taking a step back and reconsidering the assumptions and approach. Taking a step back lets the mind calm down and rest.

#### **14.4.7 Reverse Engineering is Iterative**

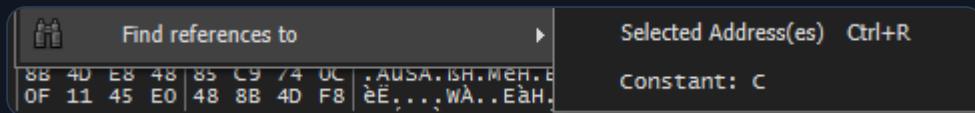
The process wasn't linear, it involved going back and forth between different parts of the assembly instructions, forming hypotheses, testing them, and refining understanding. At first I thought that I was incapable as I did not fully understand what I was looking at. But with due time and effort it all came together into a clear picture.

# 15. New things learned

## 15.1 Finding References to a Selected Address in x64dbg

I had an instruction that was being jumped to before my breakpoint. I knew which instruction, but did not know where the jump was coming from.

Right clicking on the instruction, *Find References To - Selected Address* will show you any references to that address.



## 15.2 Bit Shifting & Rotating

Understanding bit shifting and rotating operations is crucial for reverse engineering, especially when dealing with cryptographic algorithms, hash functions, or obfuscated code. These operations are fundamental building blocks in many algorithms.

### 15.2.1 Bit Shifting

Left Shift (`<<` or `SHL`):

- Moves all bits to the left by a specified number of positions
- Bits that "fall off" the left side are discarded
- Zeros are filled in from the right
- Mathematically equivalent to multiplying by  $2^{\text{shift}}$  (for unsigned values)

Example (8-bit):

Original:	1011 0100 (0xB4 = 180)
SHL by 1:	0110 1000 (0x68 = 104) ← leftmost bit lost, 0 filled on right
SHL by 2:	1101 0000 (0xD0 = 208) ← two leftmost bits lost

Right Shift (`>>` or `SHR` for logical, `SAR` for arithmetic):

- Moves all bits to the right by a specified number of positions
- Bits that "fall off" the right side are discarded

- For logical shift: zeros are filled from the left
- For arithmetic shift: sign bit is preserved (for signed numbers)
- Mathematically equivalent to dividing by  $2^{\text{shift}}$  (for unsigned values)

**Example (8-bit logical right shift):**

Original:	1011 0100 (0xB4 = 180)
SHR by 1:	0101 1010 (0x5A = 90) ← rightmost bit lost, 0 filled on left
SHR by 2:	0010 1101 (0x2D = 45) ← two rightmost bits lost

## 15.2.2 Bit Rotation

**Rotate Left ( ROL ):**

- Similar to left shift, but bits that "fall off" the left side wrap around to the right
- No bits are lost—all bits are preserved, just repositioned
- The operation is circular

**Example (8-bit ROL by 3):**

Original:	1011 0100 (0xB4)
ROL by 3:	1010 0101 (0xA5)
Step-by-step:	
1.	Shift left by 3: 0100 0000 (bits 101 fell off)
2.	Wrap around: 0000 0101 (the 101 bits)
3.	Combine: 0100 0000   0000 0101 = 0100 0101

**Rotate Right ( ROR ):**

- Similar to right shift, but bits that "fall off" the right side wrap around to the left
- Again, all bits are preserved in a circular fashion

**Example (8-bit ROR by 2):**

Original: 1011 0100 (0xB4)

ROR by 2: 0010 1101 (0x2D)

Step-by-step:

1. Shift right by 2: 0010 1101 (bits 00 fell off)

2. Wrap around: 0100 0000 (the 00 bits)

3. Combine: 0010 1101 | 0100 0000 = 0110 1101

### 15.2.3 Why These Operations Matter

In this crackme, bit rotation (specifically `ROL`) is used extensively:

- **Even path:** `ROL(acc, 0xC)` - rotates the accumulator left by 12 bits
- **Odd path:** `ROL(acc, 0x1D)` - rotates the accumulator left by 29 bits

These rotations serve several purposes:

1. **Diffusion:** Spreads the influence of each input bit across multiple output bit positions
2. **Non-linearity:** Makes the transformation harder to reverse without knowing the exact operations