Students are given this:

69 71 72 73 76 78 83

116 101 102 101 107 104 121

111 110 101 109 117 114 98

114 119 121 110 101 116 116

116 111 105 115 105 119 114

110 122 114 101 103 111

Students identify this as decimal encoded ASCII characters and with the aid of an ASCII table, generate this:

E G H I L N S

t e f e k h y

o n e m u r b

r w y n e t t

t o r s i w

i g o e z n r

Students then use columnar transposition to get

E N G L I S H

t h e k e y f

o r n u m b e

r t w e n t y

t w o i s r

i n g z e r o

“ringzero” unlocks this diary entry:

It's no wonder the forum software was out-of-date. After performing the attack and dumping the database backend, it is clear that the forum was abandoned long ago. They just hadn't bothered to take it off-line. That's definitely a no-no. It takes only a well-crafted username for me to pull out the usernames and password hashes from of the site. One username, in particular, caught my eye: jmatthews. This must be Jeanine's login to the Erudite systems. It's likely that her account has special access to everything on the network. I run a password cracker on her password hash, but hours later, it returns nothing. Either Jeanine has picked a strong password for herself or she is also using a password management system like Max is.

I try a bunch of other accounts and it returns a trove of successes. Passwords such as '123456', 'qwerty', 'abc123', 'iloveyou', 'password',and 'letmein' abound. Logging in as these users allows me to poke around in the forum, but the most recent messages on the site are years old. Just having access to an Erudite machine is valuable, though, even if the accounts I compromised are simple user accounts. It is like having a beachhead from which one can infiltrate the rest of the network. There is a common attack that network intruders use when they get access in which they take advantage of programming errors or design flaws to obtain elevated access to the machines and networks they are on. The attack I'll try next is:

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