

Chapter II - Tier Two Sat Hack

Noliad couldn't help but browse over the files; when you were in front of such a large database it was like being a kid in the n00b store. From stat records of everyone in the Masterer's gamer army over the past decade, to known hacks used, for everyone's online activities, articles and theory's on strats; the gamer knowledge was endless.

The Masterer had compiled this information when he was younger. These days everyone in the army added to it. It's even rumored the guy who started up Wikipedia was a hacker who stole the idea from us. Noliad looked around the room. It was the standard size of any bedroom, but these 13 Servers held all the information the Gamer army had gathered over the years. It was in fact right below an arcade although, being a "Masterer" stronghold, it was extremely secure. This was the first one set up, but since time had gone on, more had been set up around the world. In case, one day this position would be compromised. It never had been, but backup facilities seemed logical considering how intense things were getting.

The Arcade above was in itself interesting: it had a huge variety of games, but all of which focused on micro training, from shooters to racers and even pinball. Keeping with the times, neon lights littered the place, and it was always open late into the night. Many good recruits for the Gamer Army had been found at this place over the years, and it made an excellent place for scouting out new talent. Noliad himself had been scouted out here in the early days, and he liked to consider the place home. There was a door, behind one of the Pinball Machines, in the back room that led down a flight of stairs to this room.

The downstairs was far less impressive. The size of a standard bedroom, and filled with the 13 servers, and mainly only the glow of monitors lighting the room, there was an overhead light, but it was rarely used. The only appliance in the room, other than the computer equipment, was the coffee machine that Noliad had installed himself when he was appointed to the intelligence division of the Masterer's Army. During the day, there were at most 5 people down here, all pouring over information, and adding and organizing. Most people would have found the room eerie, but not a true gamer.

Usually he would have left when the others did, at 6pm, when most of them would head home to begin Pwning for the evening, but Vex had still not returned from the mission, and the data was of the up most importance, so he was required to stay. Noliad didn't really mind; with this much information in front of your eyes, you could start reading an article and by the next time you looked at a clock, it would be morning. The immensity of knowledge, even after working with it for so long, truly was amazing.

What Information they did have about Big Bad's forces was, at times, inconclusive, especially on strongholds. And with The Masterer preparing to make an attack against them, gathering this Intel was going to be more important than ever. Noliad had given Vex111 the order to go and collect this information from a known BB stronghold that would have received this information about 5 hours ago, but he hadn't reported back yet, which to be honest was rare for Vex; he was known for his efficiency, hence why he was chosen for the job. Either he had been caught and they were interrogating him as Noliad poured over this data, or he couldn't make contact for fear of being caught. Neither thoughts were too optimistic, but Noliad at least hoped for the latter option, and although he didn't like to admit it, there was no real chance of them catching someone like Vex.

His Endless Task, as he had come to call it in this room, was to organize the data so it

could be used. Not much of a desk job; in fact at times Noliad thought it was quite possibly the worst desk job anyone could hope for, but hey, there's a lot to be said for über micro on a Dvorák keyboard! After Vex had left, he was going over the information again and found some obscure chat log files that warned the 1337 of the BB forces trained there. He considered that some of the Big Bad's top henchmen could in fact be there, and hoped Vex could counter them. He looked, again, over the files, that were not to conclusive but interesting enough; logs taken from a CSS server about a year ago...

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All Your Fate Belongs To Us: BOOM HEADSHOT THAT! Come on down to 1337 street, give you some spanks!>!!!11111

All Your Fate Belongs To Us: Number of the Beast! Number of the Beast! Add one more and I'll show you a feast!

Skullknocker: What's That, Y'a Ghey?!!! How about less laugh on the mic. and more bullets in the head, Mr over exaggerater.

All Your Fate Belongs To Us: Says the guy who just got PWNED.

Skullknocker: What's That? cant get an erection?

All Your Fate Belongs to Us: 1337 St Bitch, come and face the sound of music.

Skullknocker: I faced the sound of music the whole length of that shitty movie, and you know what, IT'S STILL NOT AS GHEY AS YOU!

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Noliad considered this could have been a reference to 1337 street which was the joke name for one of the BB forces strongholds; the one he had sent Vex to. These taunts matched up with confirmed taunts by Deathstriker6666, and the Ips did also. It concerned him, but again, he liked to hope Vex could handle the situation. He concluded, there was not much he could do other than wait. He did consider though, he was going to need some coffee for this wait, so he got up out of his chair and walked over to the coffee machine, across the room, and poured himself a Mug.

The Guard that made it up the ladder first, fired off a Micro Bullet at Vex, on his descent, pushing him forward the extra distance he needed to make the jump. Under any other circumstance, Vex would have been knocked unconscious, which would have made things considerably worse, but here and now, fueled by adrenaline and sheer determination, he grunted through it and landed on the other rooftop in a roll. He paused for a moment, catching his breath from the hit, before realizing he needed to move fast or there would be a lot more. He looked at the ladder ahead of him and murmured, "*Momentary Loss of Reality.*" He let his body slide down the ladder more than climb; his body was utterly wrecked from this escape; he admitted things had not gone as planed, and although he assumed he had countered the rush, he didn't think it would be to long before they tried again, after all, even n00bs can find a way around a Gatling cannon.

He reached the bottom of the ladder, and re adjusted his collar and jacket, whilst for a moment forgetting his troubles and lol'ing silently, "*Top of the ladder and bottom of the ladder all in the same day GG*", he tried to walk out into the crowd of the main street, as casual as he could. But he didn't want to relax too much; those n00bs were still behind him, and he honestly thought they were just that. Deathstriker and a horde of patsies couldn't even stop him from escaping.

He kept checking behind him as he walked up the street. It was 19 blocks back to STUFU Arcade, and considering he figured Noliad would already be pissed by the fact he was incredibly late, he didn't want to keep him waiting any longer. The walk seemed incredibly long; the combined fear of what was behind him and what more problems were waiting because of this flash drive, all in all it was at least shaping up to be a interesting day. He was about 3 Blocks out of the Arcade when he saw one man ahead of him, dressed in

casual looking attire, but with a trademark golf cap he could recognize.

As he approached the crossing, the light turned red, and he was forced to wait. The man with the cap stood directly across from him, on the other side of the road, grinning as he looked directly into Vex' eyes. When the light turned green Vex walked across as normal; when the two met halfway, the man with the cap spun on his heels and walked side by side with Vex, and tilted his head to speak to him, *“Good Game Mr. Vex, but perhaps you would like to return what you have stolen from us.”*

Vex smiled, and stopped on the sidewalk. They were now walking along, and turned to him staring him deeply in the eyes, *“Certainly, right after I download all of the information. Tell me; are you familiar with the term GTFO? Because I think you might want to take a look around!”*

The man did not seem to be daunted by statement at all, and promptly replied *“You know, there are big Opportunities for talent such as yourself, with us.”*

Vex laughed in his face, *“Oh I’m sure there is, seeing as how lacking you clearly are in talent, since I’ve gotten this far, I can understand why you would need me.”* Vex motioned a hand around him, to the crowds of people passing by, *“And you’re not going to try anything here, so admit defeat and toddle of home. Kthxbye!”*

The Man in the cap’s stance changed he had realized there was in fact not a lot he could do at this particular point to stop Vex, and short of physically grabbing him, which would probably land him in jail, there was nothing he could do. He stepped back from Vex, *“Luck, but online it will run out. I hope you understand that you cant run forever.”* The Man with the cap reached into his shirt pocket and handed him a card. All that was on the back was the trademark, *Big Bad Forces*, logo in red and yellow with what appeared to be an IP address, *“Your doom”*. The man murmured, and then spun on his heels once more and walked off, the way he had originally been walking. Vex tucked the card into his pocket. He figured that that IP might be useful and was worth keeping at any rate. He smiled, thinking of how he just bluffed out a known BB forces spy, and quite confidently continued to walk up the street towards STUFU arcade.

He walked through the rolling doors to the arcade. The entrance was very retro; your classic 3 windowed rolling doors at the entrance, and arcade machines lining all the walls as well as set up as rows across the middle. It was dark now and, although the place wasn’t empty, it was really only the hardcore gamers who were ever usually around at this hour. He walked into the back room and slid the pinball machine aside and opened the door to walk downstairs, just in time to see Noliad pouring himself a cup of coffee. Noliad turned to him and, with a look of relief on his face, remarked, *“Was just pouring my first cup. I expected a longer wait.”*

Vex was glad to have evaded the BB forces and was pretty proud that he had held his own against Deathstriker6666, but he narrowed his eyes and promptly replied to Noliad, in a sarcastic imitating voice *“Oh Yeah Vex ... heh, by the way Deathstriker6666 is there so you might want to look out for that K?”* He tilted his head in a cliché valley girl way at the end, and then walked over to one of the PC chairs and slumped into it.

Noliad moved over and sat in the chair next to him, *“I didn’t know until after you left. Even then it was just a hunch; you didn’t have too many problems did you?”*

Vex closed his eyes and tilted his head back to rest against the top of the chair. He was in, *“Deathstriker, two dozen guards, jumping from rooftops, risking my life and all for this...”*

He reached into his jacket pocket and pulled out the flash drive and handed it to Noliad who had a pleased look on his face, *“If this has what we need, it will all be worth it.”*

Vex let out a groan of agreement, and once again closed his eyes and rested his head

against the chair, *"You're intelligent, you'll work it out"*. Noliad inserted the USB flash drive into the PC he was sitting at, and turned to look at the screen. He opened up the map file Vex had stolen, and let out a cheer, *"Pwned!"* Vex opened one eye and looked at the screen, taking note of the BB logo over numerous arcades and LAN centers across the town.

"Good, it was worth my gun," he yawned.

Noliad kept repeating "lol!" and "pwned!" before turning and, with a sad look on his face, *"Wait, You lost your gun?"* Vex spat out *"Deathstriker,"* and Noliad winced for a second.

"Yeah, I truly am sorry about that, I will give Teh_Salesman a ring in a second, but... but..." He kept repeating but, and laughing excitedly, and pointing at the map on the screen *"Oh ho hoooo! this is gonna be good."*

After Explaining the fundamentals of the map to Vex, Noliad pointed out that the bar ratios showed the importance of the specific locations. There were about half a dozen of them, but what Noliad had been getting so excited about was the fact that, unknowingly, Vex had stolen something much more important than just a map. This map had the footnotes of the Big Bad's next major operation detailed at the bottom; who was going to be there, where it would take place, and what roles they were going to take. The information was priceless; they no doubt had sent all of the guards to try and flank Vex because Deathstriker would have known what was attached to the files on that computer, and considering this information had been stolen, there was no way the Big Bad's forces would dare carry this mission out now. It would be too easy to counter: although they had no idea what it was really targeted at, they knew exactly what they would have to do if this plan was ever carried out. Noliad pondered as he spoke back and forth with Vex about what they should do with this information about the possibility that this would leave the Big Bad's forces to try something desperate. By the looks of the map, it seemed this was a huge operation, so whatever they would try, now would be quite unexpected. Noliad just hoped the Pwnerer was ready to lead the army if push came to shove.

After they had both finished reviewing the map, Noliad sent a message to the Masterer. They sent all that they knew, and assumed the Masterer would find a PC and review the information himself anyway. They also mentioned that Vex had lost his weapon, and that Teh_Salesman needed to be contacted. They waited about half an hour before they got a reply and, as always, it was brief and to the point, as per the Masterer's usual messages.

< The Salesman is on his way, he will tell you the next move >

Vex had expected a brief message, but not another mission so soon. And as he found this information, he had a sneaking suspicion that he was going to end up seeing his current project of the Masterer's through to the end. He didn't particularly mind; it was after all more interesting than most of the n00b assignments he usually got given. For the moment all the two could do was wait. As Vex lighted up a cigarette, Noliad returned to pouring over the information, and the two sat waiting for the next move.

They heard whistling as they sat, and checked the cameras showing the entrance to the back room; a man dressed in a black suit, holding a briefcase and duffel bag seemed to be waiting in front of the pinball machine. They knew instantly that this had to be The_Salesman, and Vex went up the short flight of stairs to let him in.

"Jeremytus is the name, selling micro guns is the game. What's the price tag, it's all the same for the greater glory of the Masterer's game," the man immediately spoke this as the pinball machine was moved aside to let him in, and Vex motioned for him to come in. The man then spoke again *"You of course can call me Teh_Salesman,"* and gave Vex a sly wink and then walked in front of him, down the stairs to greet Noliad.

The two had seemingly met before as the salesman already knew Noliad, They all sat in chairs, and Teh_Salesman spoke up, *"As always ladies, business before pleasure."* He made that same sly wink again, *"Now this information you've got here, my friends, is damn right interesting. But you can't just do a sat. hack and then not move your tanks in, am I right? Of course I'm right! So what you're going to do Mr..."* he paused for a moment and checked a piece of paper from his pocket, *"So what your going to do Mr. Vex, is go to Silhouette Arcade on Alpha Street, tomorrow afternoon at about 5. There you're going to meet your new best friend; his name is Fella_H, and you and him are gonna go on a little date, but before you get to romantic and start confessing your love for one another you're going to get to this Big Bad stronghold."* He tapped a finger to the map that was still displayed on Noliad's PC, *"Once you're there, you're going to disrupt these n00b's training. I put the odds at about 2 v 8 so it shouldn't be anything that either of you can't handle. What is the point, you're asking yourself? Well! I'm gonna tell you, right after you give me one of those cigarettes of course."*

He looked at Vex with narrowed eyes. Vex pulled one out for himself, and then for Jeremytus. Teh_Salesman lit the cigarette with a spark of a match against his boot, and then continued, *"Your main objective; now if you ever ruff them up there's no way they will stop using that place. With the information we have, they are going to know we know all of their locations in this town anyway, so if we could plant a key logger on one of the PCs, everything they talk about in there will be going straight to our friend Noliad here, and then we can better plan counters for future attacks. With everything getting so intense, boys, intelligence is more important now than ever. Now, this is a primary training stronghold so they will not be as much of a pushover as those guards you just outran, but you only need enough time to get in, get that key logger on the PCs and then get out again. I'm sure you can manage it, and hey, think on your feet; maybe you can find something else out as well!"*

Vex nodded, understanding what he was being told to do, *"I got it covered, but first of all I'm going to need that gun."* Jeremytus smiled, *"Now we get to the pleasure boys!"*

Teh_Salesman opened up the briefcase, first revealing a whole array of pistol variations, and then pulled some larger guns out of the duffel bag. Vex reached into his jacket and handed him the Namco blaster he had taken from the fallen guard on his escape. *"You can have this, it's a piece of junk"* The salesman laughed and then put it in the briefcase.

"It may be n00b, but one day those things will be collectors items; the worst guns ever made," he laughed a few times then continued, *"So Mr. Vex, we have here the pistols and the heavy weapons. What's your poison?"* Vex pointed at what appeared to be a modified Nintendo Zapper. *"A man who knows what he wants, I think we will get on just fine"*

Vex smiled smugly, *"I'm a man of the classics, and that thing looks like it's been tweaked up."* Vex reached across and picked it up out of the briefcase before flipping it a few times quickly in his hands, and then aiming upwards, before Jeremytus interjected, *"But can you use it?"*

Within milliseconds of him finishing the sentence, Vex aimed each side of his head and fired two quick shots with low focus so as not to blind. They gently hit the wall behind, and dissipated without any damage. Teh_Salesman winked, and let out a low chuckle, *"I think your going to be just fine on this next mission."* He packed his briefcase and duffel bag again, and headed up the stairs before turning back to Vex who was now gently tucking his new weapon into his jacket pocket, and stated, *"Remember kid, its not enough to just have fantastic micro!"* Vex didn't reply, but only gave a single nod and smiled. He had a feeling that on the next mission he was going to need as much Über Micro as he could get...