

Babble Babble Babble Babble Babble Babble Babble BabbleLoader

By Ryan Robinson

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Loaders, an Ever Evolving Market

The pace of innovation and development in the malware detection market is relentless, the same goes for the development of malware itself. Constantly charging and adapting to create ever more evasive and capable payloads.

One such sector of this market is the loader (also called crypter or packer) market. In today's threat landscape, loaders have become a critical tool in cybercrime operations, serving as the backbone for delivering a range of malicious payloads. Loaders are often the first stage in an attack chain, designed to stealthily execute or inject malware, such as info-stealers or ransomware, into a target system. Their prevalence reflects an evolution in tactics, allowing threat actors to evade traditional antivirus defenses through techniques like in-memory execution and anti-analysis features. Widely available for purchase or lease on underground markets, loaders are now a commodity in malware distribution, making sophisticated attack methods accessible to a broader range of actors and adaptable across diverse campaigns and targets.

In this blog, we will introduce "BabbleLoader", an extremely evasive loader, packed with defensive mechanisms, that is designed to bypass antivirus and sandbox environments to deliver stealers into memory.

BabbleLoader's Techniques to Evade Traditional and AI Systems

BabbleLoader stands out for its array of sophisticated evasion techniques that challenge **both traditional and AI-based detection systems**. Key features include junk code insertion and metamorphic transformations, which alter the loader's structure and flow, effectively evading signature-based, Artificial Intelligence, and behavioral detections. Through dynamic API resolution, the loader sidesteps common API monitoring by resolving necessary functions only at runtime, preventing static analysis from identifying telltale Windows APIs. Also bypassing sandbox injected DLLs that hook API calls. Shellcode loading and decryption further obfuscate the payload by embedding and decrypting malicious code in memory, bypassing file-based scanning. Additionally, anti-sandboxing and anti-analysis measures detect virtual environments, impeding sandbox analysis and automated AI defenses. Together, these techniques make this loader a versatile tool, capable of subverting both static and dynamic security layers.

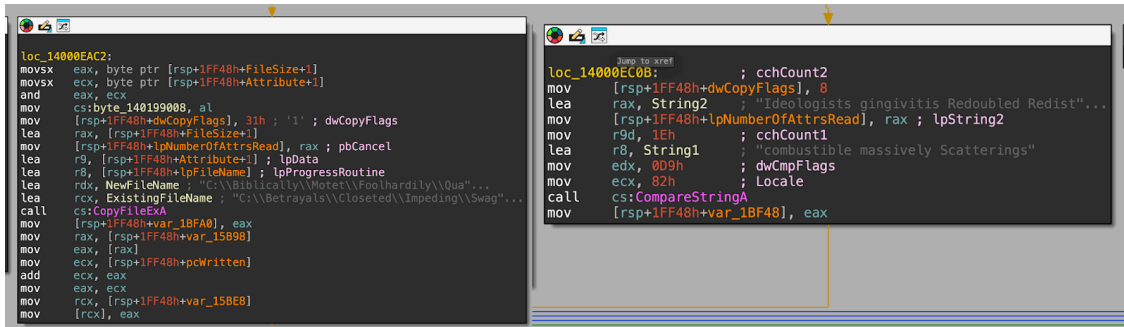
When investigating this loader, we have seen it used across multiple campaigns, targeting both English and Russian speaking individuals. Lure themes suggest it is targeting a vast range of users, from users looking to download generic cracked software, such as video editing, gaming, VPN, browsers, and utilities. We have also noticed campaigns that target with a particular focus on business professionals in finance and administration, masquerading as accounting software, and forms for filling out eligibility checks often used by HR or payroll professionals.

Technical Analysis

The sample used in this analysis is: a08db4c7b7bacc2bacd1e9a0ac7fbb91306bf83c279582f5ac3570a90e8b0f87

Junk Code/Metamorphism

BabbleLoader makes diabolical use of junk code. This is done in an effort to hamper analysis by confusing the analyst. This is achieved through multiple means. There are many paths of code that are never actually accessed, but use random imports with randomly generated hardcoded strings.



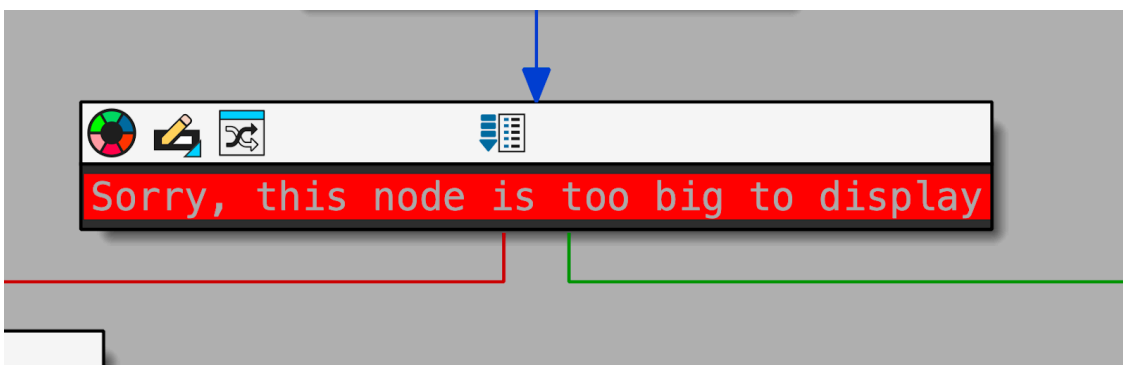
Junk Code making rubbish calls

The loader also makes excessive use of random instructions, adding values to local variables and moving data around registers for no particular functionality.

```
movzx  eax, [rsp+1FF48h+Time.wDayOfWeek]
movzx  ecx, [rsp+1FF48h+Time.wYear]
add    eax, ecx
mov    rcx, [rsp+1FF48h+var_15B48]
mov    [rcx], ax
movsx  eax, byte ptr [rsp+1FF48h+FileSize]
movsx  ecx, byte ptr [rsp+1FF48h+FileSize+1]
add    eax, ecx
mov    byte ptr [rsp+1FF48h+Attribute+1], al
mov    rax, [rsp+1FF48h+var_15B20]
mov    ecx, dword ptr [rsp+1FF48h+ClipRectangle.Right]
mov    eax, [rax]
add    eax, ecx
mov    [rsp+1FF48h+NumberOfAttrsRead], eax
mov    rax, [rsp+1FF48h+var_15B20]
mov    ecx, [rsp+1FF48h+NumberOfAttrsRead]
mov    [rax], ecx
sub    eax, ecx
mov    [rsp+1FF48h+var_1BF9C], eax
mov    rax, [rsp+1FF48h+var_15BE8]
mov    rcx, qword ptr [rsp+1FF48h+Date.wYear]
mov    ecx, [rcx]
mov    eax, [rax]
add    eax, ecx
mov    [rsp+1FF48h+pBuf], eax
mov    rax, qword ptr [rsp+1FF48h+Date.wYear]
mov    ecx, [rsp+1FF48h+pBuf]
mov    [rax], ecx
and    eax, ecx
mov    rcx, qword ptr [rsp+1FF48h+var_15AE8]
mov    [rcx], eax
mov    rax, [rsp+1FF48h+var_15BE8]
mov    [rax], rax
movzx  ecx, al
```

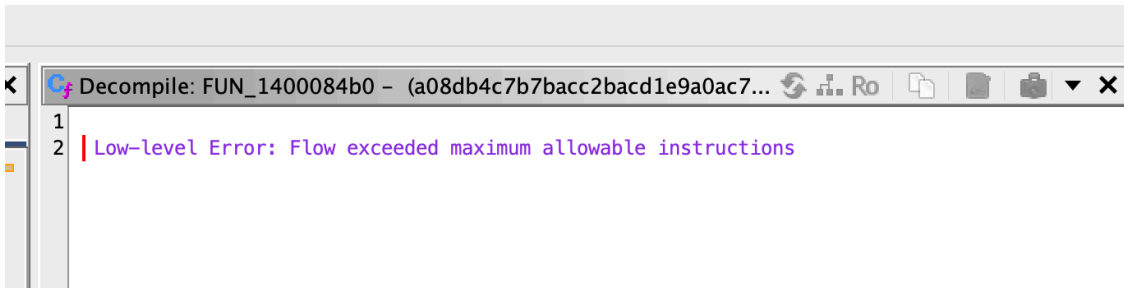
Junk Code

The amount of junk code added into the sample greatly increases the amount of code to the point where it starts to crash disassembly or decompilation tools through its sheer mass alone. In the case of IDA needs to collapse nodes due to them being so large.



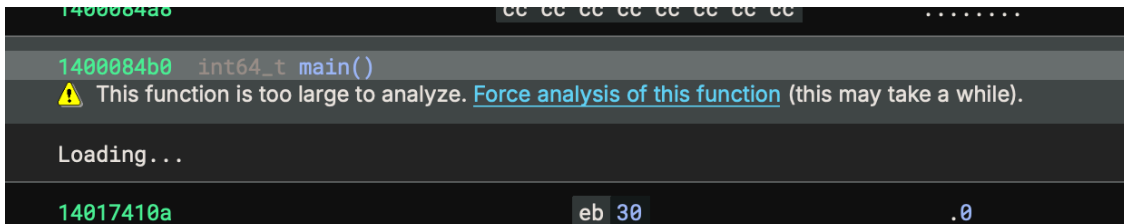
Collapsed Node in IDA

In Ghidra the function graph view will freeze and there are too many instructions for the decompiler to show.



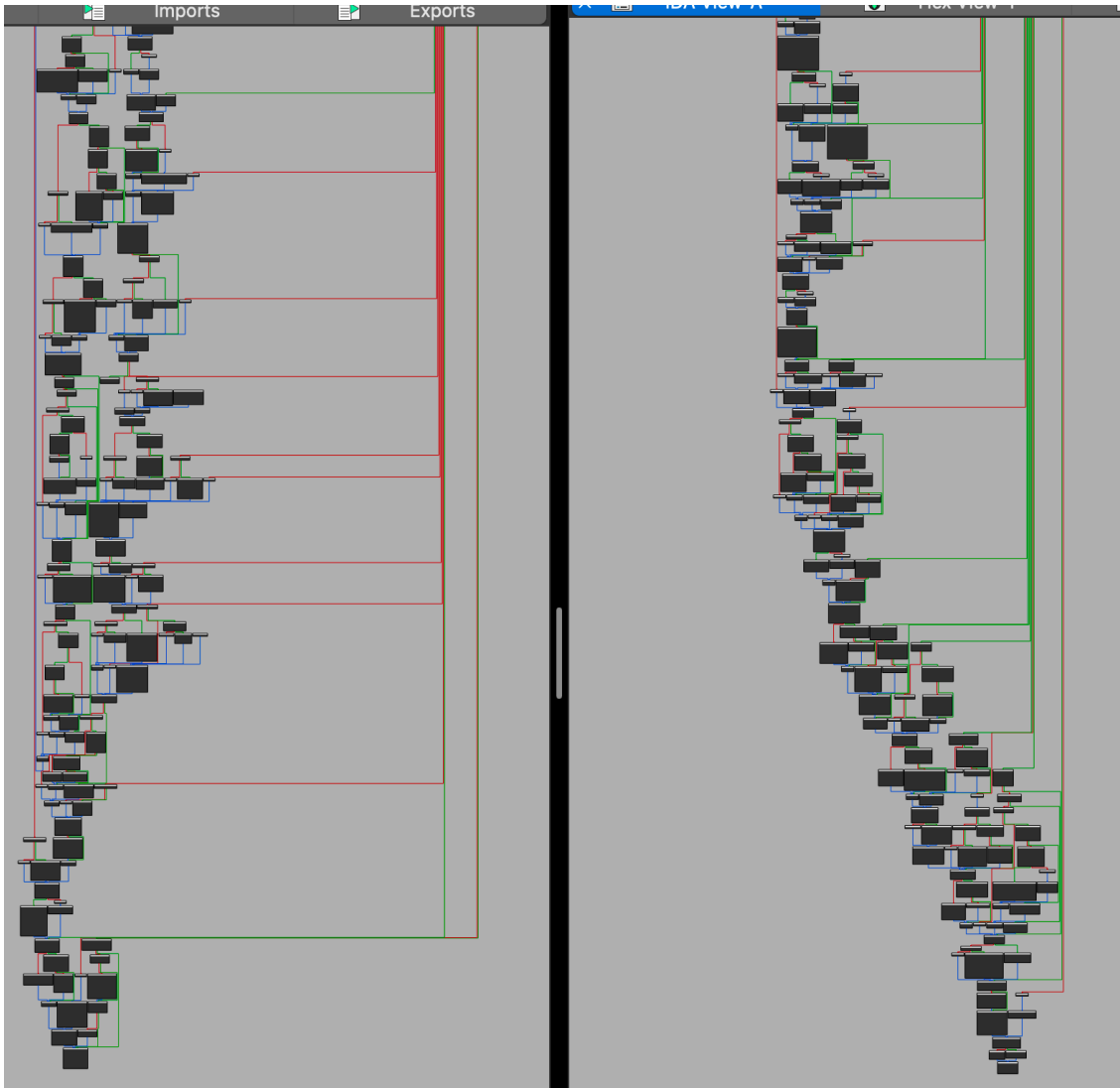
Decompilation output in Ghidra

We have even checked in Binary Ninja to see the effects of the junk code. The user is required to manually force analysis of the function due to the size.



Binary Ninja showing large function

Each of these techniques also serve the purpose of making the loader metamorphic. Each build of the loader will have unique strings, unique metadata, unique code, unique hashes, unique encryption, and a unique control flow. Each sample is structurally unique with only a few snippets of shared code. Below is a very small snippet of the main method of two different samples, showing very different control flow.



Comparison of structure of two BabbleLoader samples

Even the metadata of the file is randomized for each sample.

Property	Value
Comments	Ferry forbidden aniline tangle discoloured milkman
CompanyName	Outsourcing
FileDescription	Tormented cudgel sheer households drownings festivals
FileVersion	4.29.221.0
InternalName	Uprated disclaimer
LegalCopyright	Copyright © Saddle misunderstands respectable
LegalTrademarks	Babbling landmarks loveless metronomic

Junk Metadata

What This Means for AI-Based Analysis Techniques

These techniques also have large implications for AI based analysis techniques. This constant variation in code structure forces AI models to continuously re-learn what to look for—a process that often leads to missed detections or false positives. By filling the code with junk instructions, the loader can trick AI into interpreting irrelevant actions as meaningful ones, leading it to predict that the malware will perform operations that it never actually executes. Junk code also generates a large volume of “noise” in the program flow, overwhelming the AI’s pattern-recognition capabilities and forcing it to sift through thousands of extraneous actions that mask the true behavior of the malware.

Additionally, the inclusion of countless junk variables adds another layer of complexity. AI models analyzing variable behavior to understand data flow must now track thousands of decoy variables, each potentially obfuscated or dynamically transformed to further confuse the analysis. This variable noise, combined with the ever-shifting structure from metamorphism, makes it extremely difficult for AI to reliably determine which variables are integral to the malware’s function and which are simply junk.

The sheer volume of junk code and variables also makes analyzing this loader exceptionally costly. The sheer number of tokens AI must process to parse and interpret the junk alone leads to high computational and financial costs, effectively weaponizing the malware’s complexity against AI-driven defenses. This combination of overwhelming data volume, misleading patterns, and high processing requirements creates significant challenges in detecting and analyzing the malware accurately.

Dynamic API Resolution

One of the first operations of the loader is to start the process of dynamically resolving API calls. It will achieve this through [API hashing](#). It will first get a module handle for `ntdll.dll`. The string for the DLL is decrypted using a rolling XOR cipher.

```

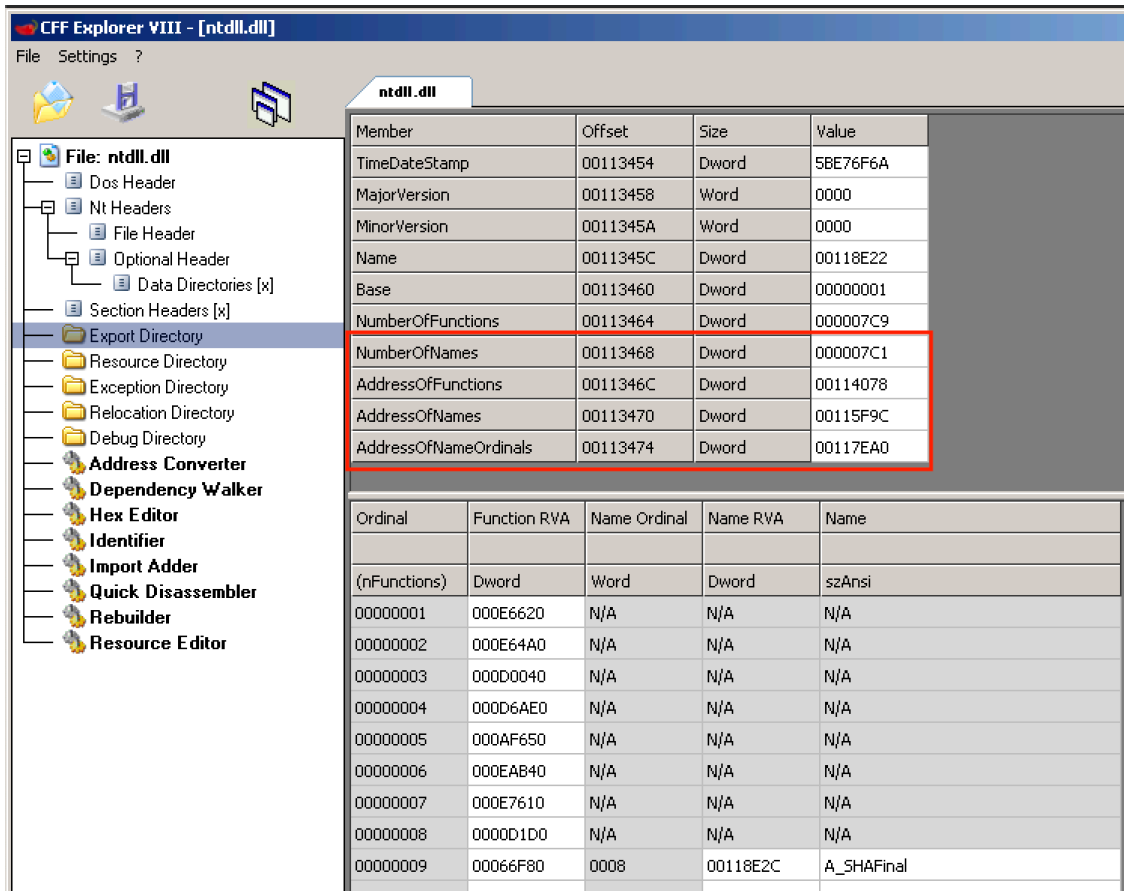
0000000140001780 | 48:894C24 08 | mov qword ptr ss:[rsp+8],rcx
0000000140001785 | 48:83EC 68 | sub rsp,68
0000000140001789 | C64424 50 23 | mov byte ptr ss:[rsp+50],23
000000014000178E | C64424 51 9B | mov byte ptr ss:[rsp+51],9B
00000001400017C3 | C64424 52 CB | mov byte ptr ss:[rsp+52],CB
00000001400017C8 | C64424 53 DD | mov byte ptr ss:[rsp+53],DD
00000001400017CD | C64424 54 AB | mov byte ptr ss:[rsp+54],AB
00000001400017D2 | C64424 55 8D | mov byte ptr ss:[rsp+55],8D
00000001400017D7 | C64424 56 4B | mov byte ptr ss:[rsp+56],4B
00000001400017DC | C64424 57 5D | mov byte ptr ss:[rsp+57],5D
00000001400017E1 | C64424 58 2B | mov byte ptr ss:[rsp+58],2B
00000001400017E6 | C64424 59 86 | mov byte ptr ss:[rsp+59],86
00000001400017EB | C74424 24 9A875B37 | mov dword ptr ss:[rsp+24],375B879A
00000001400017F2 | C74424 20 00000000 | mov dword ptr ss:[rsp+20],0
00000001400017FB | 48:8D4424 50 | lea rax,qword ptr ss:[rsp+50]
0000000140001800 | 48:894424 38 | mov qword ptr ss:[rsp+38],rax
0000000140001805 | 48:634424 20 | movsxd rax,dword ptr ss:[rsp+20]
000000014000180A | 48:83F8 0A | cmp rax,A
000000014000180E | 73 3B | jae loader.14000184B
0000000140001810 | 48:634424 20 | movsxd rax,dword ptr ss:[rsp+20]
0000000140001815 | 48:8B4C24 38 | mov rcx,qword ptr ss:[rsp+38]
000000014000181A | 0FB60401 | movzx eax,byte ptr ds:[rcx+rcx]
000000014000181E | 334424 24 | xor eax,dword ptr ss:[rsp+24]
0000000140001822 | 0FB64C24 24 | movzx ecx,byte ptr ss:[rsp+24]
0000000140001827 | D2C8 | ror al,c1
0000000140001829 | 48:634C24 20 | movsxd rcx,dword ptr ss:[rsp+20]
000000014000182E | 48:8B5424 38 | mov rdx,qword ptr ss:[rsp+38]
0000000140001833 | 8B040A | mov byte ptr ds:[rdx+rcx],al
0000000140001836 | 6B4424 24 4F | imul eax,dword ptr ss:[rsp+24],4F
000000014000183B | 894424 24 | mov dword ptr ss:[rsp+24],eax
000000014000183F | 8B4424 20 | mov eax,dword ptr ss:[rsp+20]
0000000140001843 | FFC0 | inc eax
0000000140001845 | 894424 20 | mov dword ptr ss:[rsp+20],eax
0000000140001849 | EB 8A | jmp loader.140001805
000000014000184E | 48:8D4C24 50 | lea rcx,qword ptr ss:[rsp+50]
0000000140001850 | FF15 7A8B1800 | call qword ptr ds:[<GetModuleHandle>]
0000000140001856 | 48:894424 28 | mov qword ptr ss:[rsp+28],rax
000000014000185B | 48:837C24 28 00 | cmp qword ptr ss:[rsp+28],0
0000000140001861 | 7C A7 | jmp loader.14000186A
    
```

Decoding of NTDLL string

Using the returned handle, the loader will start to read the PE header of `ntdll.dll` and it will locate the export directory and start parsing out values that it will need to dynamically resolve the functions by hash. The loader builds up the following struct.

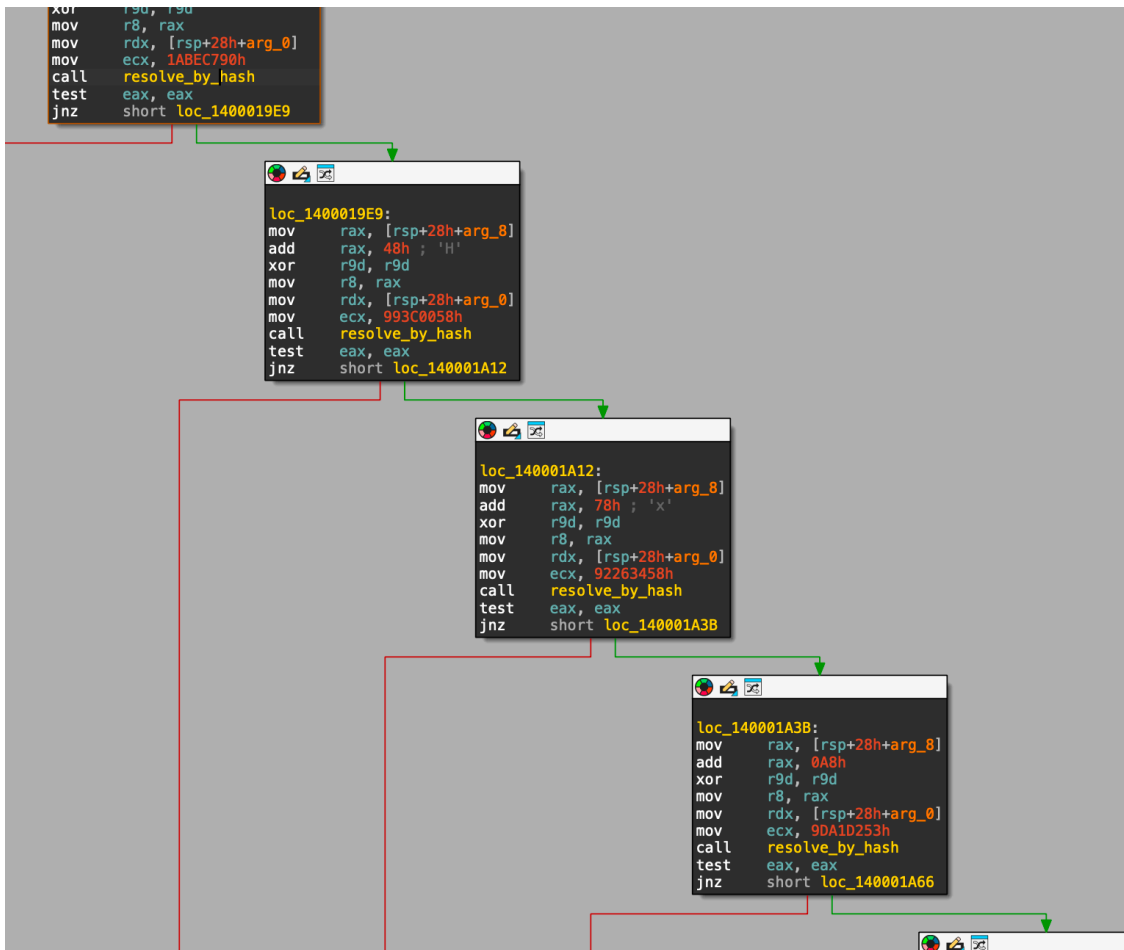
```
struct _NtdllExportInfo {  
    DWORD* AddressOfFunctions;  
    DWORD* AddressOfNames;  
    DWORD* AddressOfNameOrdinals;  
    DWORD NumberOfNames;  
    HMODULE NtdllModuleHandle;  
}
```

The parsed values can be seen easily from viewing the export directory in CFF explorer.



Parsed fields shown in CFF Explorer

Once the struct has been built up, it can then proceed to iterate through the export names, hashing the names to compare to hardcoded values in the binary.



Resolution of functions by hash

The following calls are resolved, getting pointers for imports. Whilst the exports will remain the same for each build of the malware, the hashing will be unique per each build.

Hash	Call
1ABEC790	NtCreateSection
993C0058	NtMapViewOfSection
92263458	NtUnmapViewOfSection
9DA1D253	NtClose
6AF3F390	NTQuerySystemInformation
0A96AB0E4	RtlAllocateHeap
8A21A480	RtlFreeHeap

Shellcode Loading and Payload Decryption

Once the loader resolves pointers for the imports, it first calls `NtCreateSection`, followed by `NtMapViewOfSection`. This approach allows the malware to allocate and manage memory outside the standard process space. The decryption process begins with the loader rearranging the randomly stored encrypted chunks of the payload into their correct order within the mapped memory, before proceeding to decrypt each block.

Address	Hex	ASCII
00000000001E0000	00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00	.....
00000000001E0010	00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00	.....
00000000001E0020	00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00	.....
00000000001E0030	00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00	.....
00000000001E0040	00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00	.....
00000000001E0050	00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00	.....
00000000001E0060	00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00	.....
00000000001E0070	00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00	.....
00000000001E0080	00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00	.....
00000000001E0090	00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00	.....
00000000001E00A0	00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00	.....
00000000001E00B0	00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00	.....
00000000001E00C0	00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00	.....
00000000001E00D0	00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00	.....
00000000001E00E0	00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00	.....
00000000001E00F0	00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00	.....
00000000001E0100	00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00	.....
00000000001E0110	00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00 00	.....

Address	Hex	ASCII
00000000001E0000	E7 B1 C3 9C 1C 9D 10 D7 3D 88 9F AF CD 11 0F 02 Ç±Å....x=.. î... 5jÄ(Ç4.Üp.i.G-1É	
00000000001E0010	73 A1 C4 28 53 34 9A DB DE AD CC 11 47 AC 6C CB s;Ä(Ç4.Üp.i.G-1É	
00000000001E0020	01 F4 25 9E EC 36 04 DC A5 C5 A4 59 1A 60 C2 B2 .0%.ig.Ü×Åxy.oÅ*	
00000000001E0030	C7 B7 DE BE 40 D5 92 A8 B7 49 30 EB 05 CA 2A 60 Ç.b×eÖ.´.IOÉ.É*	
00000000001E0040	07 5D 61 93 74 37 1D 46 A1 6F 01 03 49 59 F4 84 .Ja.t7.Fio..IYô.	
00000000001E0050	D1 F0 B9 B4 D0 CD F3 68 0F 0C E7 53 05 CA 5A F1 Ñö'´oióh..çS.EZñ	
00000000001E0060	3F 80 85 04 6C 03 22 B6 79 45 01 93 6B 30 CF BB ?...l."lyE..k<I»	
00000000001E0070	67 AF DE 38 B 27 6A DC g`b8.î.ð>....'jü	
00000000001E0080	E7 B1 68 1C 3 B1 B9 B2 ç+h.\p.%YK.yâ±'*	
00000000001E0090	C7 1F 3B 5C 7 AC 1F 7A Ç.;\..î;öB`vPg~z	
00000000001E00A0	CD 55 61 93 08 E8 0A B6 79 71 B3 A0 0F 01 CE B2 ÎUa..è.Ïyq*..î*	
00000000001E00B0	C7 A0 53 49 9C 66 C2 91 96 89 14 D3 47 AC FD 4B Ç SI.fÄ....ÖG-ÿK	
00000000001E00C0	E7 81 45 21 6E 93 EC 85 6E C5 23 15 01 21 F4 04 Ç.E!n.i.nÄ#..;/ö.	
00000000001E00D0	8B 29 4C E2 C1 1F A3 B7 86 01 04 C9 0D 20 5A F1 È)LÄÄ.f...E.+Zñ	
00000000001E00E0	F4 B1 E4 04 65 95 CA 99 9D A1 84 FF 60 40 CA E6 ô±ä.e.É...i.y'FÈæ	
00000000001E00F0	57 3A BD C4 D5 00 8A 99 BB 10 0E ED 7D B7 6A F3 W:%ÄÖ...»...i}·jó	
00000000001E0100	AB 00 56 44 93 F1 1B A2 F2 BD 23 2B 54 B1 A2 79 «.VD.ñ.ç0%#T±çy	
00000000001E0110	B1 74 CB 28 5B 2D DB 08 27 89 14 7C 61 B0 F6 9D ±tÈ([-0.'...|a»ö.	

Address	Hex	ASCII
00000000001E0000	48 8B C4 48 89 58 18 48 89 68 20 56 57 41 54 41 H.Ä.H.X.H.h VWATA	
00000000001E0010	56 41 57 48 83 EC 20 33 DB 48 8B F1 48 8B 09 44 VAWH.î 30H.ñH..D	
00000000001E0020	8B F3 89 58 08 8B EB 89 58 10 48 8B B9 55 01 00 .ó.X..ë.X.H.'X..	
00000000001E0030	00 4C 8B A1 70 01 00 00 48 81 C1 C0 00 00 00 E8 .L.ip...H.ÄA...è	
00000000001E0040	4C 01 00 00 4C 8D 4C 24 50 45 33 C0 33 D1 8D 4B L...L.L\$PE3Ä3Ö.K	
00000000001E0050	05 E8 41 01 00 00 85 C0 74 07 3D 04 00 00 C0 75 .èA...Ät.=...Äu	
00000000001E0060	53 65 48 8B 0C 25 60 00 00 00 33 D2 44 8B 44 24 SeH..%`...30D.D\$	
00000000001E0070	50 48 8B 49 70 FF 07 48 8B 58 48 8B 70 79 01 CC PH.IÖyxH.øH.Äu.î	
00000000001E0080	48 8B 0E 4C 0 E8 FE 00 H..L.yH.ÄA...èp.	
00000000001E0090	00 00 44 8B 8 8B D7 B9 .D.D\$PL.L\$Xh.x'	
00000000001E00A0	05 00 00 00 E0 E0 00 00 00 05 C0 74 61 3D 04 00 ....èi...Äta=.	
00000000001E00B0	00 C0 74 5A CC 33 C0 E9 B7 00 00 00 48 8B 4F 40 .ÄtZi3Äé...H.Oø	
00000000001E00C0	48 85 C9 74 1C 44 8B F3 EB 10 44 03 F0 48 8D 49 H.Ét.D.óè.D.øH.I	
00000000001E00D0	02 05 66 E3 F1 4A 44 0F AF F0 0F B7 01 85 C0 75 ..fãñJ.D.ð...Äu	
00000000001E00E0	E9 8B 07 8B D3 48 03 F8 48 8B 4F 40 EB 0E 03 D0 é...øH.øH.øè...øD	
00000000001E00F0	48 8D 49 02 05 66 E3 F1 4A 0F AF D0 0F B7 01 85 H.I...fãñJ.ð....	
00000000001E0100	C0 75 EB 8D 45 01 44 3B F2 0F 44 C5 8B E8 39 1F Äuè.E.D;ò.DÄ.è9.	
00000000001E0110	75 AA 65 48 8B 0C 25 60 00 00 00 4D 8B C7 33 D2 u`eH..%`...M.Ç3Ö	

Decryption stages

Before calling the decrypted code, the loader will perform one of a number of anti sandboxing checks.

AntiSandboxing/Analysis

DirectX DLL

One of the anti-sandboxing checks involves checking the installed graphics adapters to see if it is running in a sandboxed environment or not. This is achieved by importing the DLL `dxgi.dll`. The DLL is the DirectX Graphics Infrastructure library and is a core Windows DLL that provides functionality for interfacing with graphics hardware.

The exported function `CreateDXGIFactory` is called giving the loader a `IDXGIFactory` object. This allows the loader to enumerate information from the installed graphics adapters by calling `EnumAdapters`, followed by `GetDesc` from the `IDXGIAdapter` object to give a `DXGI_ADAPTER_DESC` struct.

```
typedef struct DXGI_ADAPTER_DESC
{
    WCHAR Description[ 128 ];
    UINT VendorId;
    UINT DeviceId;
    UINT SubSysId;
    UINT Revision;
    SIZE_T DedicatedVideoMemory;
    SIZE_T DedicatedSystemMemory;
    SIZE_T SharedSystemMemory;
    LUID AdapterLuid;
} DXGI_ADAPTER_DESC;
```

From these structs is parsed the `VendorId`, and it is compared against three values that form a vendor whitelist.

ID	Vendor
8086	Intel
10DE	Nvidia
1002	AMD

This anti-sandboxing technique has been observed in previous malwares, namely [Furtim in 2016](#) and [Invalid Printer Loader in 2023](#). BabbleLoader takes additional measures to hide the vendor ID numbers through using a simple XOR key and a few assembly instructions. The instructions are separated by a large amount of junk code so as to hide the values when statically analyzing the sample in a disassembler.

```
mov     [rsp+1FF48h+nvidiaId], 0E8185136h
...
//Junk
...
mmov   eax, [rsp+1FF48h+nvidiaId]
xor    eax, 0E81841E8h
mov    [rsp+1FF48h+nvidiaId], eax
...
```

```
//Junk
...
mov    eax, [rsp+1FF48h+nvidiaId]
cmp    [rsp+1FF48h+vendorId], eax
```

The decoded value (Nvidia Vendor ID) is shown below:

I. Input: hexadecimal (base 16) ▾

e8185136

II. Input: hexadecimal (base 16) ▾

e81841e8

Calculate XOR

III. Output: hexadecimal (base 16) ▾

10de

XOR to derive VendorID

VDLL Function

Another form of anti-sandboxing comes in the form of a VDLL check to combat Windows Defender’s Antivirus Emulator. To start this check, BabbleLoader, in a similar manner to how it deobfuscates strings to dynamically resolve functions, will decode two DLLs with exports.

The first check is to get `kernel32.dll` and look for the proc address for `MpSwitchToNextThread_WithCheck`. The second check is `ntdll.dll` with the export of `MpDispatchException`.

<pre>0000000140001D4C EB BA 0000000140001D4E 48:804C24 40 0000000140001D53 FF15 77861800 0000000140001D59 48:805424 68 0000000140001D5E 48:8BC8 0000000140001D67 FF15 59861800 0000000140001D67 48:898424 98000000 0000000140001D6F C74424 24 9A875B37 0000000140001D77 C74424 20 00000000 0000000140001D7F 48:8D4424 30 0000000140001D84 48:894424 28 0000000140001D89 48:834424 20 0000000140001D8E 48:83F8 0A 0000000140001D92 73 3B</pre>	<pre>jmp loader.140001D08 lea rcx,qword ptr ss:[rsp+40] call qword ptr ds:[<&GetModuleHandlea] lea rdx,qword ptr ss:[rsp+68] mov rcx,rax call qword ptr ss:[<&GetProcAddress>] mov qword ptr ss:[rsp+98],rax mov dword ptr ss:[rsp+24],375B879A mov dword ptr ss:[rsp+20],0 lea rax,qword ptr ss:[rsp+30] mov qword ptr ss:[rsp+28],rax movsxd rax,dword ptr ss:[rsp+20] cmp rax,A jae loader.140001DC9</pre>	<pre>rcx:"kernel32.dll" [rsp+28]: "MpSwitchToNextThread_WithCheck" A:'\n'</pre>
---	--	---

Call of emulated function

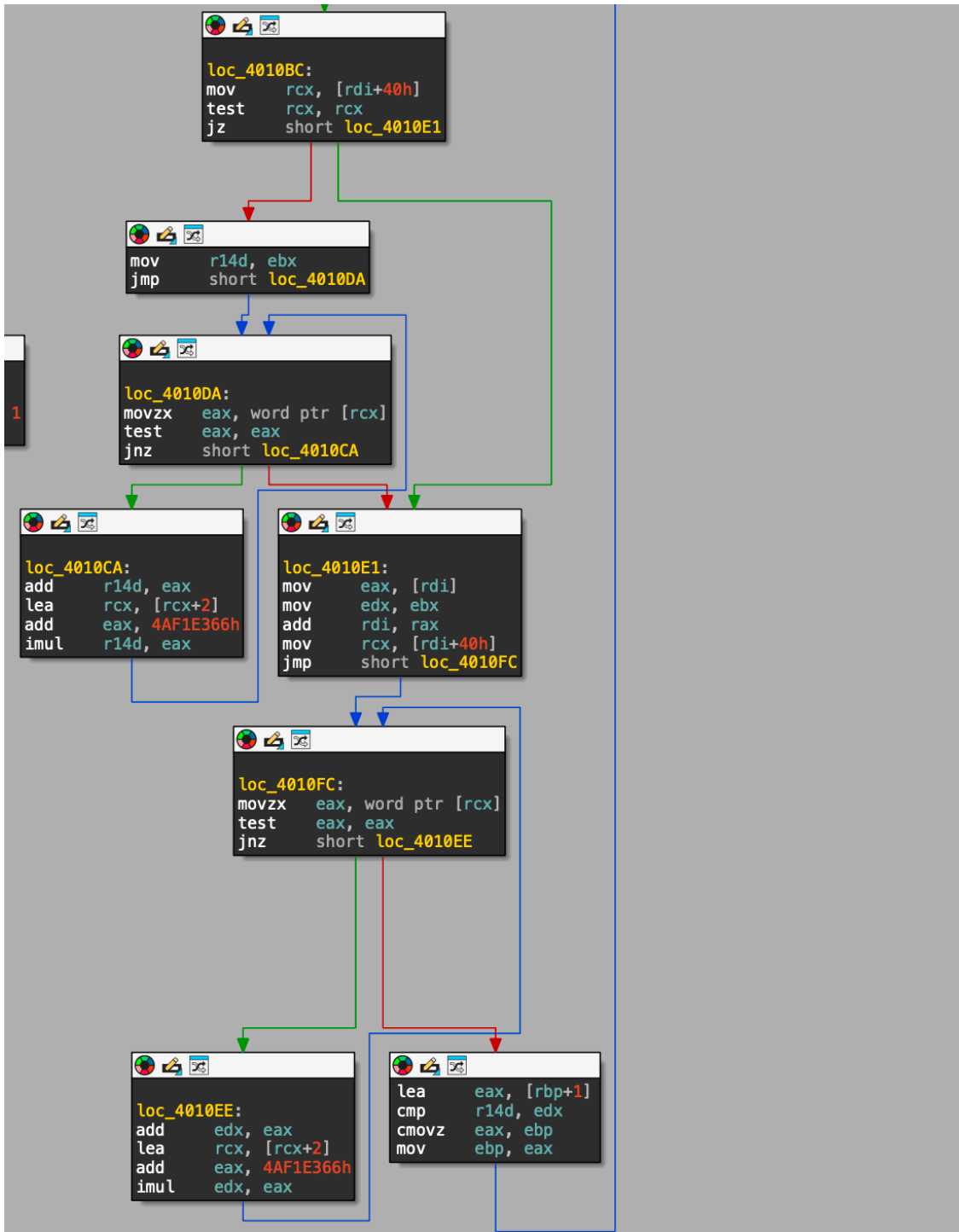
If any of the `GetProcAddress` calls are successful, it will set a variable for the loader to exit later. A successful import of any of these calls will indicate that the loader is being emulated by Windows Defender. This is because these exports only exist in VDLLs, which are modified Windows system DLLs available only in the emulator for Defender. This technique has been used by [Raspberry Robin previously](#), and suggests that the loader developer is able to incorporate new technical research around antivirus and sandboxing internals.

Unique process count

When the shellcode payload that is stored in the mapped memory of the newly created section is executed, it performs another anti sandboxing check, this time based on the running processes in the machine.

This is achieved first by calling `NtQuerySystemInformation`, previously dynamically resolved from `ntdll.dll`. Getting the `SystemProcessInformation` class. This returns an array of `SYSTEM_PROCESS_INFORMATION` structures, one for each process running in the system.

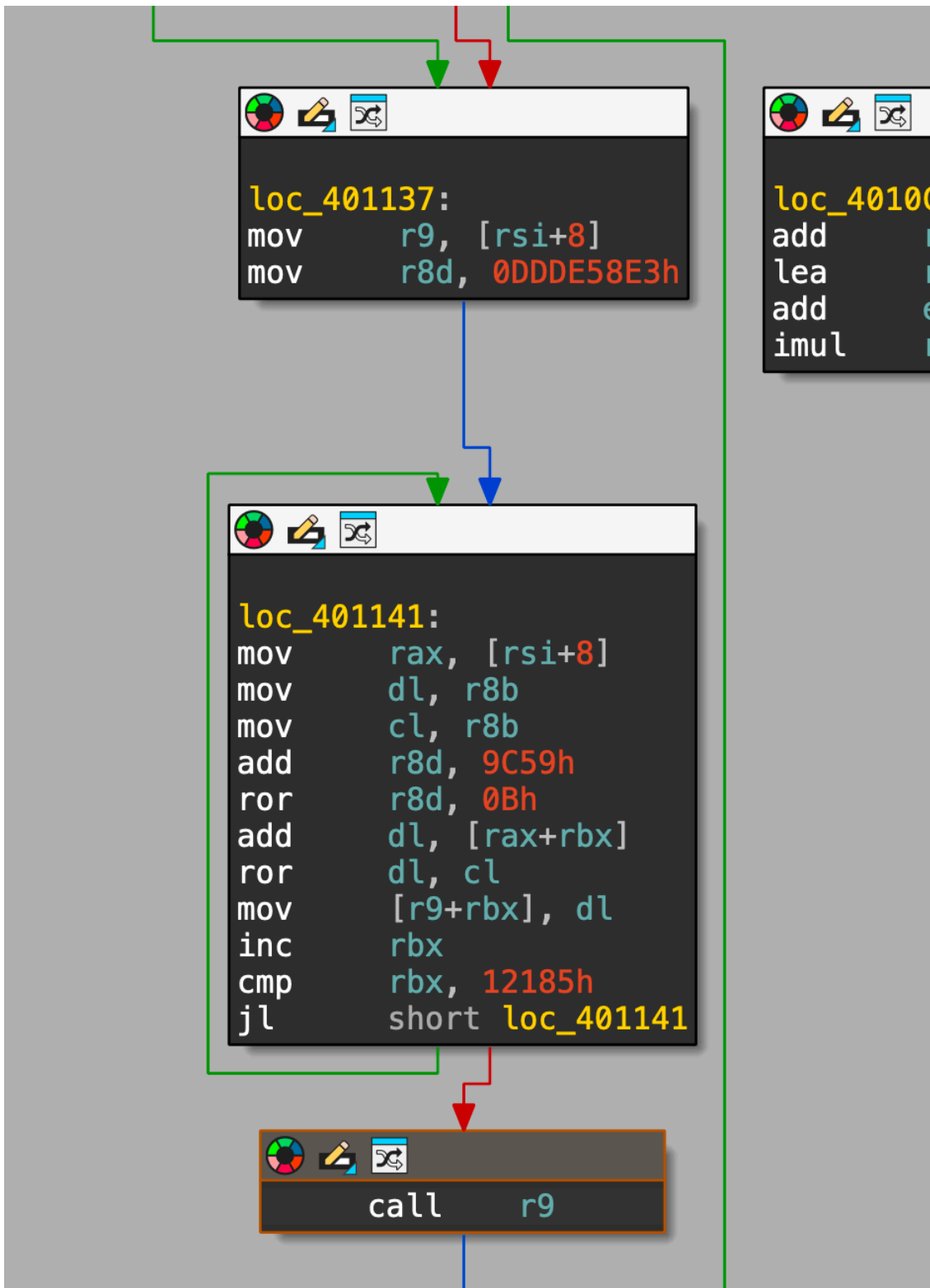
The process name for each process in the array is gathered and hashed as a checksum, and compared with the hash of the name of the process next in the array. A counter is incremented with each iteration, but if the checksums match, the counter is reduced by one. Giving the number of processes with unique names running.



Checksum counter

The counter is compared to check if there are at least 85 unique processes running on the machine. With the assumption that a true infected computer would have more running processes rather than a sandbox or emulator that is trying to be as lightweight as possible to reduce noise and costs. This technique has been employed by other malware also, such as [Latrodectus](#).

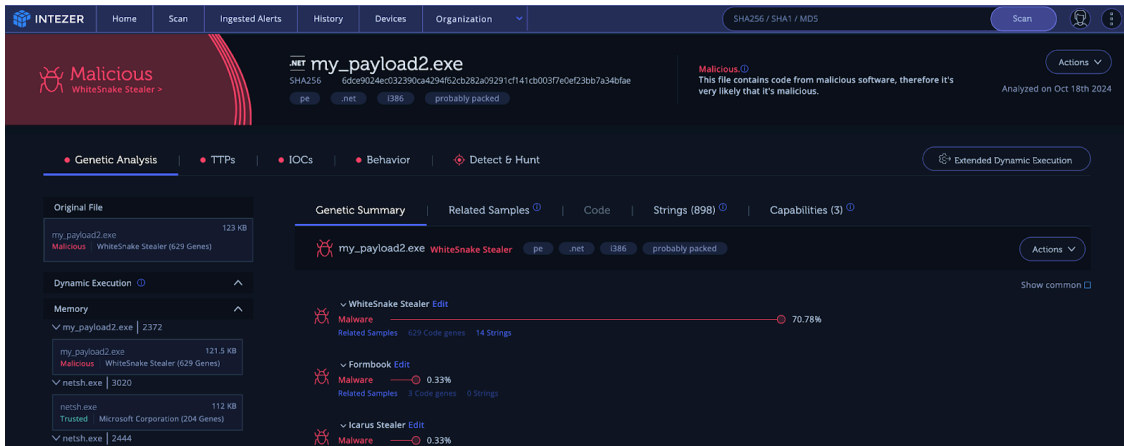
When the check has passed, the next stage of the payload will be decoded and executed.



Second stage of decryption

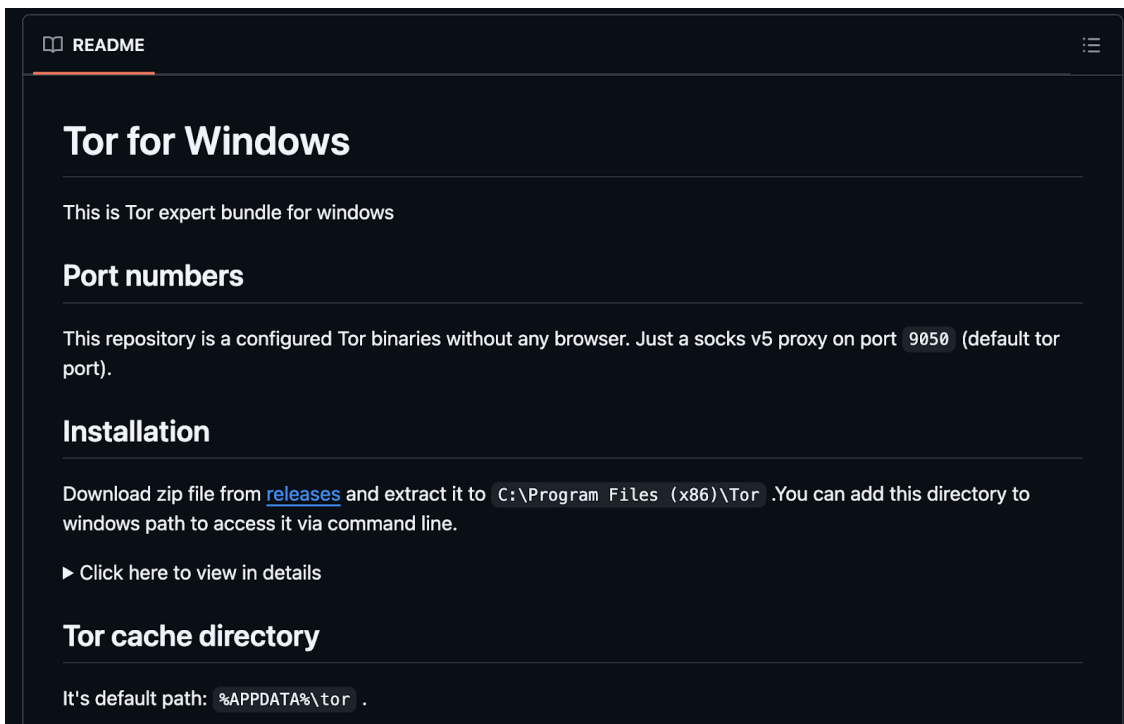
Donut Loader and Payload

The next stage in this chain is a [Donut loader](#). This is used to unpack and execute the final payload in memory. Donut loaders have been used by many different malware and threat groups in their operations. The payload in this sample is a [WhiteSnake stealer](#).



WhiteSnake Payload

This payload has a very interesting method of communication with its Command and Control (C2) server over TOR. The C2 communication is described in further detail in a blog from [JFrog in 2023](#), but instead of downloading from the official TOR Project website. The payload is downloaded from [this github repository](#).



Open source project downloaded by WhiteSnake

In other samples, Meduza stealer has also been observed. There may be other stealer payloads delivered that have not been observed yet.

Considerations for Defense

The use of loaders is a long-standing technique incorporated by threat actors. In order for modern day threat actors to have any success against the many layers of detection employed by security vendors, they too must incorporate multiple layers of defense within their own builds. It is a never ending arms race between attacker and defender.

Each side imposing increasing costs on the other in a frantic effort to come out on top, no matter how short that time period may be.

The better that the loaders can protect the ultimate payloads, the less resources threat actors will need to expend in order to rotate burned infrastructure. BabbleLoader takes measures to protect against as many forms of detection that it can, in order to compete in a crowded loader/crypiter market. The types of protection utilized protect the loader against hash, rule, genetic, static, dynamic, and AI forms of detection, imposing costs upon security vendors in the hope that the cost of detection will be so high that it will cause security vendors to overlook analyzing these files.

The developer behind this loader demonstrates an active engagement with current security research, rapidly integrating new techniques to enhance evasion capabilities. For instance, recent anti-sandboxing features reflect insights from research on Windows Defender presented by white-hat experts at Black Hat, allowing the loader to better evade detection by Microsoft's defenses. This adaptability shows a strategic commitment to keeping the loader ahead of evolving security tools by adopting the latest innovations in bypass techniques, making it more resilient and harder to detect with each new build.

Many security vendors will look at using AI to help in future cases with combating these loaders. The loaders of the future are already well equipped in this fight. The loader's layered obfuscation tactics pose a formidable challenge for AI-based defenses. These techniques flood the AI with irrelevant tokens and misleading patterns, making it difficult to distinguish meaningful actions from noise. Each layer of complexity forces the AI to process massive amounts of data, drastically increasing computational and financial costs. By weaponizing this volume and variability, the loader effectively undermines AI's pattern recognition and analysis capabilities, pushing the limits of automated detection systems.

There is no signs of slowing down in the pace in the thriving loader market.

IOCs

BabbleLoader:

052c776fdc9700dfb37f964a73d461a57efad30a01bcf54505d7abcd601e6ff3

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WhiteSnake Stealer:

6dce9024ec032390ca4294f62cb282a09291cf141cb003f7e0ef23bb7a34bfae

Source: <https://intezer.com/blog/research/babble-babble-babble-babble-babble-babbleloader/>