



From Thousands of Hours to a Couple of Minutes: Towards Automating Exploit Generation for Arbitrary Types of Kernel Vulnerabilities



JD.COM



PennState



- Wei Wu [@wu_xiao_wei](#)
 - Visiting scholar at JD.com
 - Conducting research on software security in Enterprise Settings
 - Visiting Scholar at Penn State University
 - Vulnerability analysis
 - Reverse engineering
 - Memory forensics
 - Symbolic execution
 - Malware dissection
 - Static analysis
- Final year PhD candidate at UCAS
 - Knowledge-driven vulnerability analysis
- Co-founder of CTF team Never Stop Exploiting.(2015)
 - ctftime 2017 ranking 4th team in China
- I am on market.

NSA Codebreaker Challenge

University

Carnegie Mellon University

Lafayette College

University of Hawaii

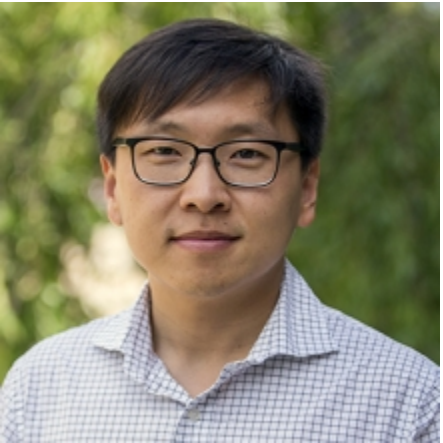
Pennsylvania State University

Georgia Institute of Technology

China

Position	Country position	Name	Points	Events
21	1	eee	365.576	16
24	2	A*0*E	332.972	6
27	3	0ops	278.460	18
30	4	Never Stop Exploiting	247.073	9
34	5	Azure Assassin Alliance	235.876	25

Xinyu Xing



- Visiting scholar at JD.com
 - Conducting research on software and hardware security in Enterprise Settings
- Assistant Professor at Penn State University
 - Advising PhD students and conducting many research projects on
 - Vulnerability identification
 - Vulnerability analysis
 - Exploit development facilitation
 - Memory forensics
 - Deep learning for software security
 - Binary analysis
 - ...

• Jimmy Su



Head of JD security research center

- Vulnerability identification and exploitation in Enterprise Settings
- Red Team
- JD IoT device security assessments
- Risk control
- Data security
- Container security

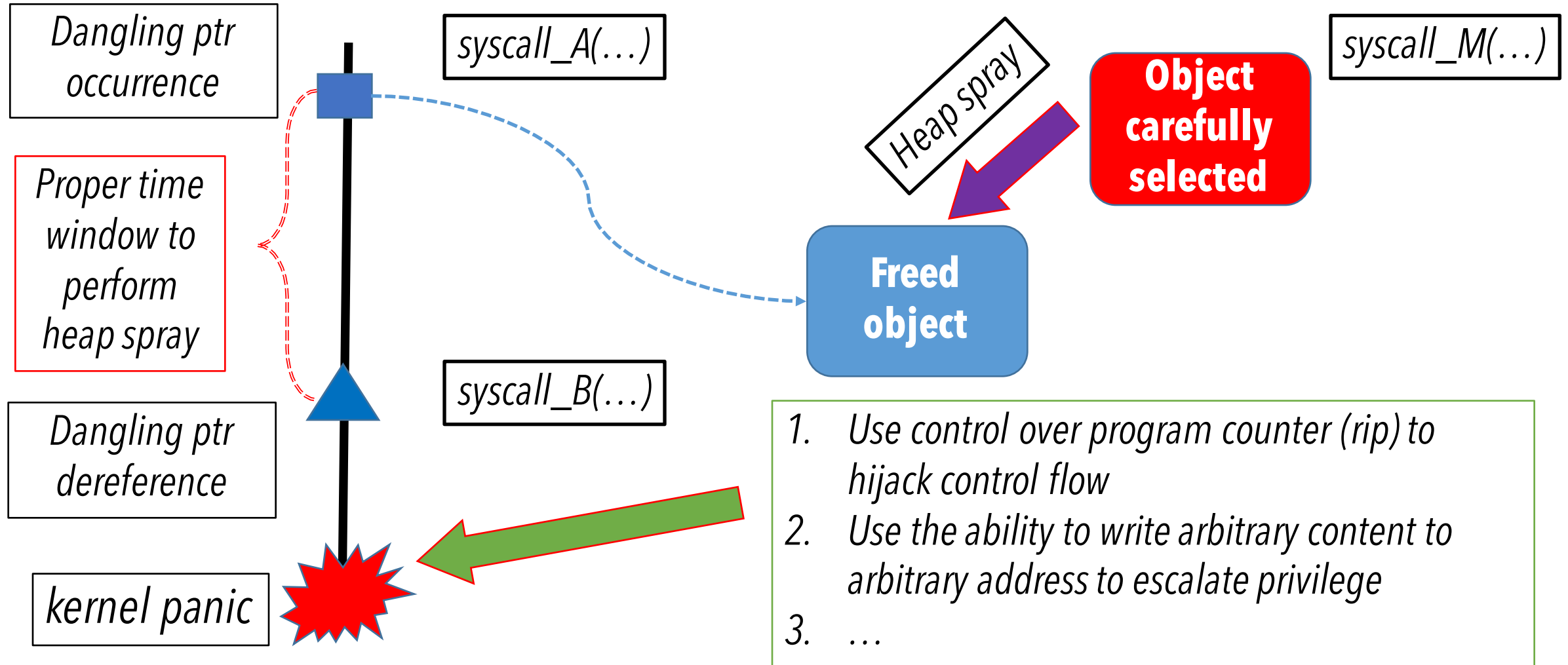
What are We Talking about?

- Discuss the challenge of exploit development
- Introduce an automated approach to facilitate exploit development
- Demonstrate how the new technique facilitate mitigation circumvention

- All software contain bugs, and # of bugs grows with the increase of software complexity
 - E.g., Syzkaller/Syzbot reports 800+ Linux kernel bugs in 8 months
- Due to the lack of manpower, it is very rare that a software development team could patch all the bugs timely
 - E.g., A Linux kernel bug could be patched in a single day or more than 8 months; on average, it takes 42 days to fix one kernel bug
- The best strategy for software development team is to prioritize their remediation efforts for bug fix
 - E.g. based on its influence upon usability
 - E.g., based on its influence upon software security
 - E.g., based on the types of the bugs
 -

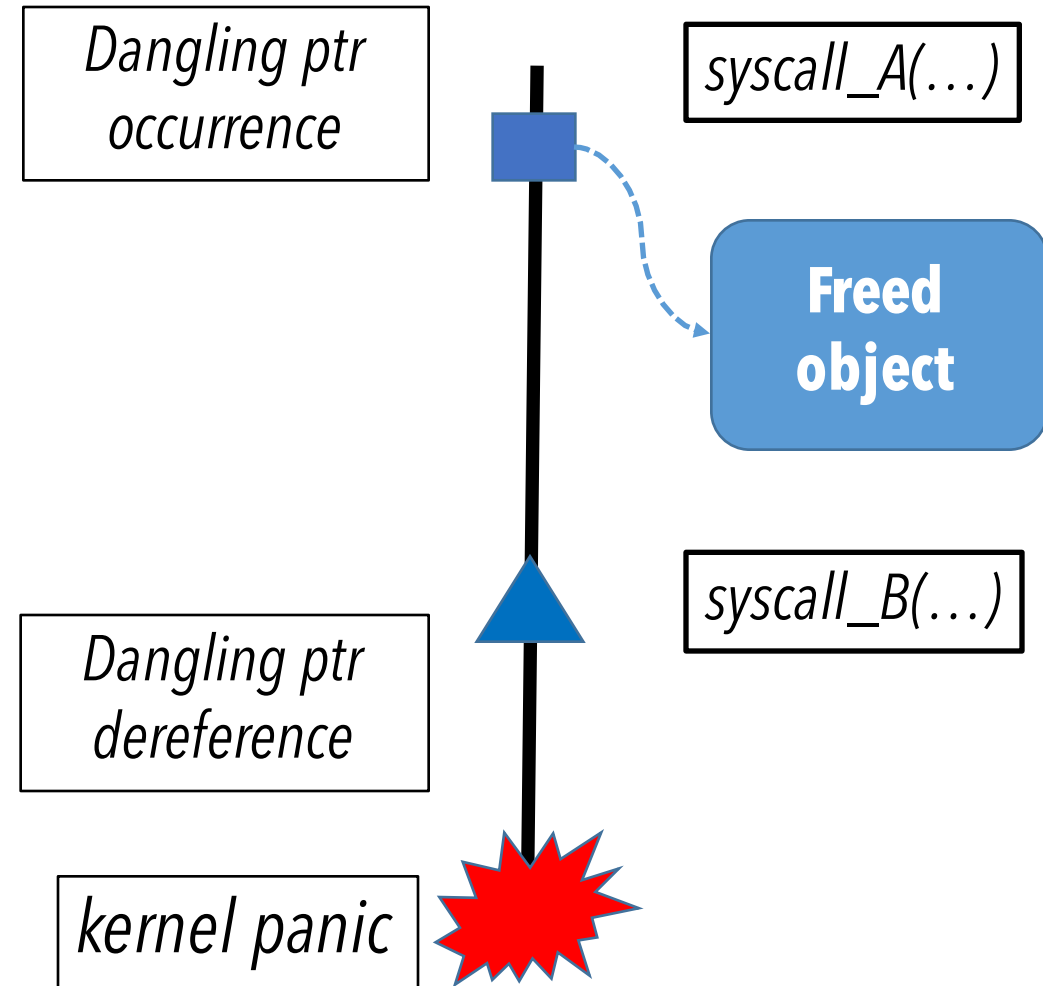
- Most common strategy is to fix a bug based on its exploitability
- To determine the exploitability of a bug, analysts generally have to write a working exploit, which needs
 - 1) Significant manual efforts
 - 2) Sufficient security expertise
 - 3) Extensive experience in target software

Crafting an Exploit for Kernel Use-After-Free

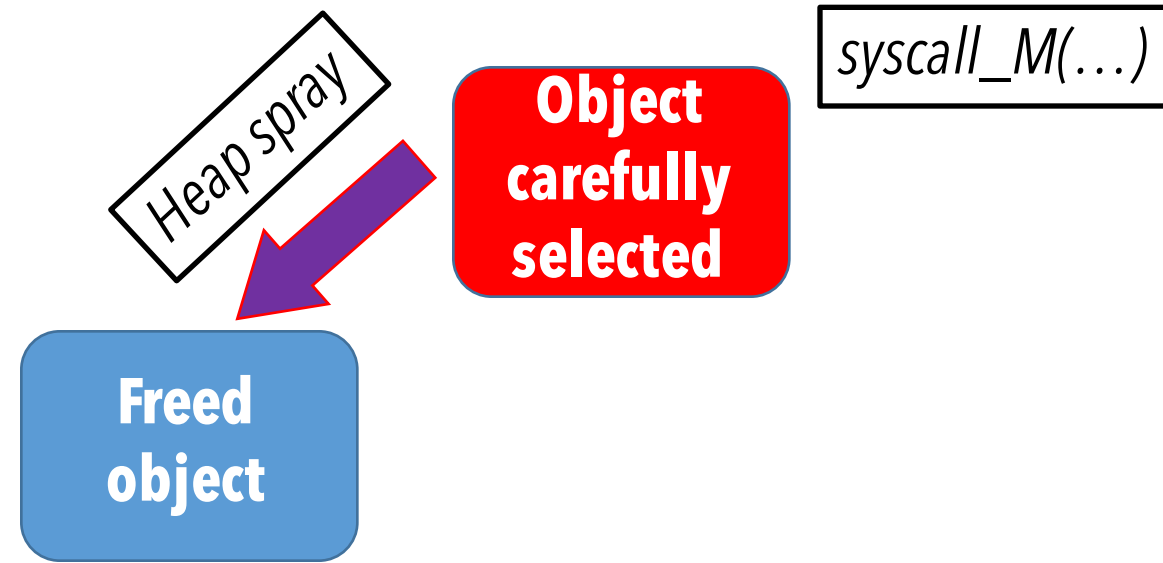


Challenge 1: Needs Intensive Manual Efforts

- Analyze the kernel panic
- Manually track down
 1. The site of dangling pointer occurrence and the corresponding system call
 2. The site of dangling pointer dereference and the corresponding system call



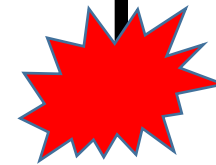
- Identify all the candidate objects that can be sprayed to the region of the freed object
- Pinpoint the proper system calls that allow an analyst to perform heap spray
- Figure out the proper arguments and context for the system call to allocate the candidate objects



Challenge 3: Needs Security Expertise

- Find proper approaches to accomplish arbitrary code execution or privilege escalation or memory leakage
 - E.g., chaining ROP
 - E.g., crafting shellcode
 - ...

1. *Use control over program counter (rip) to perform arbitrary code execution*
2. *Use the ability to write arbitrary content to arbitrary address to escalate privilege*
3. ...



kernel panic

- Approaches for Challenge 1
 - Nothing I am aware of, but simply extending KASAN could potentially solve this problem
- Approaches for Challenge 2
 - [Blackhat07] [Blackhat15] [USENIX-SEC18]
- Approaches for Challenge 3
 - [NDSS'11] [S&P16], [S&P17]

[NDSS11] Avgerinos et al., AEG: Automatic Exploit Generation.

[Blackhat 15] Xu et al., Ah! Universal android rooting is back.

[S&P16] Shoshitaishvili et al., Sok:(state of) the art of war: Offensive techniques in binary analysis.

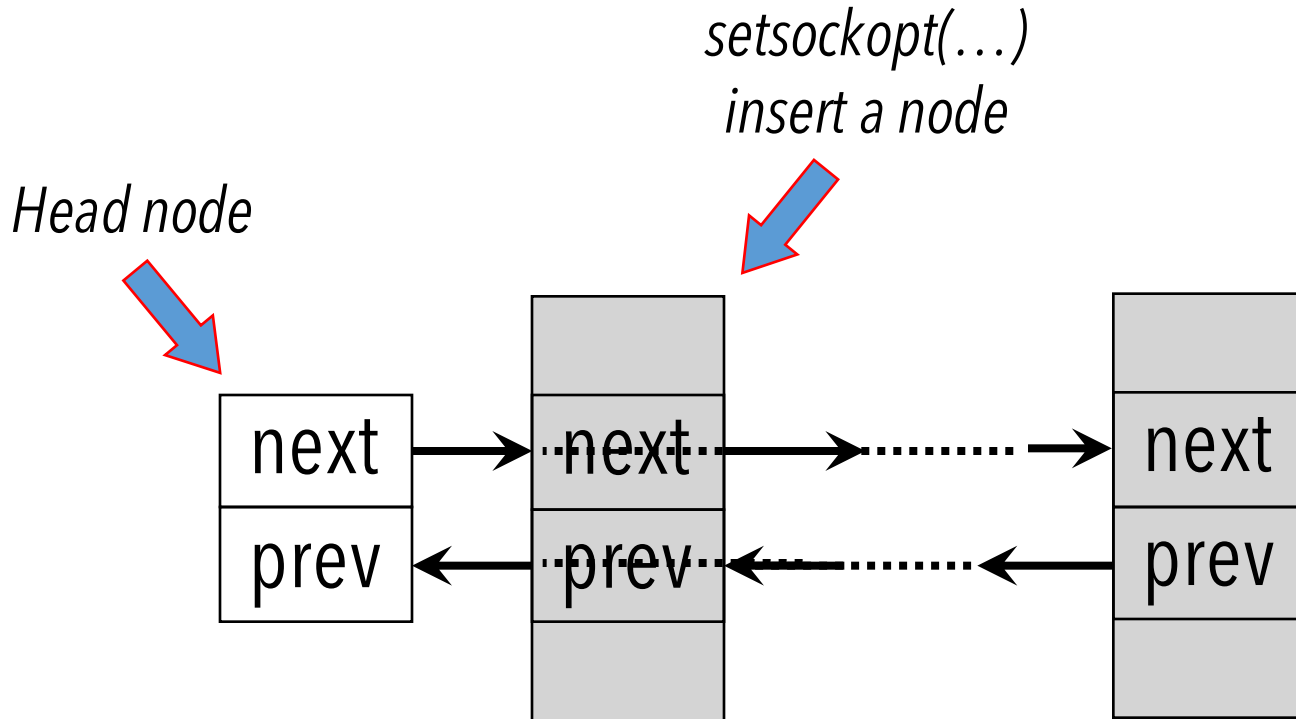
[USENIX-SEC18] Heelan et al., Automatic Heap Layout Manipulation for Exploitation.

[S&P17] Bao et al., Your Exploit is Mine: Automatic Shellcode Transplant for Remote Exploits.

[Blackhat07] Sotirov, Heap Feng Shui in JavaScript



- Unsolved challenges in exploitation facilitation
- Our techniques -- FUZE
- Demonstration with real-world Linux kernel vulnerabilities
- Conclusion

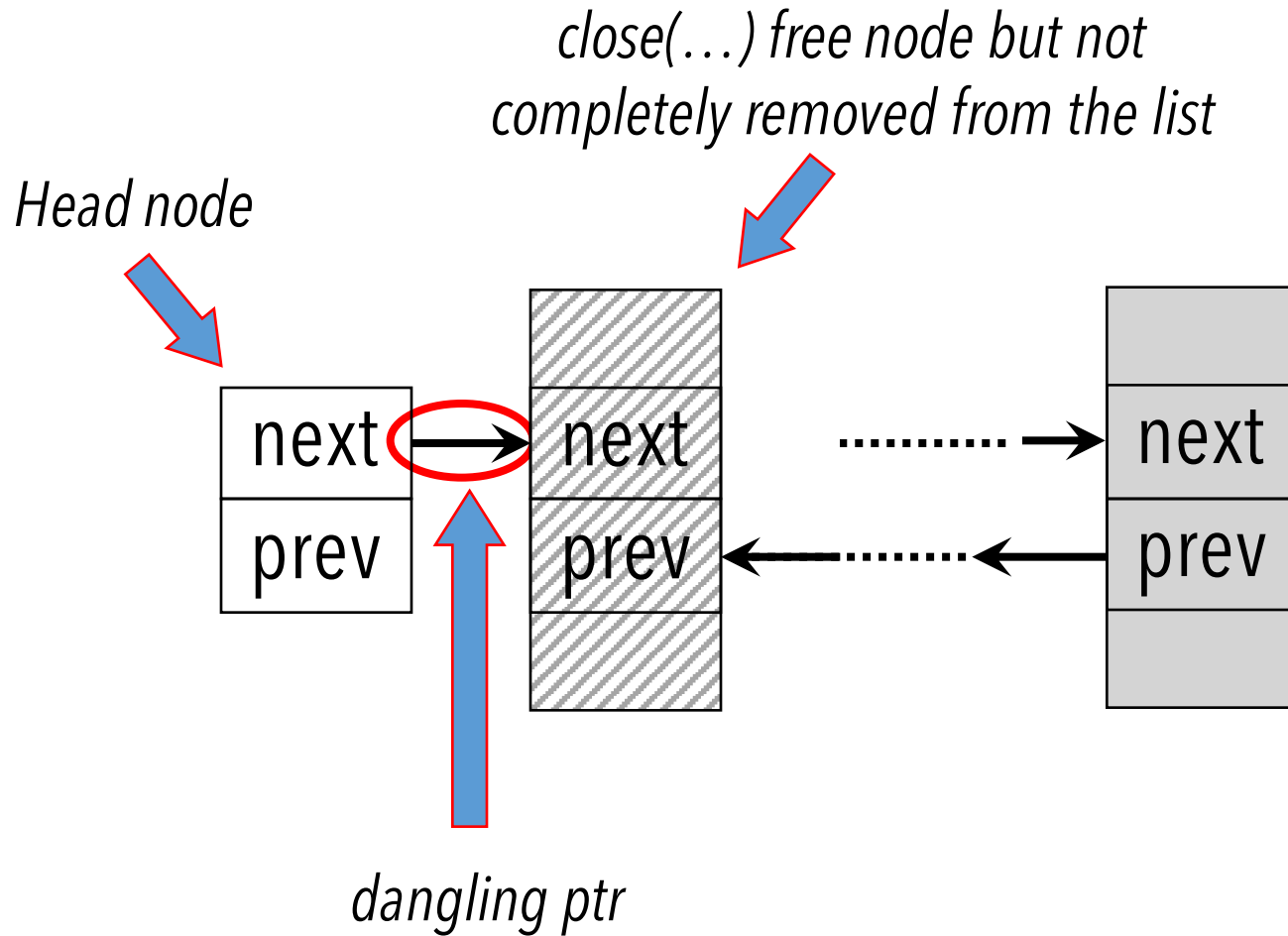


```

1 void *task1(void *unused) {
2     ...
3     int err = setsockopt(fd, 0x107, 18,
4         ...);
5 }
6 void *task2(void *unused) {
7     int err = bind(fd, &addr, ...);
8 }
9
10 void loop_race() {
11     ...
12     while(1) {
13         fd = socket(AF_PACKET, SOCK_RAW,
14             htons(ETH_P_ALL));
15         ...
16         //create two racing threads
17         pthread_create(&thread1, NULL,
18             task1, NULL);
19         pthread_create(&thread2, NULL,
20             task2, NULL);
21
22         pthread_join(thread1, NULL);
23         pthread_join(thread2, NULL);
24         close(fd);
25     }
26 }

```


A Real-World Example (CVE 2017-15649)

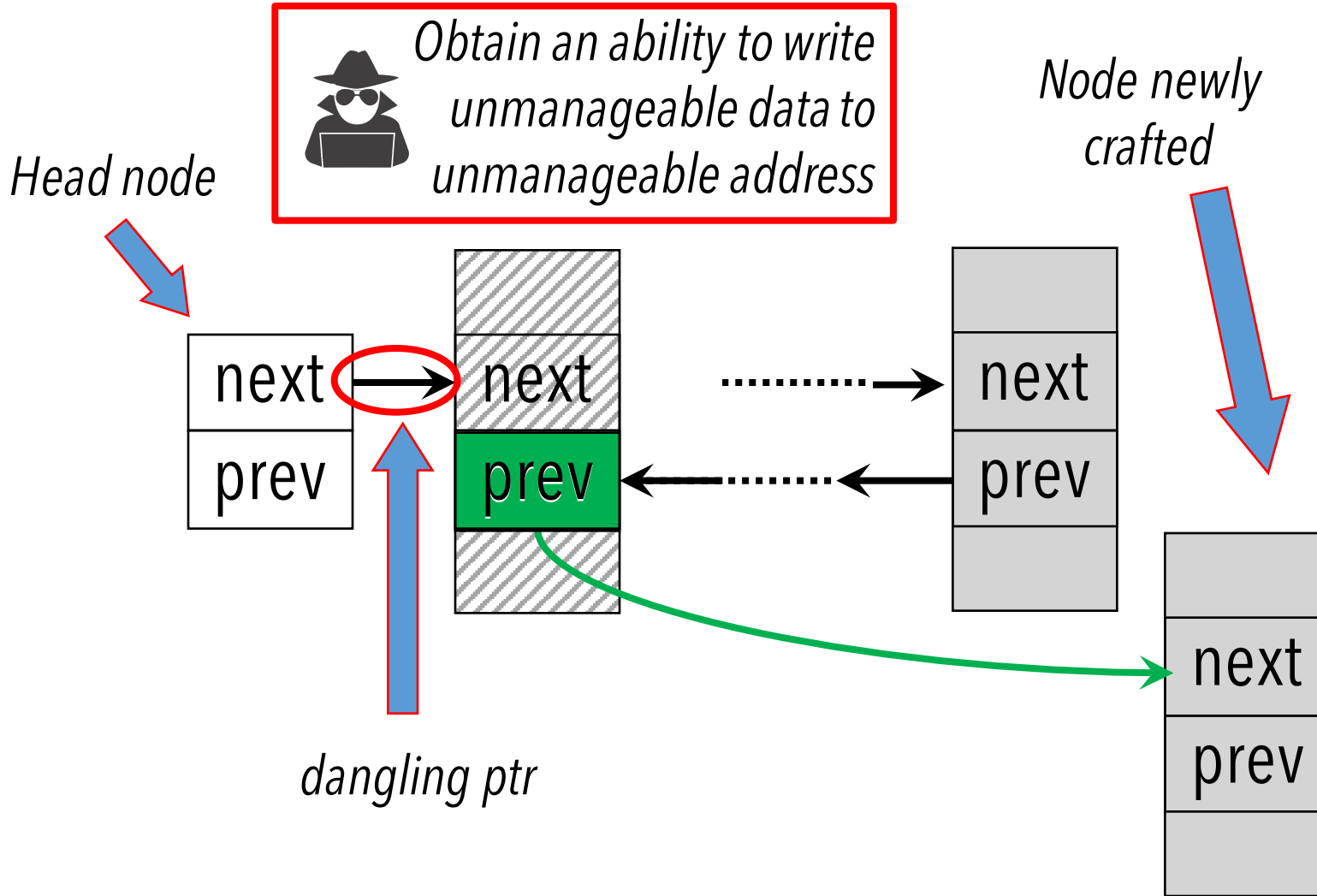


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25 }

```

Challenge 4: No Primitive Needed for Exploitation

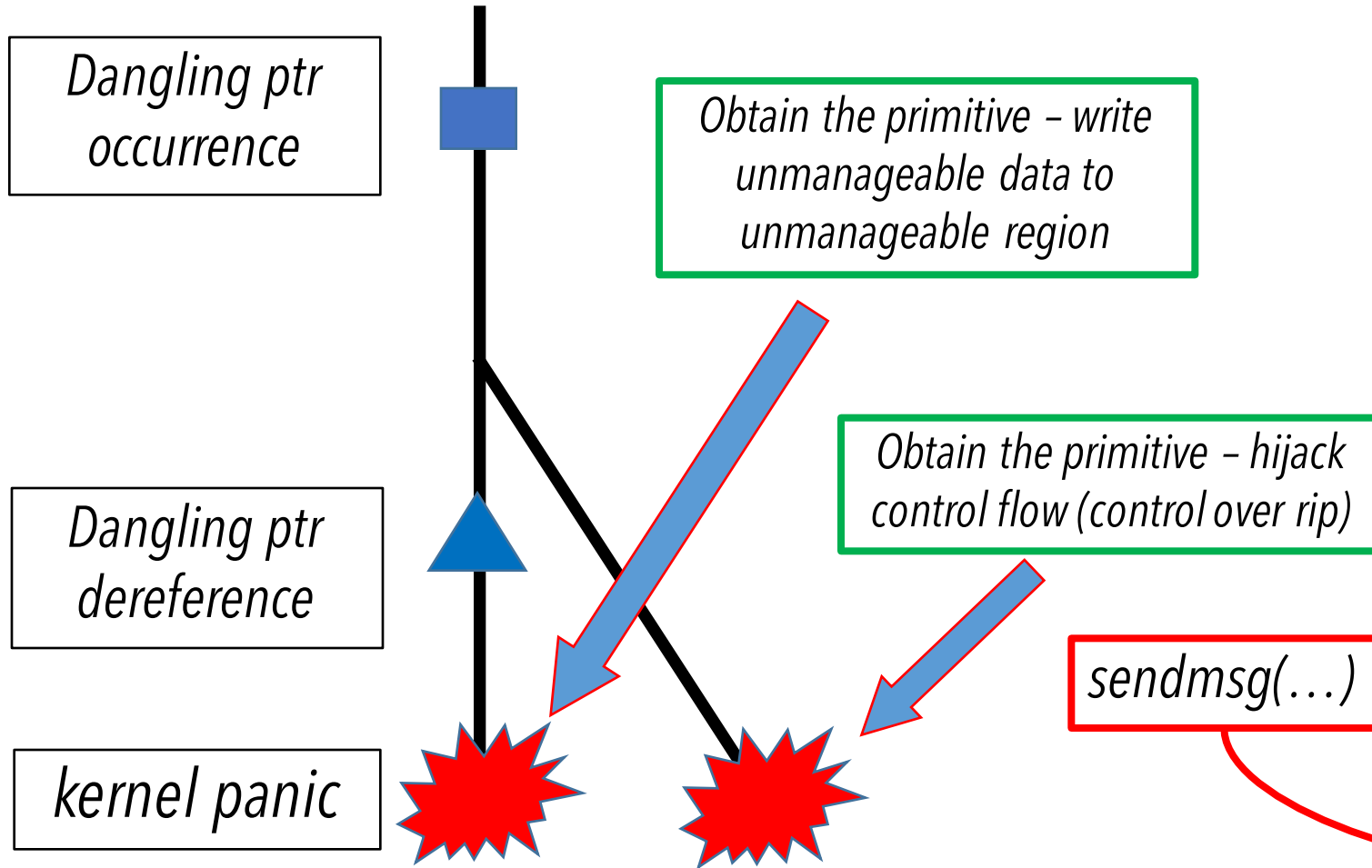


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```

No Useful Primitive == Unexploitable??



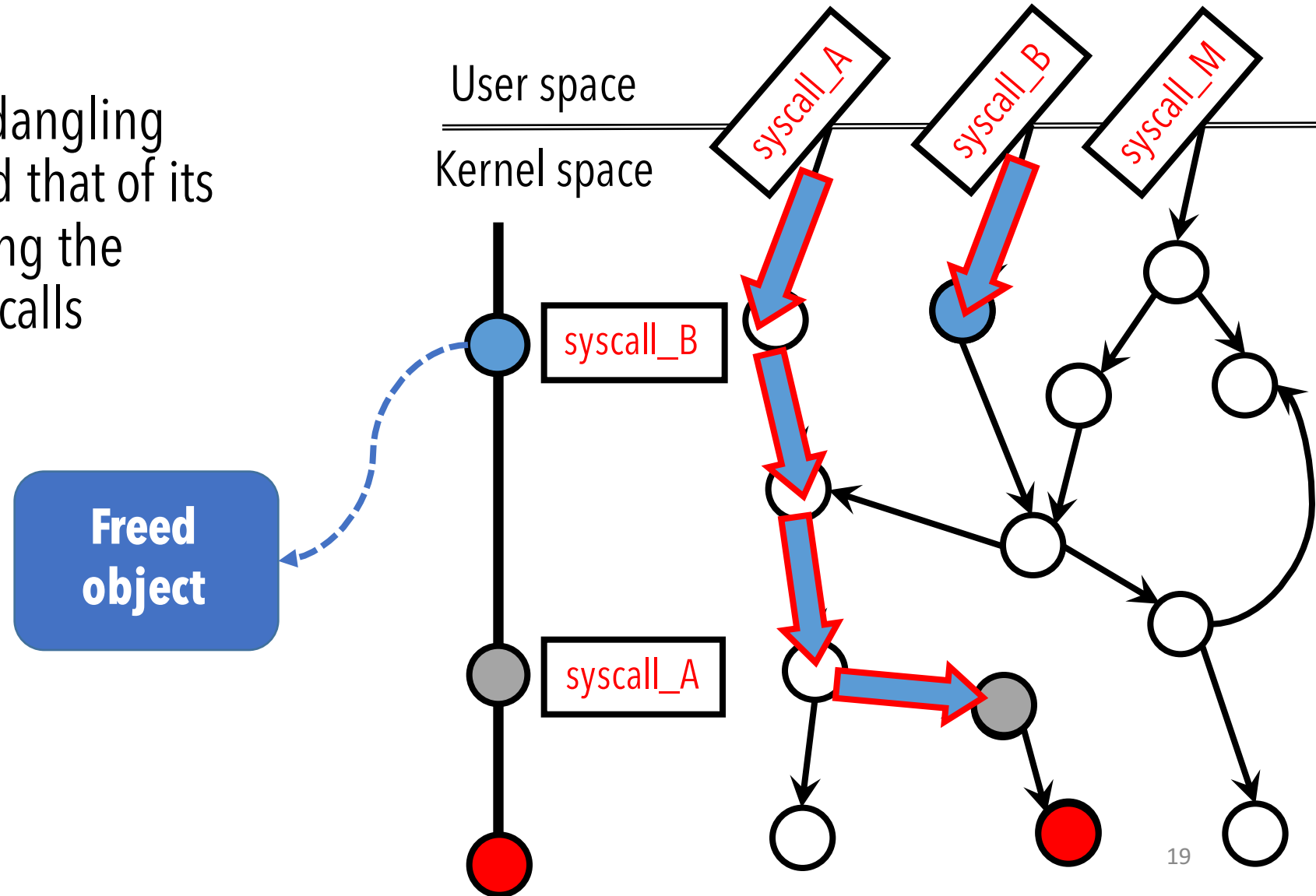
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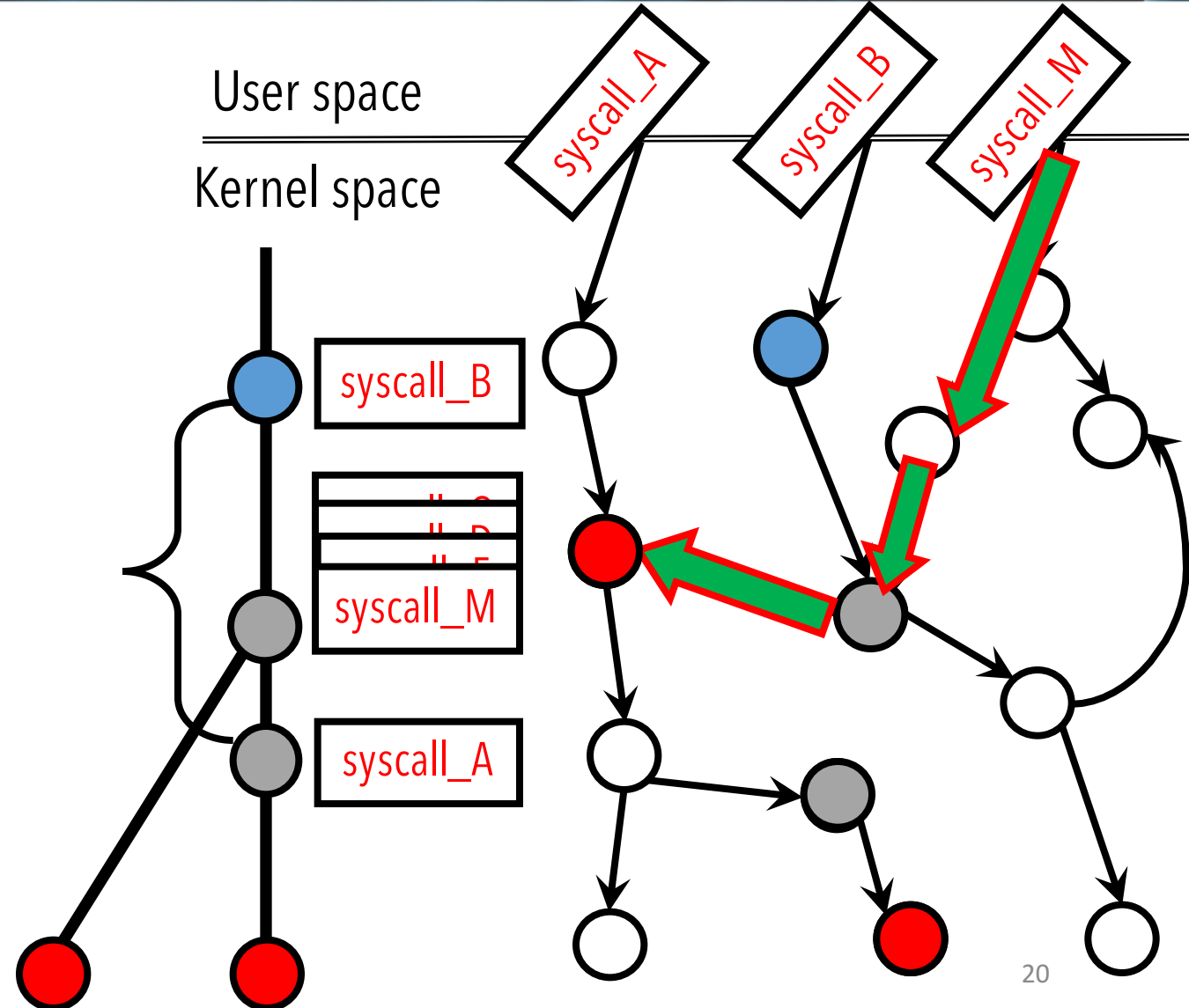
```


- Unsolved challenges in exploitation facilitation
- Our techniques -- FUZE
- Evaluation with real-world Linux kernel vulnerabilities
- Conclusion

- Identifying the site of dangling pointer occurrence, and that of its dereference; pinpointing the corresponding system calls



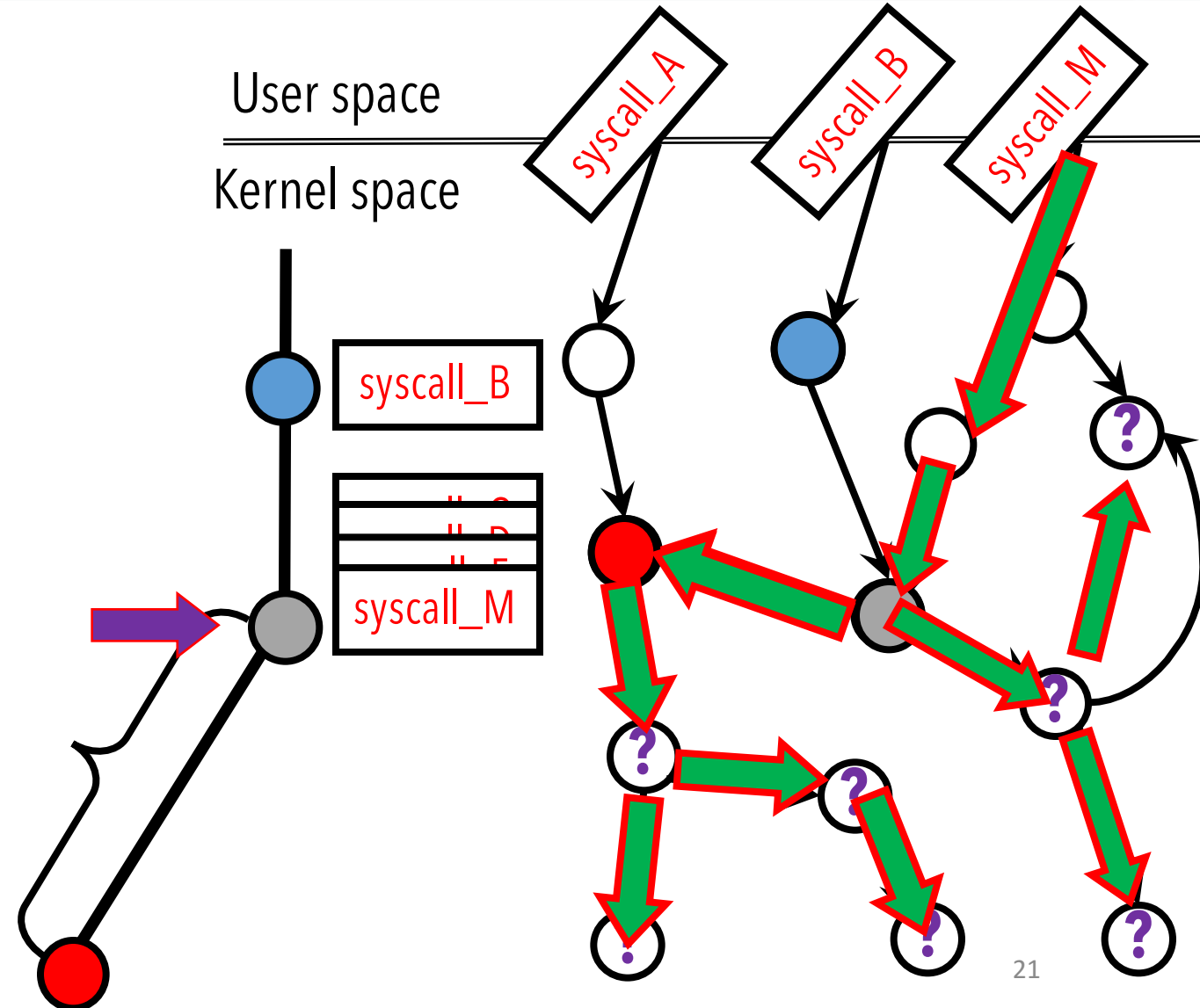
- Identifying the site of dangling pointer occurrence, and that of its dereference; pinpointing the corresponding system calls
- Performing kernel fuzzing between the two sites and exploring other panic contexts (i.e., different sites where the vulnerable object is dereferenced)

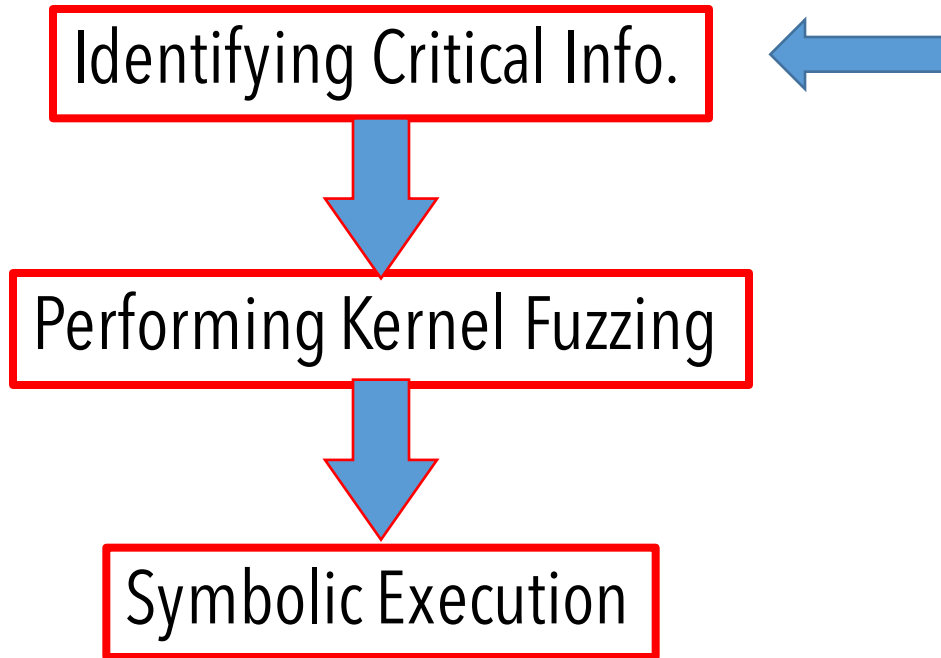


- Identifying the site of dangling pointer occurrence, and that of its dereference; pinpointing the corresponding system calls
- Performing kernel fuzzing between the two sites and exploring other panic contexts (i.e., different sites where the vulnerable object is dereferenced)
- Symbolically execute at the sites of the dangling pointer dereference

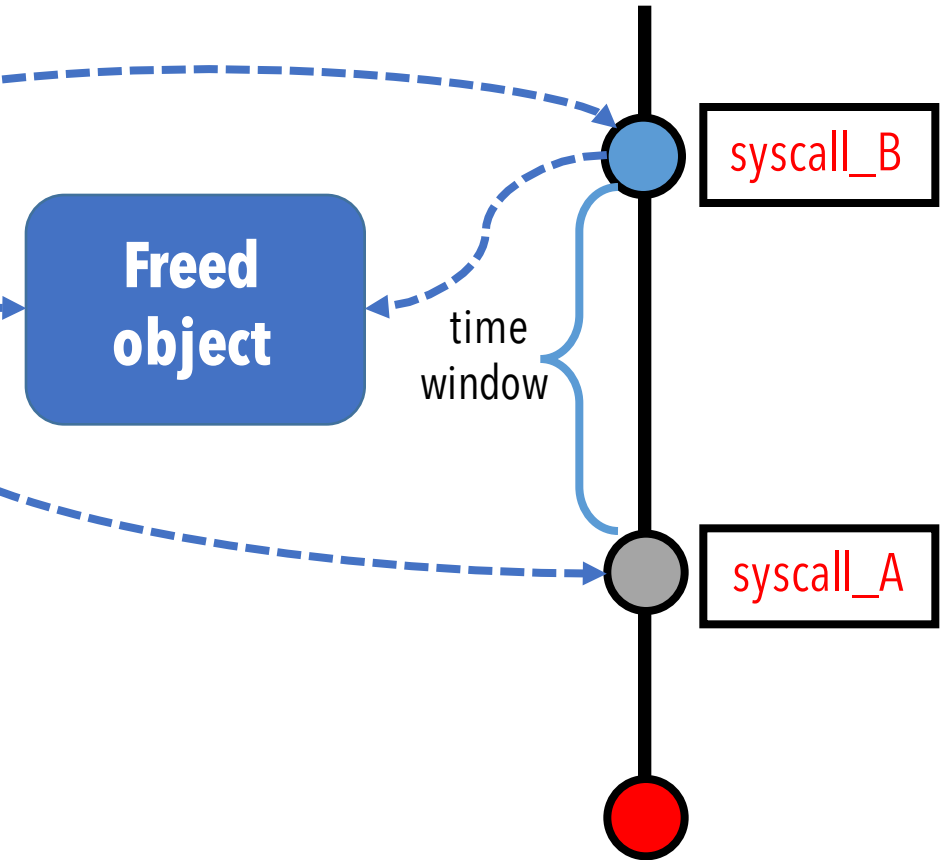
**Freed
object**

Set symbolic value
for each byte





- Goal: identifying following critical information
 - Vulnerable object
 - Free site
 - Dereference site
 - Syscalls in PoC tied to corresponding free and dereference
 - Time window between free and dereference
- Methodology:
 - Instrument the PoC with ftrace and generate ftrace log
 - instrument kernel with KASAN
 - Combining both ftrace and KASAN log for analysis



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- Methodology:
 - Instrument the PoC with ftrace[1] and generate ftrace log
 - instrument kernel with KASAN[2]
 - Combining both ftrace and KASAN log for analysis

Unique ID for each
syscall in PoC

```
void *task1(void *unused) {  
    ...  
    write_ftrace_marker(1);  
    int err = setsockopt(...);  
    write_ftrace_marker(1);  
}  
void *task2(void *unused) {  
    write_ftrace_marker(2);  
    int err = bind(...);  
    write_ftrace_marker(2);  
}  
...  
void loop_race(){  
    ...  
}  
int main(){  
    ftrace_kmem_trace_enable();  
    loop_race();  
}
```

[1] ftrace. <https://www.kernel.org/doc/Documentation/trace/ftrace.txt>

[2] kasan. <https://github.com/google/kasan/wiki>

BUG: KASAN: use-after-free
in **dev_add_pack+0x304/0x310**
Write of size 8 at addr
ffff88003280ee70
by task poc/**2678**

Call Trace:

...
Allocated by task **7271**:
...(allocation trace)
Freed by task **2678**:
...(free trace)

The buggy address belongs
to the object at
ffff88003280e600
which belongs to the cache
kmalloc-4096 of size 4096

```
...
poc-7271 : tracing_mark_write: executing syscall: setsockopt
poc-7272 : tracing_mark_write: executing syscall: bind
poc-7271 : kmalloc: call_site=... ptr=ffff88003280e600
bytes_req=2176 bytes_alloc=4352 gfp_flags=GFP_KERNEL
...
poc-7271 : tracing_mark_write: finished syscall: setsockopt
...
poc-7272 : tracing_mark_write: finished syscall: bind
...
poc-2678 : tracing_mark_write: executing syscall: close
poc-2678 : kfree: call_site=... ptr=ffff88003280e600
...
poc-2678 : tracing_mark_write: finished syscall: close
poc-2678 : tracing_mark_write: executing syscall: socket
...
end of ftrace
```

pid:2678

pid:7271

pid:7272

setsockopt
allocation site
bind

close
free site

socket

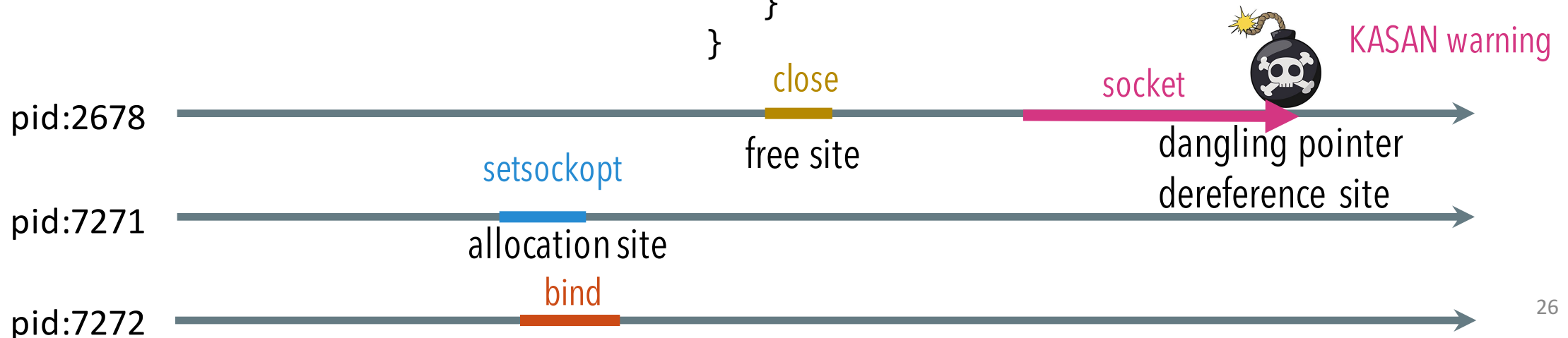
dangling pointer
dereference site

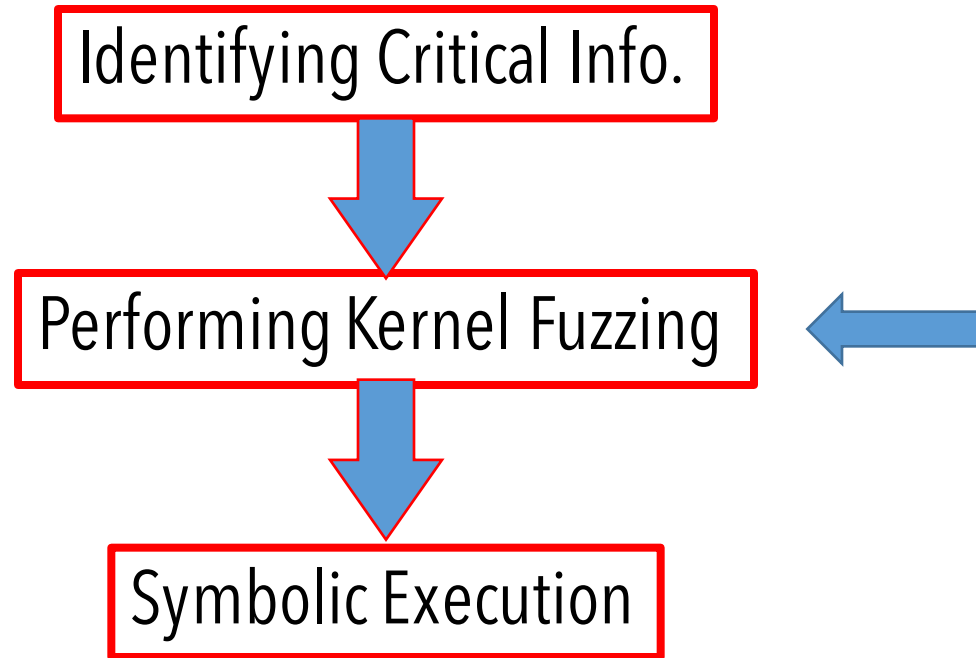


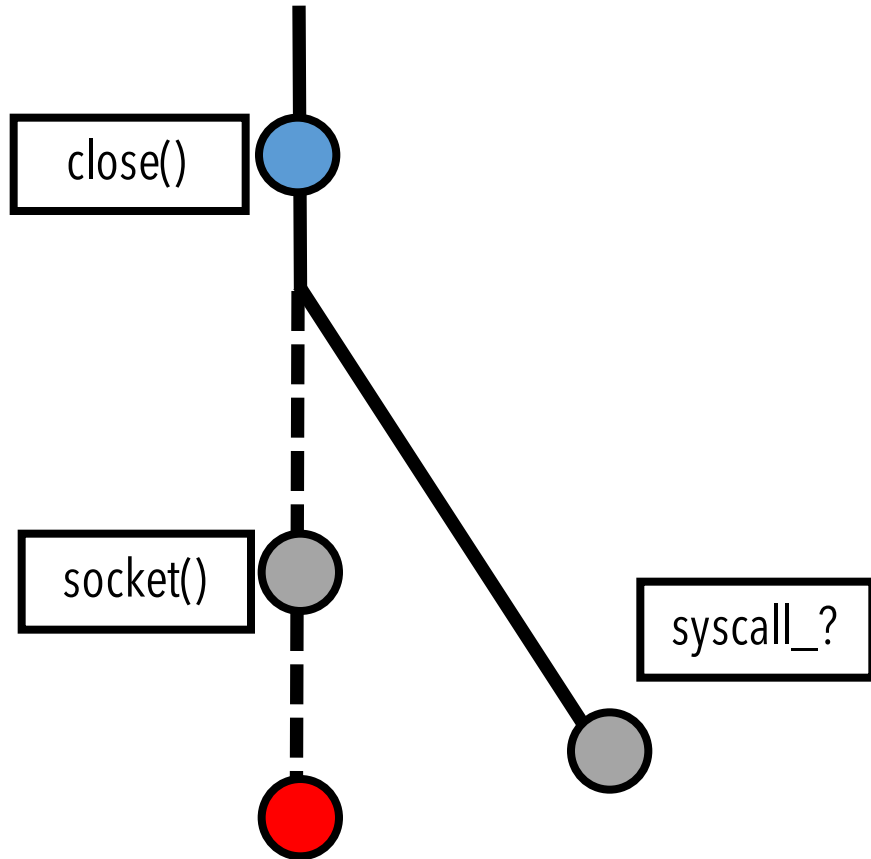
KASAN warning

```
void *task1(void *unused) {
    ...
    int err = setsockopt(fd,
0x107, 18, ..., ...);
}
void *task2(void *unused) {
    int err = bind(fd, &addr,
...);
}
```

```
void loop_race() {
    ...
    while(1) {
        fd = socket(AF_PACKET, SOCK_RAW,
htons(ETH_P_ALL));
        ...
        pthread_create (&thread1, NULL, task1, NULL);
        pthread_create (&thread2, NULL, task2, NULL);
        pthread_join(thread1, NULL);
        pthread_join(thread2, NULL);
        close(fd);
    }
}
```





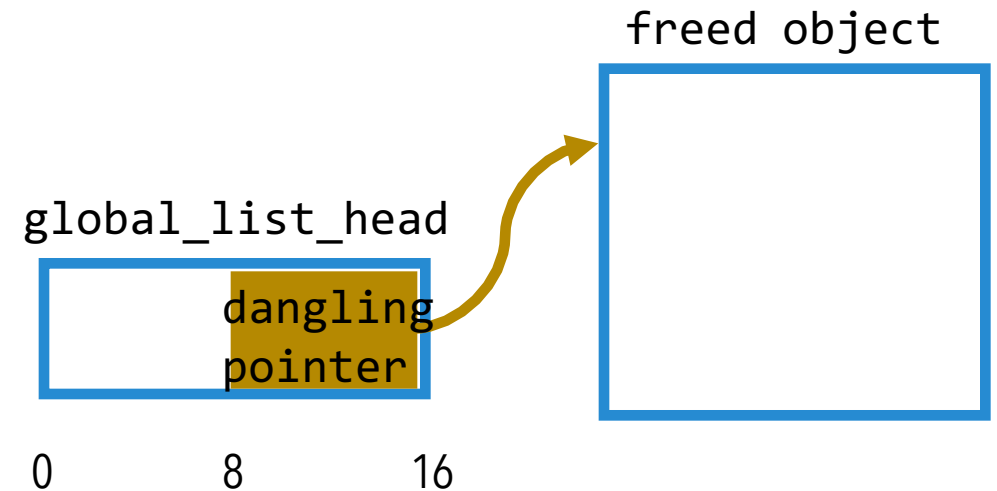


```

poc_wrapper(){
    /* PoC wrapping function */
    ...
    socket();//dereference site
    while(true){ // Race condition
        ...
        threadA(...);
        threadB(...);
        ...
        close(); //free site
        /* instrumented statements */
        if (!ioctl(...)) // interact with
a kernel module
            return;
    }
}
poc_wrapper();
fuzzing();
  
```


- Identifying dangling pointer through the global variable pertaining to vulnerable object
 - Setting breakpoint at syscall tied to the dangling pointer dereference
 - Executing PoC program and triggering the vulnerability
 - Debugging the kernel step by step and recording dataflow (all registers)
 - Tracking down global variable (or current task_struct) through backward dataflow analysis
 - Recording the base address the global variable (or current task_struct) and the offset corresponding to the freed object

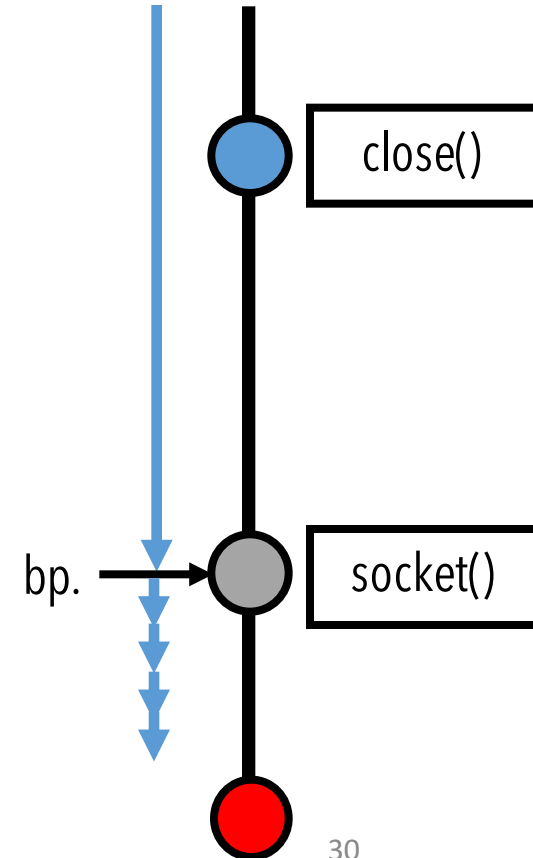
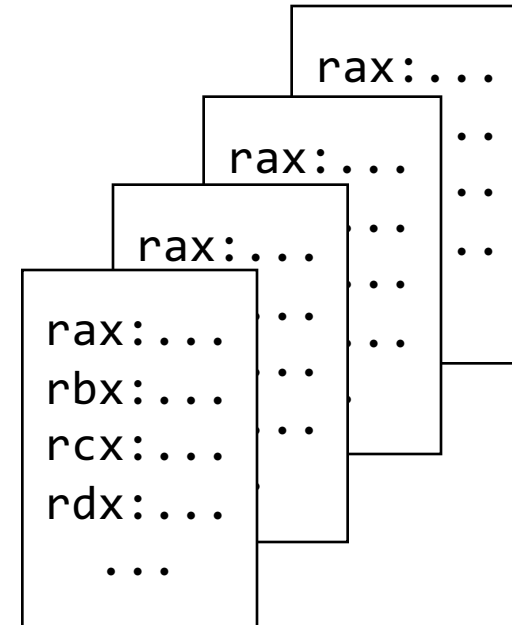
```
mov rdx, ds: global_list_head  
...  
mov rax, qword ptr[rdx+8]  
mov rdi, qword ptr[rax+16] : dangl. deref.
```



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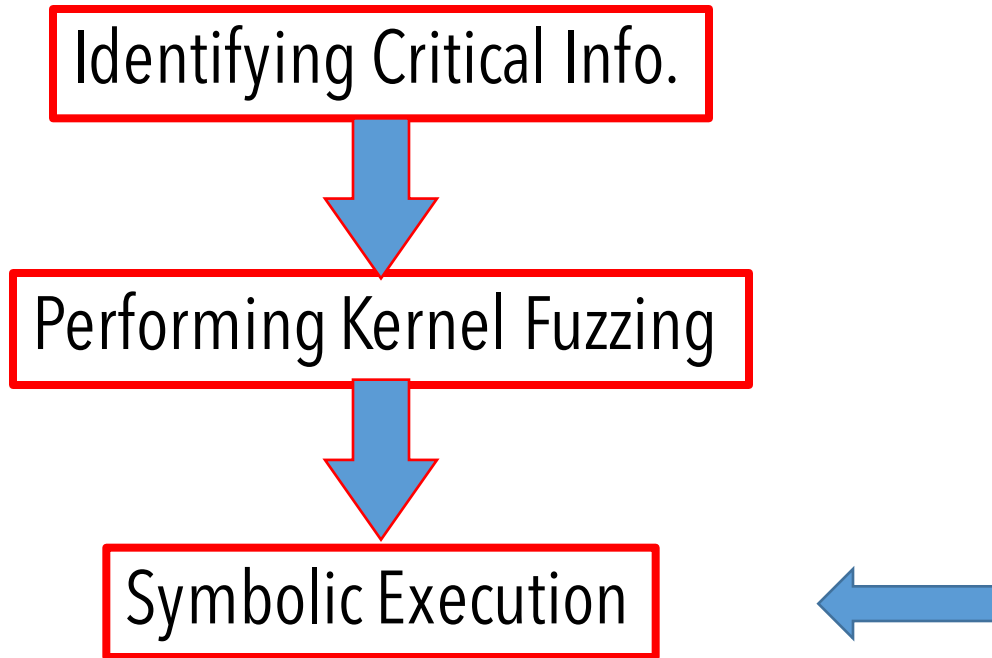
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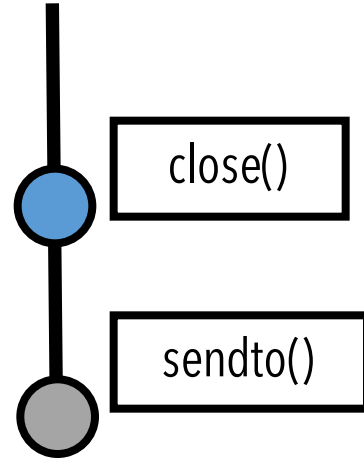


- Reusing syzkaller[1] to performing kernel fuzzing after a dangling pointer is identified
 - generate syz-executor which invoke poc_wrapper first
- enable syscalls that potentially dereference the vulnerable object
 - "enable_syscalls"
- transfer variables that appears in the PoC into the interface
 - e.g. file descriptors

```
poc_wrapper();  
fuzzing();
```



- Symbolic execution for kernel is challenging.
 - How to model and emulate interrupts?
 - How to handling multi-threading?
 - How to emulate hardware device?
- Our goal: use symbolic execution for identifying exploitable primitives
- We can opt-in angr[1] for kernel symbolic execution from a concrete state 
- single thread
- no interrupt
- no context switching

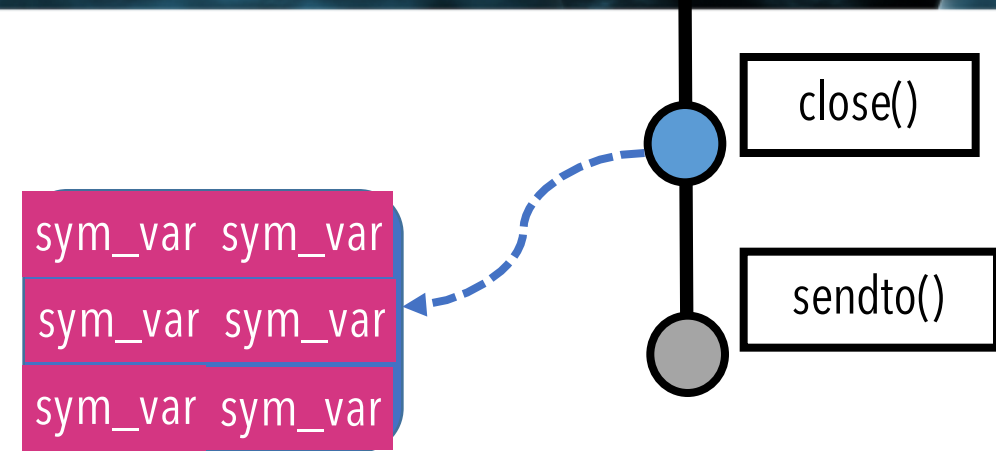
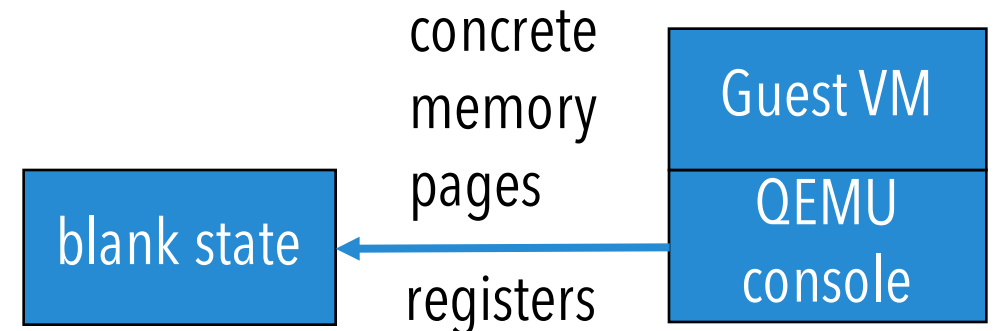


- Symbolic Execution initialization
 - Setting conditional breakpoint at the dangling pointer dereference site
 - Running the PoC program to reach the dangling pointer dereference site
 - Migrating the memory/register state to a blank state
 - Setting freed object memory region as symbolic
 - Starting symbolic execution!

- Challenges:

- How to handle state(path) explosion
- How to determine exploitable primitive
- How to handle symbolic read/write

```
for i in range(uaf_object_size):
    sym_var = state.se.BVS("uaf_byte"+str(i), 8)
    state.memory.store(uaf_object_base+i, sym_var)
```



Memory consumption \approx number_of_states * size_of_each_state

loop:

```
mov edx, dword ptr[freed obj]
```

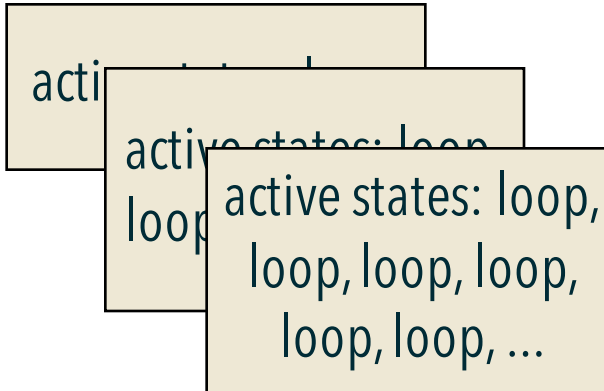
...

```
inc ecx
```

```
cmp ecx, edx
```

```
jne loop (0xffffffff81abcdef)
```

...



```
for state in simgr.active:
    if detect_loop(state, 5):
        simgr.remove(state)
```

```
for state in simgr.active:
    if len(state.history) > 200:
        simgr.remove(state)
```

- Our design already mitigates state explosion by starting from the first dereference site
 - no syscall issues
 - no user input issues
- However, if a byte from the freed object is used in a branch condition, path explosion occurs.
- Workarounds:
 - limiting the time of entering a loop.
 - limiting the total length of a path.
 - copying concrete memory page on demand
 - writing kernel function summary.
 - e.g. mutex_lock



- Unconstrained state
 - state with symbolic Instruction pointer
 - symbolic callback
- double free
 - e.g. `mov rdi, uaf_obj; call kfree`
- memory leak
 - invocation of `copy_to_user` with src point to a freed object
 - syscall return value

Code fragment related to an exploit primitive of CVE-2017-15649

```
if (ptype->id_match)
    return ptype->id_match(ptype, skb->sk)
```

Code fragment related to an exploit primitive of CVE-2017-17053

```
...
kfree(ldt); // ldt is already freed
```

Code fragment related to an exploit primitive of CVE-2017-8824

```
case 127...191:
    return ccid_hc_rx_getsockopt(dp-
>dccps_hc_rx_ccid, sk, optname, len, (u32
__user *)optval, optlen)
```


- write-what-where
 - `mov qword ptr [rdi], rsi`

rdi (destination)	rsi (source)	primitive
symbolic	symbolic	arbitrary write (qword shoot)
symbolic	concrete	write fixed value to arbitrary address
free chunk	any	write to freed object
x(concrete)	x(concrete)	self-reference structure
metadata of freed chunk	any	meta-data corruption
...

- When you found a cute exploitation technique, why not make it reusable?
- Each technique can be implemented as state plugins to angr.
- Exploit technique database
 - Control flow hijack attacks:
 - pivot-to-user
 - turn-off-smap and ret-to-user
 - set_rw() page permission modification
 - ...
 - Double free attacks
 - auxiliary victim object
 - loops in free pointer linked list
 - memory leak attacks
 - leak sensitive information (e.g. credentials)
 - write-what-where attacks
 - heap metadata corruption
 - function-pointer-hijack
 - vdso-hijack
 - credential modification
 - ...

- Solution: ROP
 - stack pivot to userspace [1]

control flow hijack
primitive

```
mov rax, qword ptr[evil_ptr]  
call rax
```

```
If simgr.unconstrained:  
    for ucstate in simgr.unconstrained:  
        try_pivot_and_rop_chain(ucstate)
```

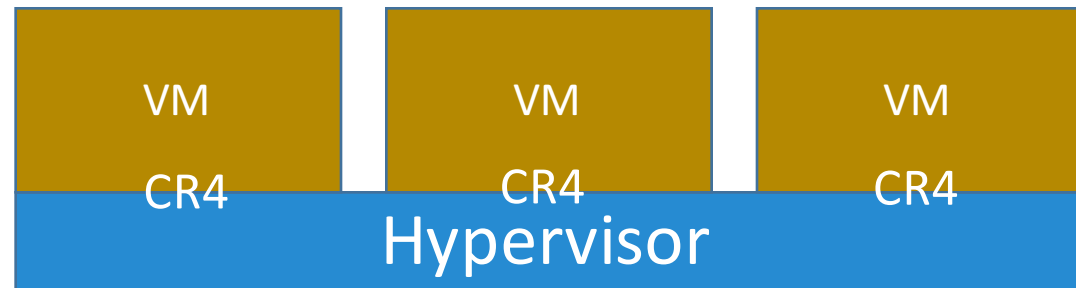
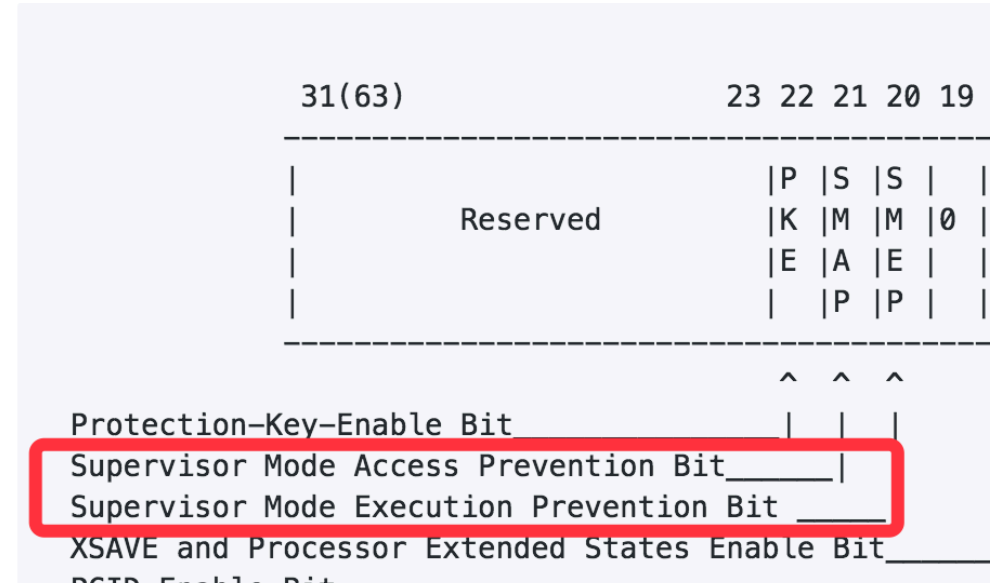
stack pivot gadget

```
xchg eax, esp; ret
```

[1] Linux Kernel ROP - Ropping your way to # (Part 2)

[https://www.trustwave.com/Resources/SpiderLabs-Blog/Linux-Kernel-ROP---Ropping-your-way-to---\(Part-2\)](https://www.trustwave.com/Resources/SpiderLabs-Blog/Linux-Kernel-ROP---Ropping-your-way-to---(Part-2))

- Solution: using two control flow hijack primitives to clear SMAP bit (21th) in CR4 and land in shellcode
 - 1st --- > `mov cr4, rdi ; ret`
 - 2nd --- > shellcode
- limitation
 - can not bypass hypervisor that protects control registers
- Universal Solution: kernel space ROP
 - bypass all mainstream mitigations.



- Goal: enhance the ability to find useful primitives
- Observation: we can use a ROP/JOP gadget to control an extra register and explore more state space
- Approach:
 - forking states with additional symbolic register upon symbolic states
 - We may explore more states by adding extra symbolic registers

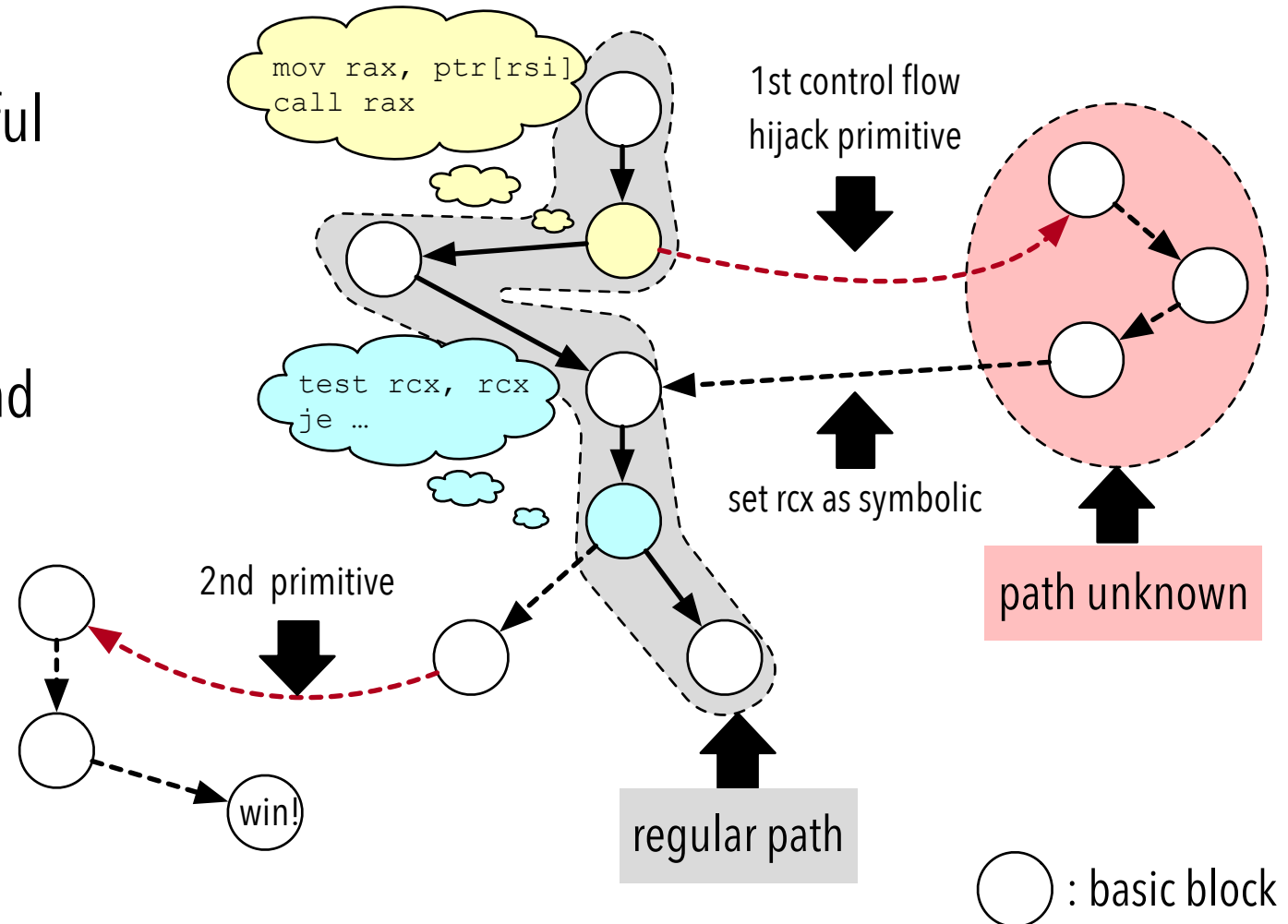


Figure: Identifying two control flow hijack primitive for CVE-2017-15649

- Sometimes we get control flow hijack primitive in interrupt context.
 - avoiding double fault: keep writing to your ROP payload page to keep it mapped in
- Some syscall (e.g. `execve`) checks current execution context (e.g. via reading `preempt_count`) and decides to panic upon unmatched context.

```
BUG_ON(in_interrupt());
```



```
-----[ cut here ]-----  
kernel BUG at linux/mm/vmalloc.c:1394!
```

- Solution: fixing `preempt_count` before invoking `execve("/bin/sh", NULL, NULL)`

```
t0
  mov rdi, QWORD PTR [corrupted_buffer]
t1
  mov rax, QWORD PTR [rdi]
t2
```



t0

rdi: *symbolic_qword*



t1

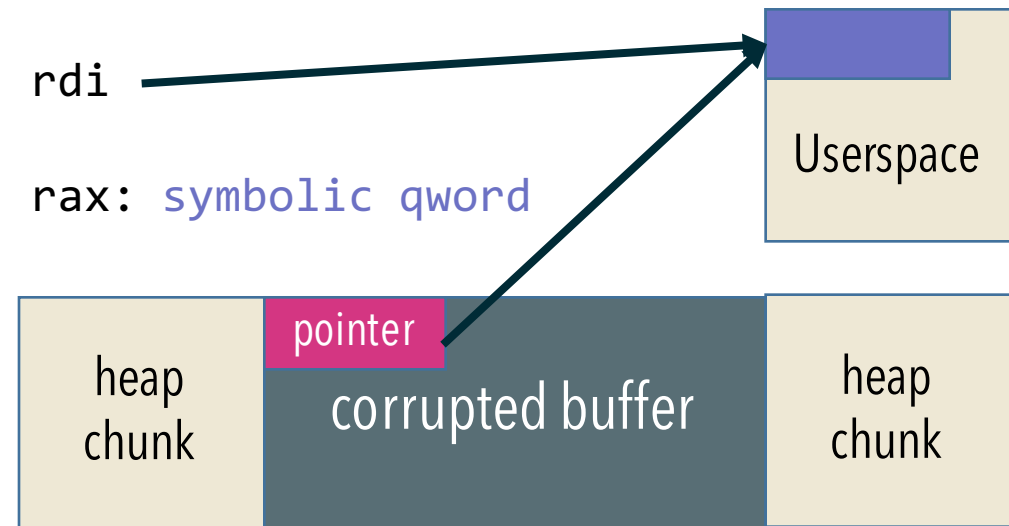
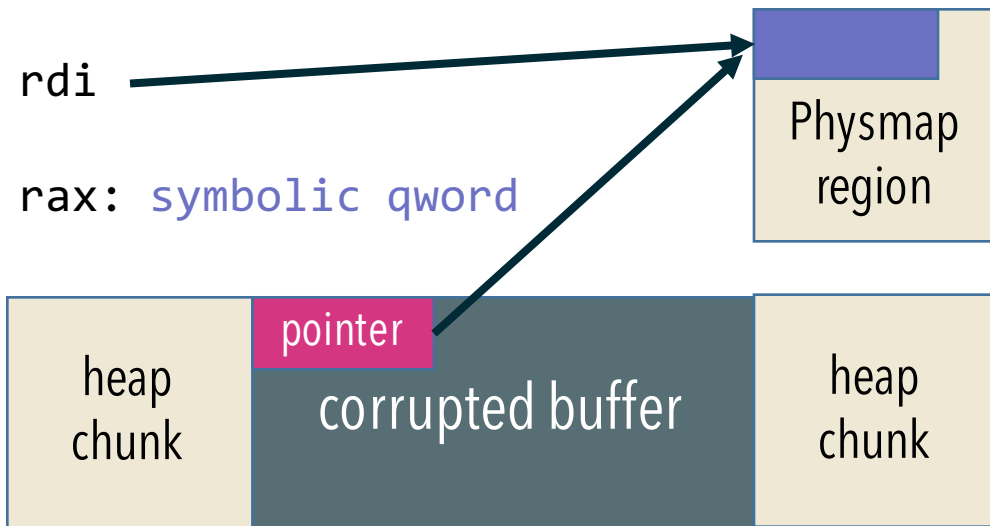
rdi: ??? rax: ???



t2

- Concretize the symbolic address to pointing a region under our control
 - no SMAP: entire userspace
 - with SMAP but no KASLR: physmap region
 - with SMAP and KASLR: ... need a leak first

```
mov rdi, QWORD PTR [corrupted_buffer]
mov rax, QWORD PTR [rdi]
```



- Unsolved challenges in exploitation facilitation
- Our techniques -- FUZE
- Demonstration with real-world Linux kernel vulnerabilities
- Conclusion

- 15 real-world UAF kernel vulnerabilities
- Only 5 vulnerabilities have demonstrated their exploitability against SMEP
- Only 2 vulnerabilities have demonstrated their exploitability against SMAP

*: discovered new dereference by fuzzing

CVE-ID	# of public exploits		# of generated exploits	
	SMEP	SMAP	SMEP	SMAP
2017-17053	0	0	1	0
2017-15649*	0	0	3	2
2017-15265	0	0	0	0
2017-10661*	0	0	2	0
2017-8890	1	0	1	0
2017-8824*	0	0	2	2
2017-7374	0	0	0	0
2016-10150	0	0	1	0
2016-8655	1	1	1	1
2016-7117	0	0	0	0
2016-4557*	1	1	4	0
2016-0728*	1	0	3	0
2015-3636	0	0	0	0
2014-2851*	1	0	1	0
2013-7446	0	0	0	0
overall	5	2	19	46 5

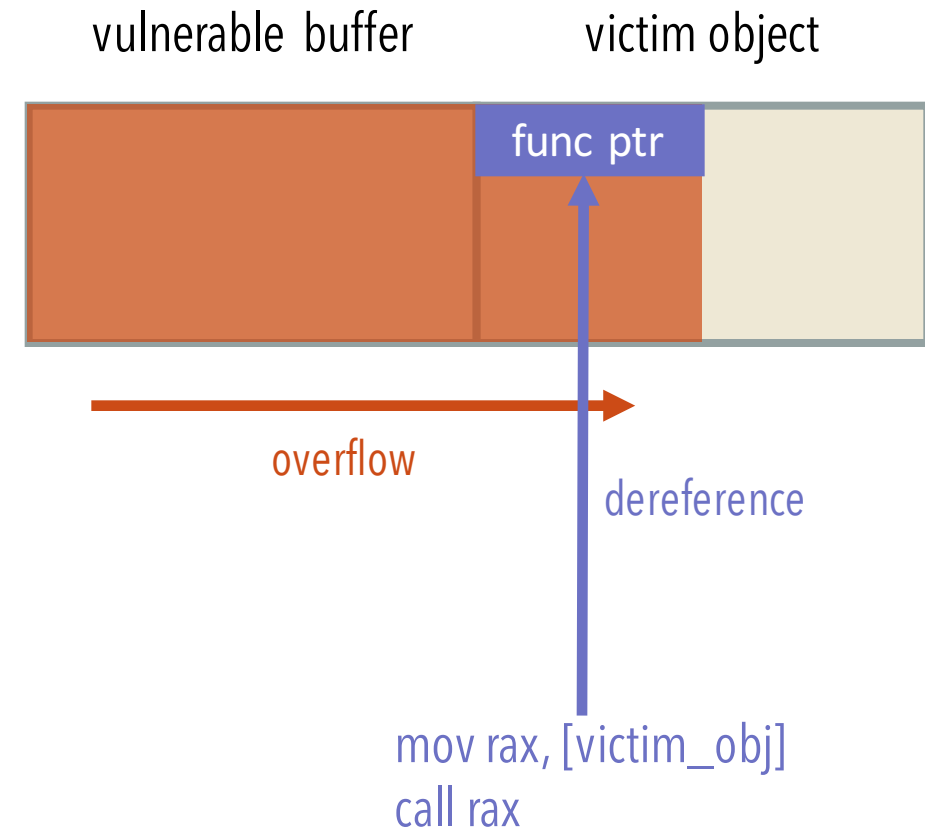
- FUZE helps track down useful primitives, giving us the power to
 - Demonstrate exploitability against SMEP for 10 vulnerabilities
 - Demonstrate exploitability against SMAP for 2 more vulnerabilities
 - Diversify the approaches to perform kernel exploitation
 - 5 vs 19 (SMEP)
 - 2 vs 5 (SMAP)

CVE-ID	# of public exploits		# of generated exploits	
	SMEP	SMAP	SMEP	SMAP
2017-17053	0	0	1	0
2017-15649	0	0	3	2
2017-15265	0	0	0	0
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2017-8890	1	0	1	0
2017-8824	0	0	2	2
2017-7374	0	0	0	0
2016-10150	0	0	1	0
2016-8655	1	1	1	1
2016-7117	0	0	0	0
2016-4557	1	1	4	0
2016-0728	1	0	3	0
2015-3636	0	0	0	0
2014-2851	1	0	1	0
2013-7446	0	0	0	0
overall	5	2	19	5



- Dangling pointer occurrence and its dereference tie to the same system call
- FUZE works for 64-bit OS but some vulnerabilities demonstrate its exploitability only for 32-bit OS
 - E.g., CVE-2015-3636
- Perhaps unexploitable!?
 - CVE-2017-7374 ← null pointer dereference
 - E.g., CVE-2013-7446, CVE-2017-15265 and CVE-2016-7117

- Heap overflow is similar to use-after-free:
 - a victim object can be controlled by attacker by:
 - heap spray (use-after-free)
 - overflow (or memory overlap incurred by corrupted heap metadata)
- Heap overflow exploitation in three steps:
 - 1) Understanding the heap overflow
off-by-one? arbitrary length? content controllable?
 - 2) Find a suitable victim object and place it after the vulnerable buffer
automated heap layout[1]
 - 3) Dereference the victim object for exploit primitives



[1] Heelan et al. Automatic Heap Layout Manipulation for Exploitation. USENIX Security 2018.

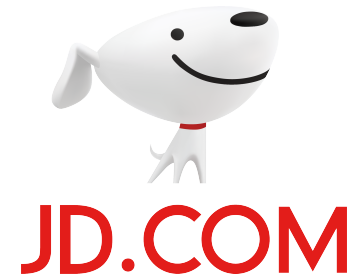
- Unsolved challenges in exploitation facilitation
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- Evaluation with real-world Linux kernel vulnerabilities
- Conclusion

- Primitive identification and security mitigation circumvention can greatly influence exploitability
- Existing exploitation research fails to provide facilitation to tackle these two challenges
- Fuzzing + symbolic execution has a great potential toward tackling these challenges
- Research on exploit automation is just the beginning of the GAME! Still many more challenges waiting for us to tackle...

- Bug prioritization
 - Focus limited resources to fix bugs with working exploits
- APT detection
 - Use generated exploits to generate fingerprints for APT detection
- Exploit generation for Red Team
 - Supply Red Team with a lot of new exploits

- Acknowledgement:

- Yueqi Chen
- Jun Xu
- Xiaorui Gong
- Wei Zou



- Exploits and source code available at:
 - https://github.com/ww9210/Linux_kernel_exploits
- Contact: wuwei@iie.ac.cn



236.5 million

Largest retailer in China,
online or offline shoppers



\$37.5bn

Third largest internet company
in the world by revenue in 2016



First e-commerce company to use commercial drone delivery

700 Million

June Sales Event Items Sold

Massive Scale

236.5M

active customer accounts

120K

active third-party vendors on
JD platform

120K

full-time employees

1.59B

full-time orders fulfilled in 2016