

# Oh Hotel No!

How A Hopeless Hooligan Helped A Homie From Homeless To Homeowner In 9 Months

**Justin Varner**

Chief of Innovation

RadZen Inc

<https://radzen.io>

[justin@radzen.io](mailto:justin@radzen.io)

June 4, 2025



# Origins of the Hotel Hooligan

1. It all began when I got stuck in a hotel elevator on February 27, 2023 for 6 hours and 18 minutes. Between 7:14 am and 1:31 pm, nobody came to help. I was all alone.
2. At approximately 1:32 pm, a hotel guest found me passed out on the elevator floor as they were leaving the 4th floor for the Mezzanine. I immediately left the hotel before talking to hotel security or EMS
3. I went back to the hotel that night to grab my things from the room at 8:27pm and GOT STUCK IN THE SAME ELEVATOR AGAIN FOR 57 MINUTES! Law enforcement finally showed up at 9:24pm. That is 14 hours and 10 minutes from the initial incident. Unbelievable - but believe it because it happened.
4. John McClane may have had one hell of a bad day in Die Hard but I guarantee mine was 1000x worse.





# The High Road Is The Road Less Taken

*“What does it mean to take the high road in this situation?”*

It means doing something so bad for the hotel that it may actually be good for humanity.

*We will surreptitiously house a homeless person in a hotel and document their journey along the way*





**LET'S DO THIS!**

# Buckshot = No Shot (Of Success)

**After further review...that approach went terribly**

It was a very cold day in Richmond, Virginia on March 14, 2023. I was walking downtown and noticed a TON of homeless people outside in the cold and clearly struggling.

I was compelled by some unknown force to do something to help alleviate the pain those people were experiencing in that moment.

So I walked into the Richmond Marriott, booked four rooms, and started cloning and handing out keycards to everyone and anyone on the streets.

Before long there were 37 people converging on the downtown Marriott.

***And then...shit went down...***



**I WAS THERE**

**WHEN THAT SHIT WENT DOWN**

imgflip.com



“

**We Care About  
Homeless People.  
Just Not In My  
Backyard**

”

**Guys, The Nerve**

Once I entered the Marriott I was immediately escorted by the hotel manager to the elevator and then taken to room 237 on the second floor. Inside the room I find the head of security and two Richmond police officers.

The officers were super fascinated by the whole ordeal and inquired about the technical details of cloning the keycards.

The head of security had a look on his face that was about as stupid as he was and said: “We all care about homeless people, but we can’t help them like this.”

To which I said: “Actually what you care about is feeling warm and fuzzy inside for virtue signaling but not actually doing a damn thing to improve the situation.” I gave him a double special of the five finger salute and left the hotel

I immediately thought of my dad (aka Jay Bird) and how he would be proud with how I handled the situation

***“I Put My Pants On The Same Way He Does -  
One Leg At A Time. Kiss my black ass” - Jay Bird***



# Clearly I Needed To Refine My Strategy...

- 1) Learned everything about hotels and hotel (in)security
- 2) Returned to College Park to find the one hotel that hadn't banned me - the Marriott (MY FAVORITE), having explored 807 different properties thus far
- 3) Asked one of the key hotel stakeholders
  - a) I ask him, "Have you ever done any physical security testing to see how easy it is to sneak into a room and stay there with no one knowing? I bet you there are several Marriott hotels around the world with people who have been living there for years and completely for free."
  - b) He says, "What do you mean?"
  - c) I replied, "I'll meet you at The Common restaurant in the adjacent building in 15 minutes and I'll show you."



# Welcome Home Justin Jenkins

He watches the 11 minute 37 second video utterly speechless. I can see the gears grinding together and him starting to short circuit

- I said to him “Do you understand what I mean now when I said that I could have lived at this hotel forever and you never would have known? I bet you there are several people in the world who have been living for free at Marriott hotels for many years and flown completely under the radar.

*Little did I know this event would stoke such a fiery inferno of motivation and desire in him to “fix Marriott security”*



# Using Information Security To Address Housing Insecurity



- Housing = one of the most fundamental human needs,
  - Implement foundational security controls (like patching, MFA, etc)
  - Create layers of security aka defense in depth
  - And DiD will mitigate the blast radius of any one of our safeguards failing.

*Where else can we bolster our security posture by building on solid housing security?*

1. Food
2. Bathing and grooming
3. Phone connectivity
4. Computer access
5. Internet access
6. Print services
7. Exercise facilities
8. Laundry and dry cleaning
9. Community
10. **A HOTEL PROVIDES AN ADDRESS!** As follows...

**HOTELS**

**HOTELS EVERYWHERE**

# The Plan?



# Marriott Mic Drop Heard Around The World

It was time to start hitting high-falutin hotels and demonstrating just how exposed the company is to risk.

The hope was this information would roll up to executive leadership who would see the value in investing in a formal red team that would continuously check for vulnerabilities

The ultimate POC happened on February 12, 2024 at the **JW Marriott hotel**.

There happened to be a political summit during that time and the hotel was housing a variety of world leaders and self-righteous people who walk like they have important shit in their ass.

This is the perfect opportunity take this up to 11.

So in addition to obtaining access and establish dominance, we should go a step further and simulate a very realistic scenario and one that would not be hard for a determine adversary to pull off. But would be absolutely catastrophic for Marriott.

What you may ask?

Well...how easy would it be to assassinate someone?

Let's find out!

# I Suppose We Should Propose (Some Solutions)

For this to work, we need to discuss our individual and collective goals from this endeavor. There is common ground we can already agree on: we all want to improve hotel security and mitigate risk to residual levels. But we have drastically different hopes and desire on an individual level.

They want to build a comprehensive playbook for hotel managers to implement security best practices to protect their employees and guests from catastrophic situations like those demonstrated at the JW Marriott DC during the G17 summit. They understand that they can't mandate security but they can influence it positively by showing hotel managers what good looks like and how to get there. That is a very doable and reasonable request.

I, on the other hand, am a needy princess who demands more things. And as such make the following requests in particular before I consider entering the partnership

1. Lifetime Ambassador Elite status
2. 3 million Bonvoy points initially (about 60 nights)
3. To house one homeless person in a Marriott property and document the journey thereafter



# The Biggest Risk Is Taking No Risk At All

- They deliver on the first and second requests just 12 days later on March 13, 2024. I immediately begin work on the third
- That afternoon I meet a guy named Earl Jones on Broad Street in Richmond right next to the Marriott. He is quite the character and seems like the perfect candidate for the program
- I tell him all the nuances of how it will work, why I believe it will be successful, and what kind of impact this could have on Marriott and housing insecurity more broadly.
- Earl thinks I am high-key next-level crazy but is also very intrigued. He says “You may be on to something though... Ah Hell Bro, Let’s Go!”.

# It's Not About The Money... It's About The Message.



The **Bonvoy Ambassador Elite** status provides the pathway to legitimately pwning the rewards system to point where you can book free rooms and actually make money with leftover points. As a new lifetime member, I had the means to prove this out.

I wanted to try and accomplish my goal through legitimate methods (whatever the hell that means) before I decided to hack and whack my way in like I always do.

So on **April 29, 2024**, I decided to become an official Marriott employee for the sole purpose of getting access to the source code to see just how bad things are within the underbelly. And there are just some things in life that you can't unsee.

And then on **July 19, 2024**, Marriott and many others got pwned by CrowdStrike via a Windows Update that killed the keycard system at **90% of Marriott hotels**. That night was the most fun of my life because I smashed into 13 different DC hotels with even more lax or nonexistent security than usual.

And on **July 20, 2024** I ended my official employment relationship with Marriott because people started asking me for help remediation CrowdStrike issues and I didn't sign up for that shit.

*I signed up to be a complete hooligan and absolute menace to society. Mission Accomplished*

# Time To Become Red Man With The Method, Man

Hiding in plain sight and causing chaos day and night.

- **Recon** - learn everything you can about the hotel as an outsider using “legal” means - OSINT, passive surveillance, walkthroughs, conversing with staff, studying movement patterns, understanding the location of functions and teams (i.e. where is the security office?), identifying technologies and associated vulnerabilities, and so on
- **Enumeration** - learn everything you can about the hotel while you stay there (legitimately) in your own room
- **Initial Access** - get a free room!
- **Lateral movement** - get more free rooms!
- **Privilege escalation** - get even better rooms!
- **Live off the land** - literally eat all the food, drink all the drinks, and overflow the bathroom sinks
- **Persistence** - success is 90% perspiration and 10% imagination
- Observe and Report
- Educate and Remediate

# 1. Recon

Learn everything you can about the hotel and the people inside of it as an outsider using “legal” means

- Open Source Intelligence (OSINT)
- Passive surveillance
- Property walkthroughs
- Conversing with staff
- Studying movement patterns of maids and security guards
- Understanding the location of functions and teams (i.e. where is the security office?)
- Identifying technologies and associated vulnerabilities

... and so on



## 2. Enumeration

Learn everything you can about the hotel while you stay there (legitimately) in your own room

Ask about trash chutes...

We're here to help!

### 3. Establish Initial Access

- Swipe a skeleton key and/or social engineer away one and make a copy
- Find a keycard on a cleaning cart or elsewhere and make a copy
- Sneak into an expensive and infrequently booked room and establish dominance
- Book a legitimate room and keep it indefinitely by abusing the loyalty rewards program (more on that later)
- Run with a fire extinguisher full speed at a maid from one end of the hall to the other. Who stops that guy? (true story)

***This Is How Easy It Is To Sneak Into A Room Without Anyone Knowing***





## 4. Lateral Movement



Launch from your paid room to others that are free!

Then launch to more rooms. And more. Ad infinitum. It won't be long before the hotel will be occupied only by strippers, homeless people, and animals. And it'll be too late for the hotel staff to notice and do anything. Great success!



ENTER THE DAMN DUNGEON?  
Fuck yeah

## 5. Live off the Land

*Literally, eat all the food, drink all the drinks, and overflow the bathroom sinks*

The Marriott M Club provides **exclusive concierge lounge access** for Platinum Bonvoy members (50 n/y) and above. They are open 24/7 and include **free breakfast, lunch, and dinner**, and **alcohol** for free.

They also come loaded with lots of **couches, tables, TVs**, and other expensive pieces of awesome that I really enjoy moving into my room.

You can find the M Club lounges and accompanying elitist pricks at most of **Marriott's 4 and 5 star branded hotels** like Sheraton, Ritz-Carlton, Renaissance, and St. Regis.

You know who else has access to the lounges? Anyone I give my keycard to. Oops.  
#SorryNotSorry

<https://marriott-hotels.marriott.com/experience/m-club/>

## 6. Persistence

- Success is 90% perspiration and 10% imagination
- Make sure you can still get access to the room(s) of your choice - there are many methods but obtaining a skeleton key is the most effective. And some others demoed below

The Wedge Trick



The Pen Trick





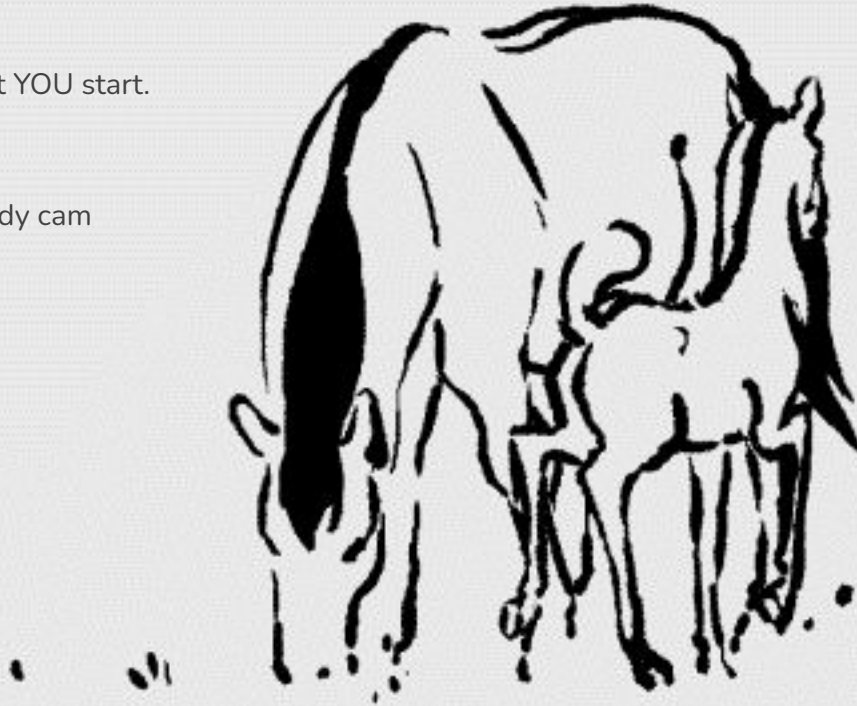
# 7. Observe and Report



This actually starts the moment YOU start.

Record conversations

Capture video with a body cam



**Gather as much data as you can** to compile a report in real-time that contains [comprehensive](#) list of vulnerabilities and success exploits which allowed you to accomplish the aforementioned

## 8. Educate and Remediate

- Discuss your findings with the client
- Propose solutions for mitigating risk to residual levels - It should be really hard for an adversary to pull this off if you're continuously practicing defense in depth



# Prestige Goes Up. Security Goes Down. Why?

Having assessed over 700 hotels last year, there is one conclusion that can be drawn: As the prestige of a hotel increases, the security decreases at least proportionally.

Hotel security is hard and must be traded off with the guest experience. Some of the systems that must be deployed include cameras, doors, locks, badge readers, keycards, and Access Control Systems

This leads to all kinds of security issues like gaps in visibility, vulnerable keycards, lack of access control, and no monitoring. Check out the 8-minute video below if you're interested more in this topic.



**My Name Is Earl (Jones).**



*Just Kidding! That's actually James Earl Jones (RIP)*



# A Little Bit About Earl

- Earl Jones had been homeless in Richmond for **17 years**.
- He was in and out of the government housing program 8 times - more on that later.
- There were a series of tragic events that he was unable to recover from that led to this situation, namely:
  - a. His mom (his best friend) passed away
  - b. His wife left him for his best friend
  - c. Job-related injury leaving him unable to work
  - d. Claim denied for worker's compensation, as well as the appeal
- We met on March 13, 2024 on Broad Street right in front of the Richmond Marriott hotel

He asked recently...

**Earl:** "Mr Justin, what captivated you to speak to me specifically on that day?"

To which I said:

**Justin:** "It takes a character to know a character. And it was evident I was dealing with one given the rainbow shirt, bright pink cowboy hat, and purple crocks you had on. In fact I knew I was dealing with someone beyond just a simple character - I was dealing with a 'critter' (more on that later). And I was right."



# Brick by Brick: Earl's Way Up

I offered Earl something radical: a key. Not a voucher, not a waiting list—an actual key to unlock a home. Rent-free for eight months, no strings attached.

“I walked in, and it had heat, running water, a door I could lock,” “I broke down crying. That was the first night I slept through till morning in almost a year.”

Earl's story will expose a deeper truth: *housing isn't a reward for success—it's the foundation of it*. Without a stable address, it's nearly impossible to apply for jobs, receive mail, maintain hygiene, or get consistent sleep. These aren't luxuries—they're basic conditions needed to be a reliable participant in today's workforce.

# Use The Hotel As Your Personal Dumping Ground

Anyone can use the hotel's address as their own for any number of reasons.

I like to mail stuff to my hotel of choice anywhere in the world so I don't have to transport it and pay baggage fees.

I definitely know people who use hotels in other states to qualify for in-state tuition (because I told them too hehe)  
Very nice! College should be free anyway.

Earl was also able qualify for medical benefits and food stamps with this method.

**Earl Jones**  
**500 E Broad St**  
**STE 404**  
**Richmond, VA 23219**

# Breaking Bonvoy Down



The Marriott Bonvoy loyalty program has 99 problems and they all bitches

Here's a couple interesting “features” that allow any member to pile on points and stay for free (and in my case even make money)

1. Book each hotel night **one day at a time** so that you get the **1000 point elite bonus** every night
2. Book the most expensive member non-refundable rate with a virtual credit card and \$1 limit. The hotel will try to process the card and in the process pre-credits your account with the expected points. However, they will then call you to cancel or use a new payment on file at which point you say “**So sorry boss. I meant to book under the Explore Rate**”
3. On that note - If you are a Marriott employee or have a really good friend who will claim you as their brother, you **qualify for the heavily discounted Explore rate**. Here's an example of a hotel in Prague  
The Explore rate is \$166 and the regular rate is \$555.
4. Earn points with other services like **rideshares, flights, food**, etc
5. There are many other avenues of abuse that I won't cover here. But yeah there at lots.

*Earl stayed for 292 days at the Marriott and left on December 30, 2024 with unused points valued at \$876.52*

*That's right - he earned \$3 a day by living in a baller hotel, eating, working out, and being merry.*

*Take some time to try and wrap your head around that one.*

*The real question is - why hasn't anyone with real resources solved this problem? You already know the answer to that*





## 404 Error

Sorry, page not found

[Back to home](#)

Get it??? 404 =  
**NOT  
FOUND!**

# 404

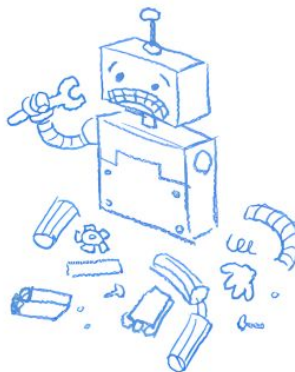
Not Found

The resource requested could not be found on this server



**404.** That's an error.

The requested URL was not found on this server. That's all we know.

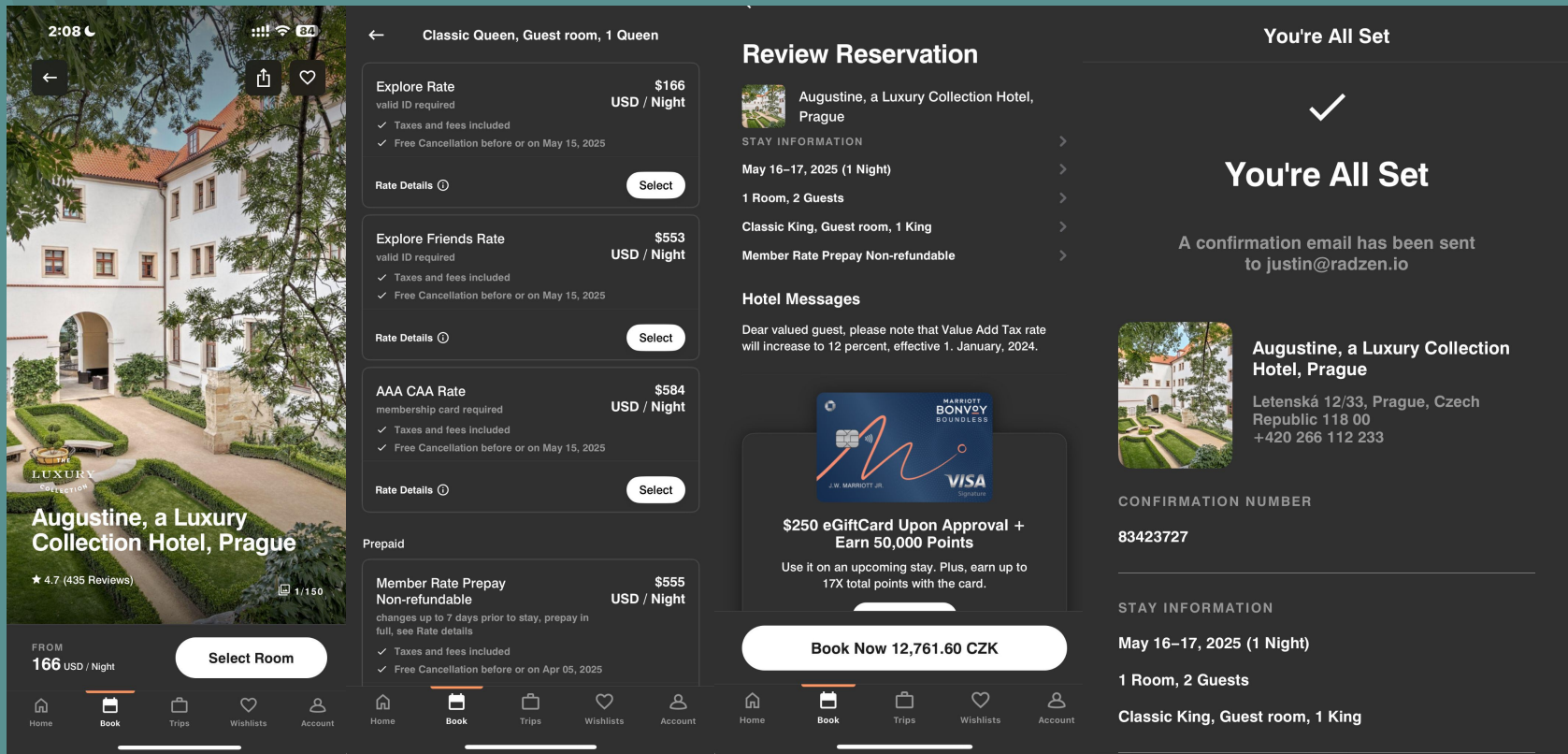


# 404

NOT FOUND



# You Save More When You Explore



# I Broke That Titanium Ambassador In Half




















Marriott Bonvoy

Benefits

Earn Points

Use Points and Awards

Manage Points

	Ambassador Service	+		48-hour Guarantee	+		Exclusive Member Rates	+
	Your24™	+		Lounge Access	+		Mobile Check-In and Mobile Key	+
	75% Bonus Points on Stays	+		4 p.m. Late Checkout	+		Cash + Points	+
	Welcome Gift Choice	+		Free In-Room Wi-Fi	+		Instant Redemption	+
	Annual Choice Benefit for Members with 50 Elite Night Credits	+		Ultimate Reservation Guarantee	+		PointSavers™	+
	Annual Choice Benefit for Members 75 Elite Night Credits	+		Complimentary United® MileagePlus® Premier® Silver Status	+		Enhanced Room Upgrade	+
	Hertz President's Circle® Status	+						

# The Point Is You Have Lots Of Point Possibilities

## Transfer Your Miles to Points

Earn more towards your next stay by transferring your airline miles with our participating partners into Marriott Bonvoy Points. Complete the request with your preferred airline partner.



**Aeroplan**

Miles to Points - 1:1



**ANA Mileage Club**

Miles to Points - 1:1\*



**Cathay Pacific**

**Cathay**

Miles to Points - 2:1



**Hawaiian Airlines HawaiianMiles**

Miles to Points - 2:1



**Japan Airlines JAL Mileage**

**Bank**

Miles to Points - 4:3



**Qatar Airways**

**Privilege Club**

Miles to Points - 2:1



**Singapore Airlines KrisFlyer®**

Miles to Points - 2:1



**United MileagePlus®**

Miles to Points - 1:1



# Homeless To Thriving Homeowner In 292 Days

2/ 2007 - 3/2024: Homeless in Richmond  
3/14/24 - Moved Into Richmond Marriott  
5/15/24 - Receives job offer for a remote tech support engineer  
5/27/24 - Starts new job  
10/4/24 - Promoted to Senior Support Engineer

11/26 - Begins looking for houses to buy. Finds one in South Richmond that he really likes  
12/20 - Approved for the mortgage  
12/30 - Moves out of Richmond Marriott  
1/3/25 - Moves into new home

**This One's For Earl**



**Richmond Marriott Presidential Suite #1806 Tour**



# Thank You So Much!

## **Ariana Khan**

For the original Prague slide deck design, content review, love, and moral support

**Azaria Lewis** - For taking this slide deck to the next level

## **Earl Jones**

For inspiring us and showing that anything is possible

**My Network Of Titanium Turbobabe Princesses (TTPs)** - Ariana, Bree, Christyanne, Cassandra, Rene, and PJ

For their boundless love, support, and encouragement. I love you all so much.

**Cloaked** - Create Identities En Masse with Real Phone numbers and verified addresses (think job references hehe)

<https://www.cloaked.com/>

**Hak5** - The creme de le creme of physical attack tools

<https://hak5.org>

**iCopyX** - An excellent RFID badge cloning device for low-frequency tags (e.g hotel keycards and credit cards)

<https://icopyx.com>

**Keysy** - An excellent RFID cloner for high-frequency tags (e.g. building FOBs and vehicle transponders)

<https://www.keysy.com>

## **Flipper Zero**

An all-in-one physical hacking device that can perform all the functions of the iCopyX and Keysy and additional capabilities like changing traffic lights and opening garage doors (naughty naughty!)

<https://flipperzero.one/>

## **Oh Hotel No! Playlist**

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLYpk2OjMmsURNmxeFbUZ0KnQNO-QiQ3M1>