Do(n't) Panic!

A Manual for original library Escape Room events







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(I'm a Teen Librarian, of course I dressed up for this!)

How Did This Even Happen?

Who put this together?

A teen librarian with experience creating original, live-action games working with her staff.

What made you want to do this?

In looking for something new to try that might strike a chord with new users of all ages, we found an article online, and with advice from an obsessed co-worker, a plan was hatched…

Where did you do this?

An underused but architecturally amazing set of program rooms that could be reserved for days at a time

When did you start doing these?

Planning began 9/2015. Staging of 'Escape the Attic': 2/2016 with plans to do them biannually.

Why do an Escape Room in the library?

Because original live-action games bring teens to the library – even those who aren't regular users. It shows a different side of the 'stuffy old library,' it is a format can be replicated for all ages many times, is full of skill-based learning and it's just fun! Totally worth the time and effort.

How…um…well…

(Warning: I'm not into the whole brevity thing - this is a massive pile of info trying to translate the process of game design, mostly done in my head and on the fly, into a manual that is understandable /replicable. I apologize for any gaps in coherency!)

Of note: I designed most of this event BEFORE ever playing a commercial Escape Room - for better or worse! I've been to a few since, and they stress me out! But they are worth seeing as part of your planning process and for ideas.

Things to Consider before you begin:

Timing

- Setting a date:
  - When is the best time to put on this type of event for your intended audience?
    - Date and time
  - We did: Three days with two sessions per day. One for teens during open hours, one after-hours for adults, for a total of 7 sessions in a row.
  - We started planning in September and were antsy to get going!

- Commercial Escape Rooms sessions usually last for one hour.
  - Your timeframe will depend on the size of your space, number of players and how many steps to your game.

- Are you interested in or able to run the game multiple times?
  - How much access do you have to your event space/room?
  - Can you occupy it for a long period of time without disrupting other functions in the library? For days? Weeks?
    - This will determine how often you can repeat your game, which in turn influence how many total players you can expect to cycle through the entire program

Things to Consider before you begin:

- Before you begin making the game, consider:
  - Number of players?:
    - We did: Ten players per session. More on this later…
  - Registration or Drop-In?
    - Individual sign-ups or group registration like commercial escape rooms.
      - We did: Individual registered signs ups. One session for teens was drop-in, with our lowest attendance (the only one not full!) We are considering a mix of individual and group registrations for the next session we are planning for this summer.
  - Ages allowed to participate?
    - We did: Teens and Adults. We will add another session for tweens next time.
      - Will involving younger players mean creating a 'simpler' version of the same game ? A question we are currently grappling with…



Black lights are magical for teens and adults!



More things to consider:

- To be in the room, or not be in the room?
  - Be in the room: We didn't have much of a choice – too much breakable stuff in our rooms that our admins were rightfully concerned about.
    - Pros:
      - Able to give directed hints that applied to exactly where players were stuck.
      - Able to remind teams of how much time they had left. We could also reassure teens who felt they were not making progress when they really were…
        - We had a hand bell that we rang every 10, then five minutes. The players came to hate it.
    - Cons:
      - Players will keep asking you for help, even if you are strict about not talking at all except to reveal the set number of hints (Adults were the worst!)
        - A tech workaround: It is relatively easy – at small cost - to set up cameras and monitor the game as well as give clues remotely.
        - We ran out of time during planning and the rooms we used weren't tech friendly…but we are working on this for next time! Looking at baby monitors!

More things to consider:

- Don't be in the room:
  - Pros:
    - No distractions from you (it can be hard to watch teams do poorly…)
    - Depending on your theme/story, it can enhance the ambiance to be 'alone' in the room.
  - Cons:
    - If you don't have eyes on the room in some format, you might not be able to give helpful clues. (Unless…See tech workaround above).
    - If you have stuff that must not be damaged or broken you can't stop it from happening – this is heavily dependent on where you stage it.

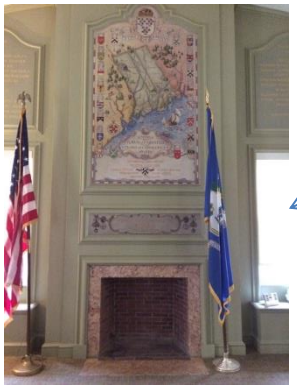
We did: In the room. We'll likely continue that way since our room was FULL of breakable stuff that did wonders for our ambiance, but our bosses would have been furious if any of it was destroyed!

Like this fancy boat!
More on this later…



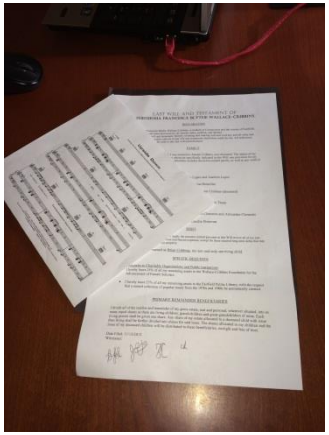
Making the Game!

There are four elements to any live-action game:



Space

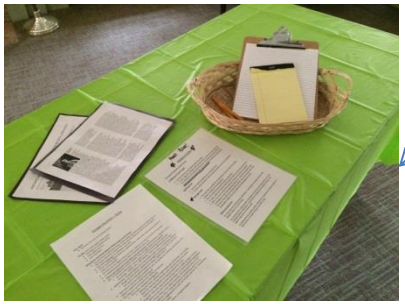
Story



Steps

and

Stuff





Space

- It is the most important element to consider for an Escape Room. Other elements are worked on concurrently and will change as you go, but the space is where things start.
- What you need:
  - Do you have a space with a door that can lock from the outside? This is the common element of most commercial Escape Rooms – the goal is to find a key or code that will get you out.
    - You don't? Don't worry…we didn't either!

- Is it big enough to fit several people?
  - The size of your room determines the number of players and could influence the number of sessions you run
    - You may wish to plan multiple sessions to keep group sizes small enough to work with and get the most 'bang for your buck.'
  - Is it clear of stuff (furniture, décor, technology) or is the stuff inside usable?
    - Are there things that might be easily damaged?
    - Can the stuff in the room be altered to suit your needs?

The answers to all these questions will play a major factor in how you design your game.

Space

- Every program or meeting room has it's advantages and disadvantages. You have to work with what you've got!
  - Pros of bigger spaces:
    - More players per session
    - More room to for your players to spread stuff out and work
  - Cons of bigger spaces:
    - Harder to get the whole team communicating
    - Need more stuff to conceal/camouflage game items, making the game harder
- Does this room have any beneficial features that can add to the program?
  - Cabinets, closets, tables, interesting fixtures, décor, etc.?
    - This can tie into your clue-making and/or plot in addition to being places you can hide stuff!
  - Can you alter the room to suit your needs?
    - Mark up with invisible ink? Tape/nail things to walls? Drill holes? Remove décor?

We were SUPER LUCKY – we have an amazing set of fancy meeting rooms that are rarely used because they are not tech-friendly...and wound up with a big room and a small room together:



The Jennings Room – a small meeting room full of cabinets (!), old books and fancy things. This became our 'Upside Down' room

The Memorial Room – (our town's actual veterans memorial) was our 'Attic'. Big space, full of fun stuff like pianos and their benches, names written on the walls and murals of maps all over the place



Together, these attached rooms gave us an unbelievable space to play with, and plenty of inspiration as we began writing our scenario and crafting our clues.

I bet the library founders never saw this kind of program coming when they designed these rooms!

Space

No lock on the door? No worries!

- Most public buildings don't have doors that prevent exit, which is the common expectation of an 'Escape Room,' or, a 'Locked Room' game
- It's fine! Really! You just need to **change the goal of your game.**
- Instead of searching for a key, make the search about finding an object, preferably one you can build a story around!
  - Money, antidotes, proof of crime…Potential MacGuffins are endless!

We did: A Pirate Map with hidden treasure



Our map and treasure box…

Unpictured – a big bowl of candy because Teen program!

Now that you have your **SPACE** worked out…things are going to get a bit trickier.

Do(n't) Panic!



Teens, panicking…

The next steps all occur more or less concurrently as you plan. This is where I freaked out (continuously for weeks). Remember: Everything you tackle is another thing done!

Just keep moving forward! ☺

Story: The fun stuff

- Work backwards: Set the game goal or 'final objective'
    - Is it literally 'escaping' the room? The goal is a key or door-opening code.
    - Is it to find something? The goal is that thing.
    - Once you have your final objective, you can determine the stakes of your game – why is it important?
        - What will happen if your players succeed or fail?
            - Ours was – find the map in the time allotted or 'go to jail.'
- Next, build your scenario or theme – the plot that will guide the rest of your planning for the game and give your objects and clues context.
    - Our story: Dead retired pirate lady has hidden a map to her secret island and treasure for her favorite grandkid to find – our teams must help the heir to get a cut of the money.
        - Where does story come from? Whatever might inspire you, from whatever stuff you have around!
            - We had a model ship in a glass case that couldn't be moved. It had to be incorporated into our story, and became the inspiration for the whole backstory!



Librarians: making potential liabilities into positives!

Story: Let your imagination run wild!

Special Events



Escape the Attic!

Tuesday, 2/9, Wednesday, 2/10 and Thursday, 2/11, 2016

Jennings Room, Main Library

Teens: 7:00 - 8:15 PM, Adults: 9:00 - 10:15 PM

Make sure you register early (if you dare) for a new game based on the popular 'locked room mystery' phenomenon sweeping the country! Work in a team to solve the challenging puzzles and riddles before time runs out! Be sure to wear comfortable clothes and be prepared to think on your feet. Please register for one of the three dates, with sessions offered by age range.

In 2016, the Teen Services department of the Fairfield Public Library celebrates its tenth year of providing outstanding services and programs to the young people of this community

All programs are free and open to the public. For more information, visit www.fairfieldpubliclibrary.org, or call 203-256-3160.

Main Library
1080 Old Post Road
Fairfield, CT 06824

Fairfield Woods Branch
1147 Fairfield Woods Road
Fairfield, CT 06825

Fairfield Public Library

You belong here!

Our Story:

Great-granny has died, leaving a fortune to ungrateful relatives, except for one girl – a friend to the players. The team is entrusted to find a map hidden in an attic that will lead to secret treasure, but it must be done in secret while the services are going on so the greedy family can be cut out of the riches.

What will your story be?

- Mystery
- Sci-Fi
- Horror
- Adventure

Take inspiration where you can find it!

- Use what you have lying around
- What interesting stuff do you have?
  - Our next one will be built around a Yeti doll I have in my office…no joke!

Story: Some Advice

- Don't get locked in to your plot too early
  - As you work through the planning process, things will inevitably change for better or worse. The scenario is easier to change than other elements.

- Don't get too complicated
  - The stakes and scenario should be easily understood so it doesn't get in the way of the action of the game or confuse/mislead your players too much.
    - It's tempting to bury clues in the scenario but it's not very fair – use aspects of the scenario for optional hints only. More on this later…



WALLACE-CRIBBINS – Theodosia "Teddy" Francesca Blythe, 103, of Fairfield, passed away of natural causes on February 2, 2016. Ms. Cribbins-Wallace was the daughter of legendary mariner, treasure hunter and bootlegger Jonas 'Whiskey-Toe' Wallace and his wife, Lady Blythe Watney-Green, daughter of the 7th Earl of Coatesworth, whose elopement caused a minor sensation in the time of Queen Victoria. Young Theodosia, or Teddy, spent her life aboard the ship of her father and her early education was overseen by both her mother and the ship's doctor, Peter Cribbins. At the age of sixteen, as her father was retiring from the sea and his lucrative, illegal operations, Teddy enrolled at Radcliffe College. Unwilling to conform to expectations on land, and having inherited a sizeable fortune upon the passing of her parents, Teddy left her course of study in economics to return to the sea, this time on her own ship. She had always been enchanted by the mythology of pirates and corsairs, and determined to find the legendary and-to-this-day-uncharted island of Ondaatje, rumored to be bursting with ancient pirate plunder.

Captain Teddy, as she was known to her crew, sailed the world in a futile attempt to discover this secret treasure. She gained a fame of her own, with newspapers around the globe following her exploits, rumored love affairs and bold, masculine fashion choices. Captain Teddy eventually retired from the sea and sold her ship in 1938 before the outbreak of World War II. Upon her return to the United States, she became a fixture among elite society in New York, Boston and London. She eventually settled in Fairfield, Connecticut with her husband, noted Scottish author Alastair Cribbins, the son of her childhood teacher.

Ms. Cribbins-Wallace was a noted eccentric: She loved reading book review journals and manga, playing video games, dressing in costumes and dancing to the music of her favorite singer, Diana Ross. While she was unsuccessful in locating Ondaatje, travel remained a beloved hobby for Teddy, and she would eventually visit every continent and nearly every country in the world. Her time studying economics as an undergraduate fostered a keen skill at playing the stock market, which enabled her to live a life of leisure and to establish several notable philanthropic foundations, most notably the Wallace-Cribbins Foundation for the Advancement of Female Scholars. Teddy especially loved games and puzzles of any and all sort, and is remembered for her fiercely competitive spirit. She is survived by her son Brian, her granddaughters Polly, Martha, Theodosia and Francesca, many great- and great-great-grandchildren, cousins and friends. She was predeceased by her beloved husband Alastair, sons Jasper and Reginald, daughter Blythe and grandsons Martin and Malcolm.

Reposing Friday, February 5 at 4-9 pm at the Fairfield Funeral Home, with a private funeral service to follow on Saturday, February 6. In lieu of flowers, Ms. Wallace-Cribbins stated that mourners should save their money and use it to see the world, or at the very least, invest in emerging technology stocks.

The obituary for our main character, Teddy, whose death sets off the game (it's her secret treasure players have to find!) We made her up, and made her a pirate because of that model ship!

Stuff: Also fun!

- Hardware and Equipment
  - Locks and Lockables
    - Even in a 'blank' room without cabinets or furniture there are lots of things out there to use.
      - Poke around on Amazon, hardware stores, even dollar stores and look for safes, locks, lockable boxes, diversion safes, lock cables , locked diaries, and be amazed! There are so many things to choose from.
      - How many lockables do you need?
        - We had five lockable things for a one hour game: A storage lock, a word lock, two travel locks and a keyed lockbox.
          - Advice on locks: Be aware of the size of the latches. A lot of lock boxes have very slim/narrow latches. Travel locks are usually have the smallest shackles so they work on many boxes/containers. Bigger locks, which are easier to use, require larger-latched containers. We used cable cords to attach them to larger items like piano benches.









Stuff

- Hardware and Equipment
  - Tools: Things that are needed to advance in the game
    - Black lights & Invisible Ink
      - Handheld blacklight flashlights are available online, as are invisible ink pens
        - Always have a back-up (we had a lamp with a blacklight bulb) in case there are in-game issues (this is a great example of a redundancy – see more on this below)
          - We bought doubles of everything. We wound up not needing them, but we were in the room with the players…Better safe than sorry?
          - Note: We found that highlighters didn't really cut it, particularly on furniture and objects. Get the invisible ink! It's worth it and you can buy multi-packs that you can later use as prizes for teens, if that's your thing.



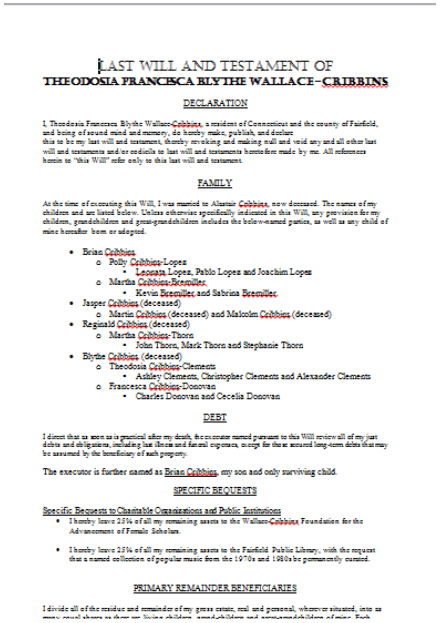


Your new favorite things!

Stuff

- Hardware and Equipment
  - Puzzle Keys
    - Things that are needed to solve puzzles
      - These are usually manufactured by the game maker
        - We had a math equation written on the back of a disc. It made no sense at first, but once teams found our sheet music, it became useful.

- The **Instructional Item!**
  - This is the most important item in the game…more to come on that in **Steps.**



LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF
THEODOSIA FRANCESCA BLYTHE WALLACE-CRIBBINS

DECLARATION

I, Theodosia Francesca Blythe Wallace-Cribbins, a resident of Connecticut and the county of Fairfield, and being of sound mind and memory, do hereby make, publish, and declare this to be my last will and testament, thereby revoking and making null and void any and all other last will and testaments and/or codicils to last will and testaments heretofore made by me. All references herein to "this Will" refer only to this last will and testament.

FAMILY

At the time of executing this Will, I was married to Alastair Cribbins, now deceased. The names of my children and are listed bellow. Unless otherwise specifically indicated in this Will, any provision for my children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren includes the below-named parties, as well as any child of mine hereafter born or adopted.

- Brian Cribbins
  - Polly Cribbins-Lopes
    - Leonora Lopes, Pablo Lopes and Joachim Lopes
  - Martha Cribbins-Beaumiller
    - Kevin Beaumiller and Sabrina Beaumiller
- Jasper Cribbins (deceased)
  - Martin Cribbins (deceased) and Malcolm Cribbins (deceased)
- Reginald Cribbins (deceased)
  - Martha Cribbins-Thorn
    - John Thorn, Mark Thorn and Stephanie Thorn
- Blythe Cribbins (deceased)
  - Theodosia Cribbins-Clements
    - Ashley Clements, Christopher Clements and Alexander Clements
  - Francesca Cribbins-Donovan
    - Charles Donovan and Cecelia Donovan

DEBT

I direct that as soon as is practical after my death, the executor named pursuant to this Will review all of my just debts and obligations, including last illness and funeral expenses, except for those secured long-term debts that may be assumed by the beneficiary of such property.

The executor is further named as Brian Cribbins, my son and only surviving child.

SPECIFIC BEQUESTS

Specific Bequests to Charitable Organizations and Public Institutions

- I hereby leave 25% of all my remaining assets to the Wallace-Cribbins Foundation for the Advancement of Female Scholars.
- I hereby leave 25% of all my remaining assets to the Fairfield Public Library, with the request that a named collection of popular music from the 1970s and 1980s be permanently curated.

PRIMARY REMAINDER BENEFICIARIES

I divide all of the residue and remainder of my gross estate, real and personal, wherever situated, into as many equal shares as there are living children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of mine. Each

Teddy's Will was our Instructional Item…and the most important Tool in the game

Stuff

- Props as Clues
  - What do you have lying around that can fit into your story?
    - Can your co-workers pitch in with stuff?
  - Can they be altered to suit your needs?
    - Inked on? Broken into pieces? (More on this to come…)
  - What do you need to make?
    - Lots of paper goods, depending on your story…
      - We had the will, fake telegrams, maps, obituaries, news articles…
    - Make extra copies of all your paper props in case they get damaged or written on by the teams.
- Red Herrings
  - Props that apply to your plot and aid the setting but have no game value.
    - Edit yourself! Set out what you think you need and then remove 25%.



It's DDR! That must mean something…Arrows or something…and a TV!

Catnip to all players, all meaningless in the game!
(And that Guitar Hero bag was lost in editing…)

Stuff

- Décor
  - Set the feeling of your scenario but don't overdo it. Players will look for clues in any and everything, and they'll always surprise you!
    - Our 'Attic' had busts and travel souvenirs, planters, toys and games, old books and a box of holiday decorations
  - Plaster things that are not game pieces or that might be damaged in 'Do Not Touch' signs. This made a huge difference for us. Be very explicit and clear. Go overboard here, you won't regret it.
    - We used about 50 little signs all over the place and people still found things to obsess over that were not game-relevant...like the one window that didn't have a Do Not Touch sign (It must *MEAN* something!)



Never, ever enough…

Steps

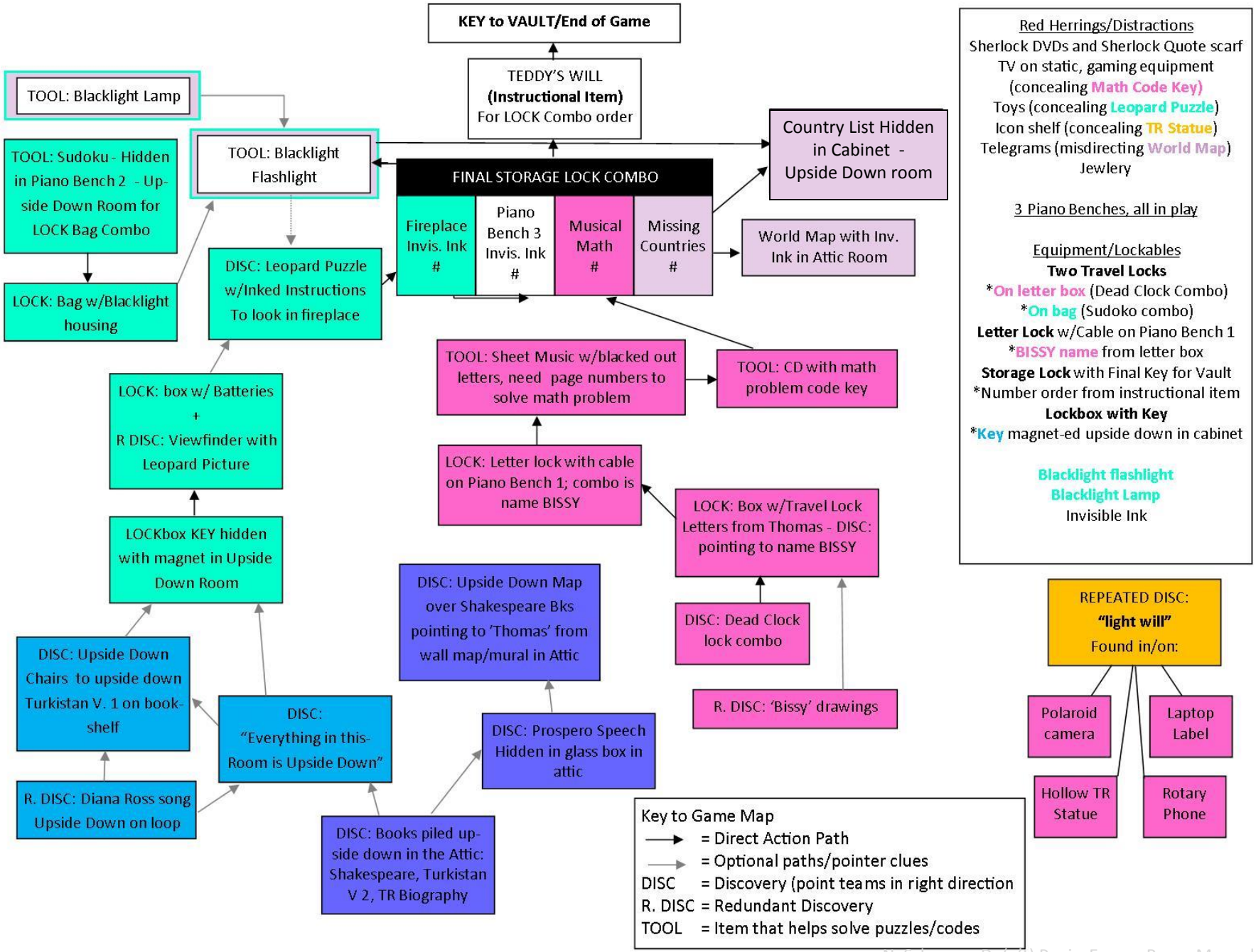
This is where we start to get serious:
Time to create the layout of your game!

You are about to see our Game Map.

Fair warning: It looks insane.

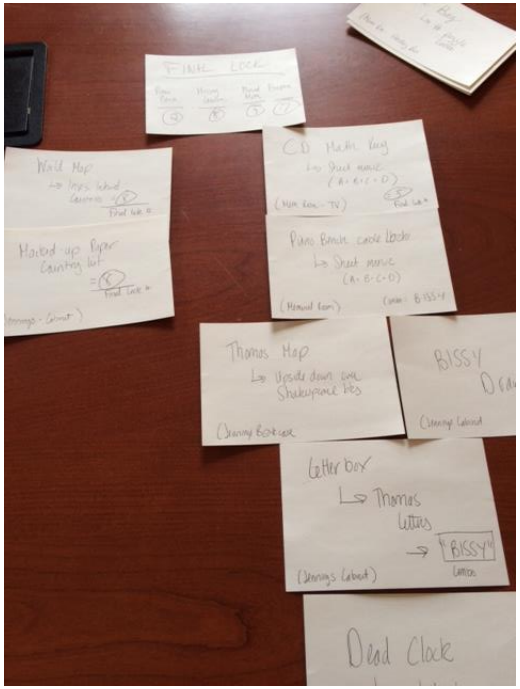
Do(n’t) Panic!

We’re going to take it apart piece by piece soon…


KEY to VAULT/End of Game
TEDDY'S WILL
(Instructional Item)
For LOCK Combo order
TOOL: Blacklight Lamp
TOOL: Blacklight Flashlight
TOOL: Sudoku - Hidden in Piano Bench 2 - Up-side Down Room for LOCK Bag Combo
LOCK: Bag w/Blacklight housing
FINAL STORAGE LOCK COMBO
Fireplace Invis. Ink #
Piano Bench 3 Invis. Ink #
Musical Math #
Missing Countries #
Country List Hidden in Cabinet - Upside Down room
World Map with Inv. Ink in Attic Room
DISC: Leopard Puzzle w/Inked Instructions To look in fireplace
TOOL: Sheet Music w/blacked out letters, need page numbers to solve math problem
TOOL: CD with math problem code key
LOCK: box w/ Batteries + R DISC: Viewfinder with Leopard Picture
LOCK: Letter lock with cable on Piano Bench 1; combo is name BISSY
LOCK: Box w/Travel Lock Letters from Thomas - DISC: pointing to name BISSY
LOCKbox KEY hidden with magnet in Upside Down Room
DISC: Upside Down Map over Shakespeare Bks pointing to 'Thomas' from wall map/mural in Attic
DISC: Dead Clock lock combo
R. DISC: 'Bissy' drawings
DISC: Upside Down Chairs to upside down Turkistan V. 1 on book-shelf
DISC: "Everything in this-Room is Upside Down"
DISC: Prospero Speech Hidden in glass box in attic
R. DISC: Diana Ross song Upside Down on loop
DISC: Books piled up-side down in the Attic: Shakespeare, Turkistan V 2, TR Biography
Red Herrings/Distractions
Sherlock DVDs and Sherlock Quote scarf
TV on static, gaming equipment (concealing Math Code Key)
Toys (concealing Leopard Puzzle)
Icon shelf (concealing TR Statue)
Telegrams (misdirecting World Map)
Jewlery
3 Piano Benches, all in play
Equipment/Lockables
Two Travel Locks
*On letter box (Dead Clock Combo)
*On bag (Sudoko combo)
Letter Lock w/Cable on Piano Bench 1
*BISSY name from letter box
Storage Lock with Final Key for Vault
*Number order from instructional item
Lockbox with Key
*Key magnet-ed upside down in cabinet
Blacklight flashlight
Blacklight Lamp
Invisible Ink
REPEATED DISC:
"light will"
Found in/on:
Polaroid camera
Laptop Label
Hollow TR Statue
Rotary Phone
Key to Game Map
= Direct Action Path
= Optional paths/pointer clues
DISC = Discovery (point teams in right direction
R. DISC = Redundant Discovery
TOOL = Item that helps solve puzzles/codes

Steps

- Start with index cards!
  - Make a card for all the lockables, hardware and equipment you are planning to use – locks, boxes, cables, furniture, etc.
  - Make more cards for any game pieces that are props – books, maps, sheet music, clocks, etc.
    - You'll design the game very peacefully, by arranging your cards on a table.



Every game piece gets a card. Add cards as you add elements and/or break things down into more pieces.

This was early on – these cards got color-coded by path eventually…

Steps

- Begin your game design by working backwards
  - What is the last puzzle/code the team needs to complete to get what they need to win?
  - What does that ‘last thing’ need to be solved?
    - We did: A 4 digit combination lock that had a storage door, which held a key that opened a supply closet (or ‘Vault’) where our map was. So, Our ‘last thing’ was a four-digit combination.
    - Four digits = Four paths that move from clue to clue, ending in a single number



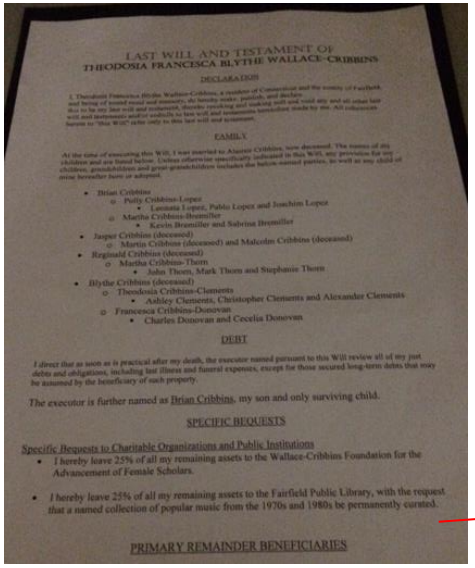
With a little alarm clock that started blaring with 5 minutes to go, since we’re ‘mean’ like that.





Steps

- The most important prop/clue is the **instructional item.**
  - One item in the room should have a description of what the final objective is, or the 'last thing' the teams need to find, and what will lead them there.
    - This indicates what you need to solve your last lock. <u>I'd advise using a lock as the last thing if you can.</u>
      - Number of digits needed, and in what order they are used to make the right combination
  - Make the instructional item important by tying it into your scenario/story
    - Ours was on the back of our main character's Last Will and Testament.



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PRIMARY REMAINDER BENEFICIARIES

The will was found in a room where everything of importance was upside down…so we invisible inked the instructions on the back of it!



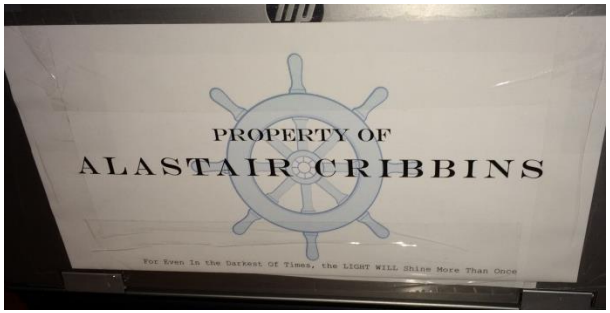
Steps

- This is where your invisible ink will come in handy. However you choose to set up your instructional item, make sure you create enough clues that point to it. (More on pointer clues to come)
  - To get teams to find the list on the back of the will, we had several items in the room that repeated the phrase, 'will light' or 'light will' over and over. Some teams caught it right away, some teams burned a hint for this. (More on hints later…)









All these items are clues, with our magic phrases highlighted, bolded and/or emphasized on them. Even those scraps of paper in the headless TR statue and coming out of the bottom of the phone.

Steps

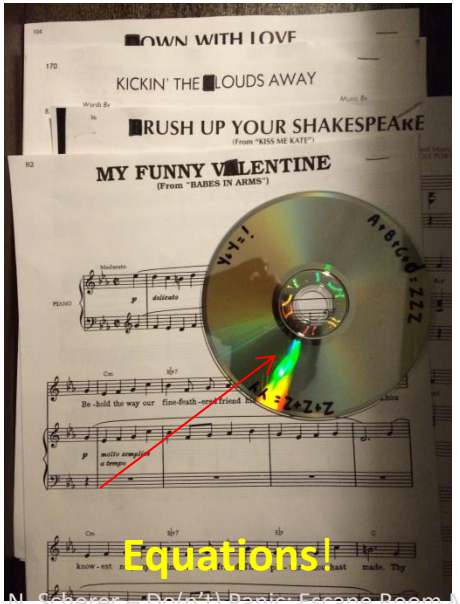
- Clue Material Types – What can you do? Well, the possibilities are endless…
  - Code Making!
    - Books are made for code games
      - Pages, sentences, letters, words
    - Names of things, whatever and wherever you might find them
      - We used a name from the map on the wall of our room to set up a series of clues.
    - Sheet Music!
      - It's full of numbers and words – great for code making!



These books all connected to books in the other room – redundancies…more on that later!



Letters are blocked out (A, B, C, D)



Steps

- Clue Material Types – What can you do? Well, the possibilities are endless…
  - Puzzles and Games!
    - Word Games, Number Games
      - We did: Sudoku at first, but it proved to be too hard for the adults! So we switched to a blacklight/hidden number clue.
    - Actual Jigsaw Puzzles
      - Inked letters on the back of a puzzle, or a completed puzzle can be a visual clue to something important in the game
        - You can find puzzles with images of just about anything to tie into your theme/story





This was a bit of a mishap…I used a marker, then changed my mind and used invisible ink…this was a redundant clue so it worked out alright.

Steps

- More Clue Material Types!
  - Props – based on your scenario
    - Long live the dead clock as a lock combination!
      - Everyone does this one. Everywhere.
    - Maps
      - Latitude, Longitude, Place Names connected to other stuff…
    - Consider your scenario and make what you need!
      - We did: For our pirate lady, we manufactured maps and telegrams, deeds to boats, kid drawings, love letters, etc..
        - We created a lot of this ourselves. Some teams were quick to realize that things that were obviously manufactured were important to the game. Clever!





Fake handwritten letters by our volunteer teens…they loved creating them!

Steps

- Consider Complexity when designing your clue paths
  - How obscure should this stuff be?
    - Not an easy question to answer…one of the best things about this program is that is encourages experimentation and re-evaluation after failure.
    - When in doubt – veer towards easier, especially for things that need to be found early in the game so players don't lose confidence.

  - Is there a difference in gameplay between adults and teens?
    - Not that we found…same play mechanics, different problems
      - Teens lost focus
      - Adults brought in too much outside information and went too deep



A great night – teens in the first session, their parents in the second!



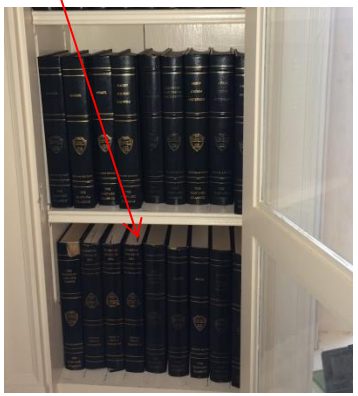
Steps

- Consider Complexity when designing your clue paths
  - Pointer Clues send players in the right direction and make connections between items. They become reference points for teams to pay attention to
    - Place related or twinned clues apart from each other in different parts of the room
    - We had several references to Shakespeare, leopards and Teddy Roosevelt
      - Why these? We used what we had lying around!





Two volumes of the same book, upside down…



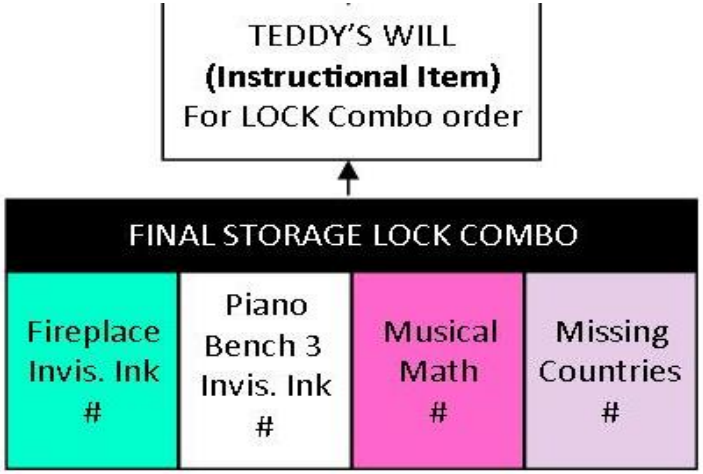
Two sets of upside down Shakespeare

Poor, decapitated TR!



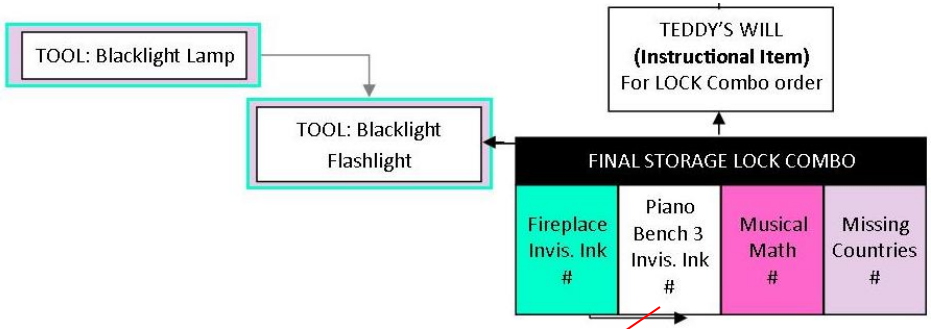
Creating Game Paths

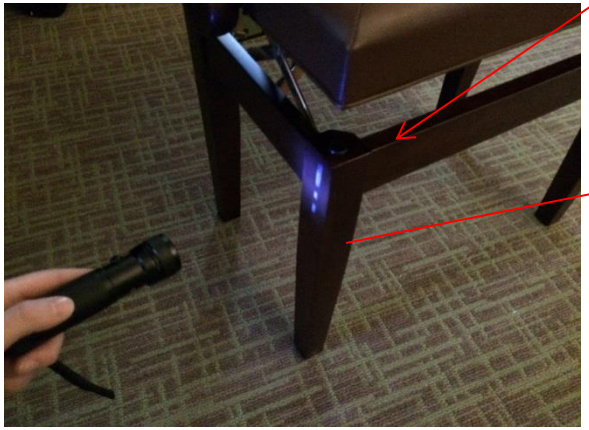
- Time to take apart the game map, (not in order, but by of clue complexity):
- Our paths:
  - One final lock digit was found solely on the instructional item. (**Piano Bench 3**)
  - One had two clues (Country list, world map + the instructional item. (**Missing Countries**)
  - One had one clue (Leopard puzzle) + instructional item (**Fireplace Invis. Ink**), with lots of pointer clues.
    - What made this a bit trickier was that it was the path to the blacklight tool
  - One clue had a complex trail of clues (Wall Map and Letter Box to Piano Bench and CD key). (**Musical Math**)



Creating Game Paths

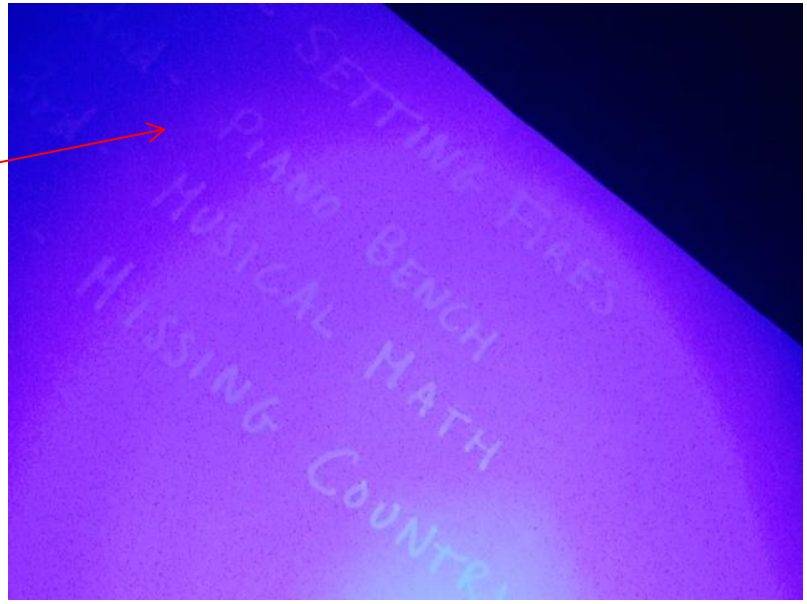
- At least one path should only be clear from the instructional item. This clue is the one exception to all the other suggestions below…
  - Ours was the invisible ink on the piano bench
  - This will save you time, and make sure that the instructional item is used.





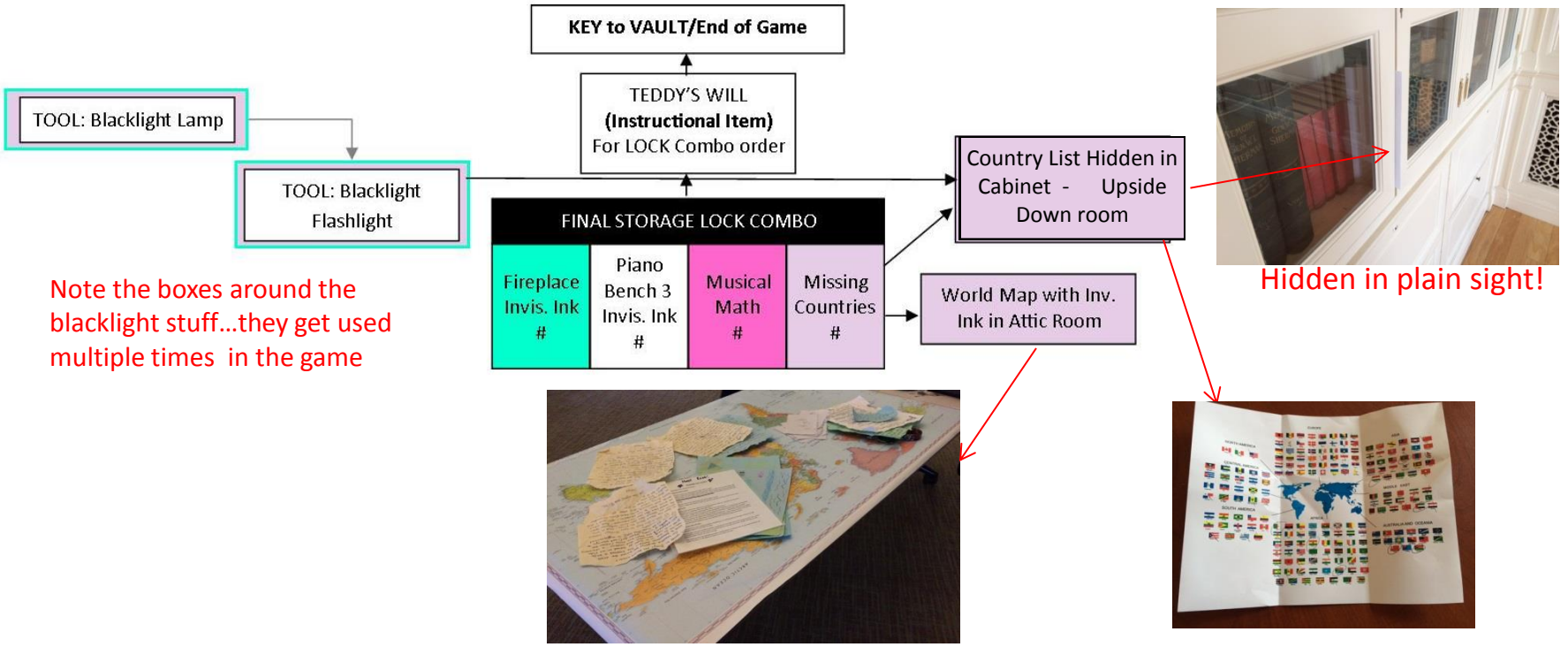
Note: We found that you need to 're-ink' stuff - it smears easily and sometimes it can absorb into wood.

The digit order, as found on the back of our instructional item, Teddy's Will



Creating Game Paths

- One had two clues (Country list, world map) in addition to the instructional item. (Missing Countries)



This is an easier path, with a redundancy – teams without the blacklight can figure it out with the Country List once they get the instructional clue.

Creating Game Paths

- One path had one clue (Leopard puzzle) + instructional item (**Fireplace Invis. Ink**), with lots of pointer clues. What made this trickier was that it was the path to the blacklight tool





There's a locked bag in there…

Blacklight housing is in here

TOOL: Blacklight Lamp

TOOL: Number Puzzle - Hidden in Piano Bench 2 - Upside Down Room for LOCK Bag Combo

TOOL: Blacklight Flashlight

TEDDY'S WILL **(Instructional Item)** For LOCK Combo order

FINAL STORAGE LOCK COMBO

Fireplace Invis. Ink #

Piano Bench 3 Invis. Ink #

Musical Math #

Missing Countries #

LOCK: Bag w/Blacklight housing

DISC: Leopard Puzzle w/Inked Instructions To look in fireplace





LOCK: box w/ Batteries + R DISC: Viewfinder with Leopard Picture

LOCKbox KEY hidden with magnet in Upside Down Room



Blacklight batteries in here





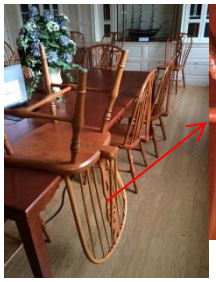
Distraction Rat!

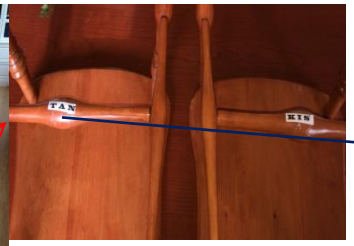
DISC: Upside Down Chairs to upside down Turkistan V. 1 on book-shelf

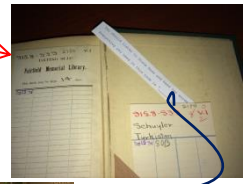
DISC: "Everything in this Room is Upside Down"

R. DISC: Diana Ross song Upside Down on loop

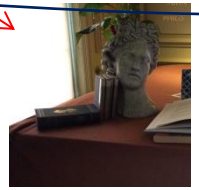
DISC: Books piled up-side down in the Attic: Shakespeare, Turkistan V 2, TR Biography







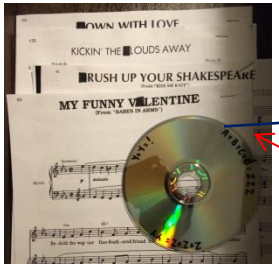




The letters on the chair unscramble to form a book title and that book has a clue inside!

Creating Game Paths

- One clue had a complex trail of clues (Wall Map and Letter Box to Piano Bench and CD key) to find. (**Musical Math**)

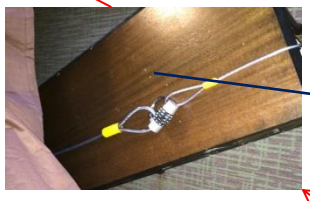


TEDDY'S WILL
(Instructional Item)
For LOCK Combo order

FINAL STORAGE LOCK COMBO

Fireplace Invis. Ink #	Piano Bench 3 Invis. Ink #	Musical Math #	Missing Countries #





TOOL: Sheet Music w/blacked out letters, need page numbers to solve math problem

TOOL: CD with math problem code key





LOCK: Letter lock with cable on Piano Bench 1; combo is name BISSY

LOCK: Box w/Travel Lock Letters from Thomas - DISC: pointing to name BISSY



It's the same map… They both highlight a name that ties to the letters in the box…

DISC: Upside Down Map over Shakespeare Bks pointing to 'Thomas' from wall map/mural in Attic

DISC: Dead Clock lock combo



The letters from the name on the map reference a child named Bissy's drawings…and Bissy is the combo for the piano bench letter lock!

R. DISC: 'Bissy' drawings

DISC: "Everything in this Room is Upside Down"

DISC: Prospero Speech Hidden in glass box in attic

R. DISC: Diana Ross song Upside Down on loop





DISC: Books piled up-side down in the Attic: Shakespeare, Turkistan V 2, TR Biography

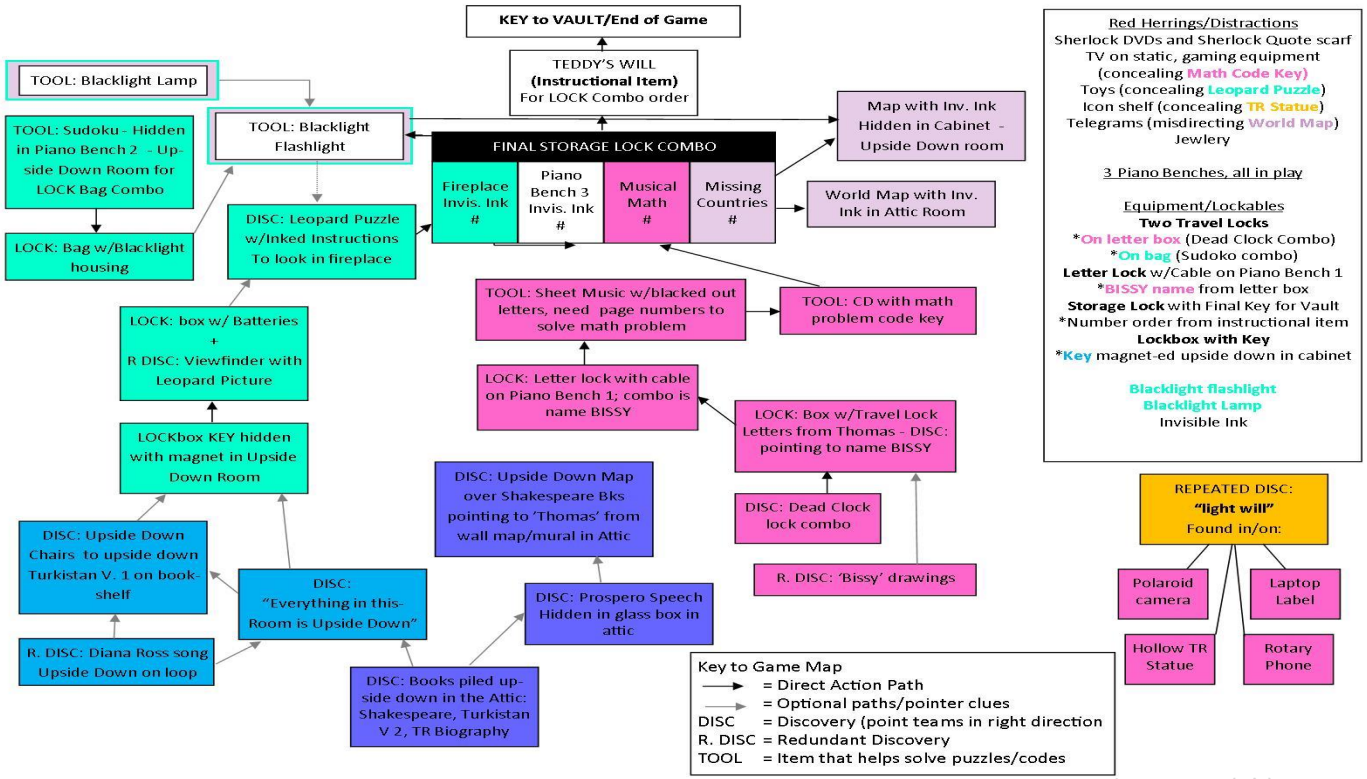






Creating Game Paths

- Why focus on only one or two complex paths?
  - This makes things easier for you – you are working on one complex piece of game design and then adding simpler, more straightforward things.
    - In the heat of the game, players won't know that most of the work went into only one of the paths they need.



What are those other boxes on the map?

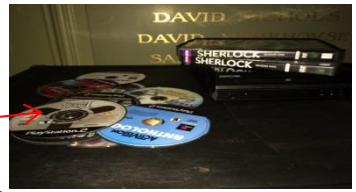
- A list of our Red Herrings
- A list of our equipment
- A note about our repeated clues that point to our Informational Item

Red Herrings/Distractions
Sherlock DVDs and Sherlock Quote scarf
TV on static, gaming equipment
(concealing **Math Code Key**)
Toys (concealing **Leopard Puzzle**)
Icon shelf (concealing **TR Statue**)
Telegrams (misdirecting **World Map**)
Jewlery

3 Piano Benches, all in play

Equipment/Lockables
Two Travel Locks
*__On letter box__ (Dead Clock Combo)
*__On bag__ (Sudoko combo)
Letter Lock w/Cable on Piano Bench 1
*__BISSY name__ from letter box
Storage Lock with Final Key for Vault
*Number order from instructional item
Lockbox with Key
*__Key__ magnet-ed upside down in cabinet

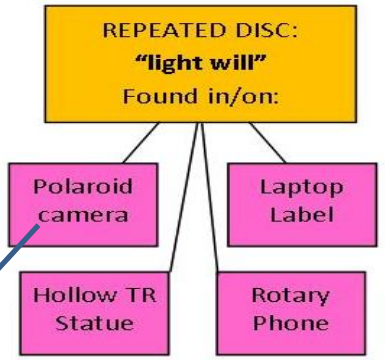
Blacklight flashlight
Blacklight Lamp
Invisible Ink











DISC = Discovery
Thing teams find that \point them in the right direction

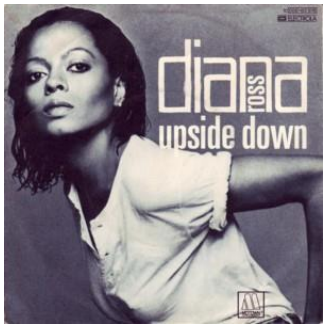


Breaking Up the Paths

- Or, breaking pieces into pieces (This is the trickiest part…)
  - This is the best part of the game because it demands that players use teamwork and communication.
    - One player's dead end is another's answer…if they can work together.
- You should build in two different ways to get at the major things they need to find to advance in the game: **Create some redundancies for a few paths.**
  - This means making sure there are some fail safes in case something doesn't work out for the team, for example: A blacklight lamp, just in case…
- Also, consider that players will likely have different detecting skills and/or learning preferences, and try to diversify your clue-making.
  - Think about musical/audio cues, visual pairing clues, puzzles, math, maps, etc..
    - Our favorite: looping a song in what came to be known as the 'Upside Down' room – everything of game value in there had to be looked at…Upside down.



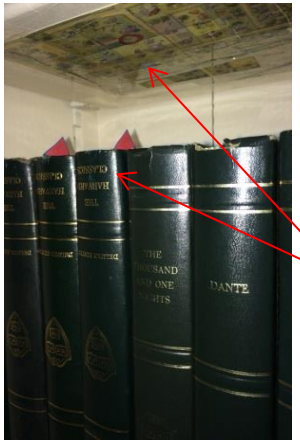
Blacklight Lamp



"Upside down
Boy, you turn me
Inside out
And round and round
Upside down
Boy, you turn me
Inside out
And round and round" (ad nauseum)

Breaking Up the Paths

- If you can split important tools into pieces to be found separately
  - We did: The blacklight batteries were locked away separately from the housing.
- Find ways to spread key game pieces on the same path around the room and keep them apart from each other.
  - For our **Musical Math**, which was our most complex path, teams had to:
    - Find a map that was hidden upside down in a bookcase in the 'Upside Down' room, leading to a name found in our locked letter box.
    - The combination to open the letter box was from the dead clock in our 'Attic' The letters written by the man with the name from the map mentioned a five-letter name that was in turn the combo that opened a lock on a piano bench.
    - In the piano bench was sheet music, with letters blocked out from the titles.
    - Used in conjunction with a code key found on the back of a DVD, teams solved a math puzzle starting with the page numbers of the sheet music, drilling down to a single number, which was one of the digits needed for the final lock.



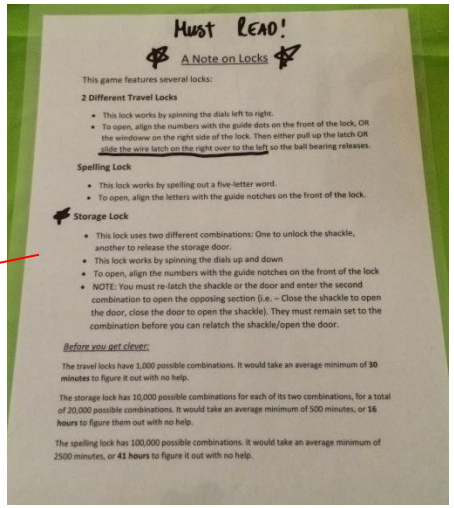
Those little arrows sticking out on top of the upside down Shakespeare books are pointing to a copy of a map found in the Attic room, taped upside down under the cabinet shelf…

Hints and Help

- This will depend on if you are in the room or not in the room. There are pros and cons to each.
- We allowed three hints per game.
  - Players had to agree as a team and were given advice at the start to spread their hints out (asking for them all at the end is not useful!)
    - Players had to specifically ask for a hint ("May we have a hint now"), but would not receive answers to any direct question over the course of the game.
    - Hints were given out at the game runner's discretion, based on where players were in the game.



SO CLOSE TO THE END!



Hint Read!

A Note on Locks

This game features several locks:

2 Different Travel Locks

- This lock works by spinning the dials left to right.
- To open, align the numbers with the guide dots on the front of the lock, OR the windoww on the right side of the lock. Then either pull up the latch OR slide the wire latch on the right over to the left so the ball bearing releases.

Spelling Lock

- This lock works by spelling out a five-letter word.
- To open, align the letters with the guide notches on the front of the lock.

Storage Lock

- This lock uses two different combinations: One to unlock the shackle, another to release the storage door.
- This lock works by spinning the dials up and down
- To open, align the numbers with the guide notches on the front of the lock
- NOTE: You must re-latch the shackle or the door and enter the second combination to open the opposing section (i.e. – Close the shackle to open the door, close the door to open the shackle). They must remain set to the combination before you can relatch the shackle/open the door.

Before you get clever:

The travel locks have 1,000 possible combinations. It would take an average minimum of **30 minutes** to figure it out with no help.

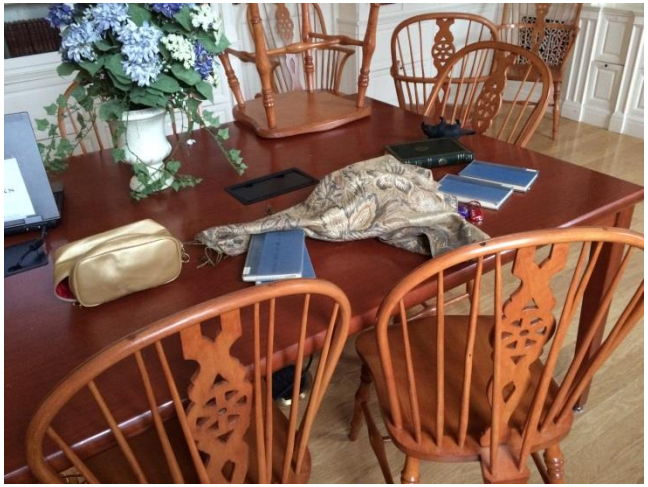
The storage lock has 10,000 possible combinations for each of its two combinations, for a total of 20,000 possible combinations. It would take an average minimum of 500 minutes, or **16 hours** to figure them out with no help.

The spelling lock has 100,000 possible combinations. It would take an average minimum of 2500 minutes, or **41 hours** to figure it out with no help.

More on the super-essential Lock Guide sheet to come…

Hints and Help

- Frequent Hints we gave out:
  - "Check everything! And check it all over!"
    - All our teams had a habit of looking hard at one thing, then abandoning the rest of it (example: found one of the Upside Down chair words but never stopped to look at the rest)
  - "Listen to Diana Ross! Literally!"
    - The song got creepy, but it was great for ambiance and some players caught the cue right away!
  - "Take all that 'Light Will' stuff literally."
  - "If it's locked up, it's important!"
    - Teams would get stuff open, only to ignore the content they had just discovered…



A properly disheveled set of clues…

Hints and Help

- Help is a bit trickier…
  - You are making the rules. If you feel like a team needs a boost to get ahead in the game, you can use your discretion.
    - Some people are invested in the difficulty of the game (you'll see this at commercial Escape Rooms, which make difficulty part of their advertising)
    - Some people are more invested in seeing teams succeed.
    - No judgement, it's up to you!
      - I'm a softie. I gave out a bajillion clues. But I got tougher after each session, I swear!



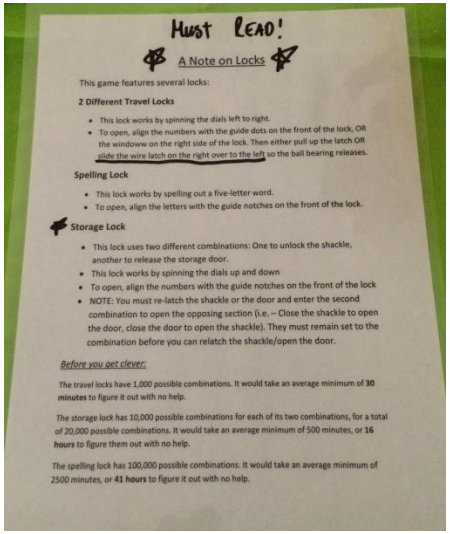
By the time we did our last session, I managed to keep it together and give out only three hints.

These kids had the best winning time of any group.

No idea if there is a correlation there…!

Running the Show & Random Bits of Advice

- DO A TEST RUN WITH STAFF and/or EXPERIENCED ESCAPERS!
  - So important! Our first adult group had a bunch of ringers and escape room veterans who gave excellent advice…wish we had brought them in earlier!
- A 'Blank' Table
  - Keep an empty table in the room so teams have a clear space to work, gather clues, etc..
    - Helpful things to put out on the table
      - Paper, pencils and a copy of the game rules (more on rules below)
      - **A lock guide**
        - Detailed instructions on how to open each type of lock they might encounter.
          - Nerves and stress make opening even 'simple' locks an ordeal for some players...they shouldn't fail because their fingers go all boneless!



MUST READ!

A Note on Locks

This game features several locks:

2 Different Travel Locks

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The spelling lock has 100,000 possible combinations. It would take an average minimum of 2500 minutes, or **41 hours** to figure it out with no help.

The second most important thing in the room…and always, always ignored by the teams until someone is freaking out.

Game Time!

- The pre-amble
  - Set aside ten minutes before the game begins to go over rules and answer questions
    - If you can, do this outside your game area, not inside of it, where players will be too distracted to pay attention to you.
  - Put out a few choice props if you can to set the scenario, but make sure they aren't essential to the game
    - The players will have too much nervous energy to focus on them
      - We had our pirate lady's obituary and Mass cards, as the scenario was that the family was at her memorial service, giving our players the one-hour cover to break into the vault for the pirate map.



Theodosia "Teddy" Francesca
Blythe Wallace-Cribbins
1913 - 2016

Flaunt out O Sea, your separate flags of nations!
Flaunt out, visible as ever, the various ship-signals!
But do you reserve especially for yourself, and for the soul of man, one flag above all the rest,
A spiritual woven Signal, for all nations, emblem of man elate above death,
Token of all brave captains, and all intrepid sailors and mates,
And all that went down doing their duty,
Reminiscent of them'twined from all intrepid captains, young or old;
A pennant universal, subtly waving, all time, o'er all brave sailors,
All seas, all ships.

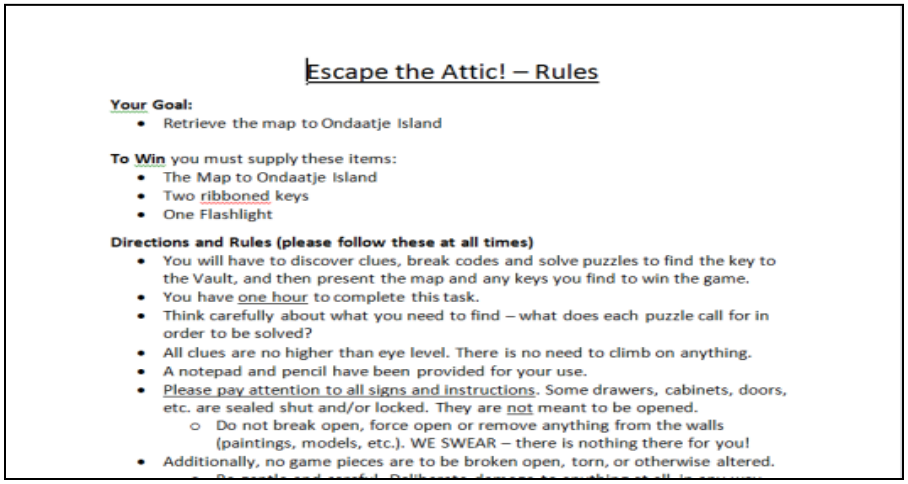
Interment
Private, Saturday February 6, 2016
Memorial Service
9 PM St. Cecelia's Church, Fairfield
Reception
10:15 PM Wallace-Cribbins Estate

In lieu of flowers, Teddy asked that you go out and see the world

Rest in Peace, pretend rich pirate lady…

Game Time!

- Name Tags!
  - Especially if you are doing an open (non-group) registration to help with in-game communication. Share the scenario and explicitly tell the players what their goal is
  - We read the pirate lady's letter to her granddaughter, sharing the goal of finding the treasure map that was hidden in the vault.
- Rules!
  - Read the rules to the players before the game begins. Be sure to include:
    - Time limit and hints/help parameters – how many? How should they ask?
    - Share some advice:
      - Stress the importance of teamwork and communication. Repeatedly.
      - Warn about breakables
        - This is where 'Do Not Touch' signs come in very handy – tell them that there those things don't matter in the game and it's not a trick to confuse them.



Escape the Attic! – Rules

Your Goal:
- Retrieve the map to Ondaatje Island

To Win you must supply these items:
- The Map to Ondaatje Island
- Two ribboned keys
- One Flashlight

Directions and Rules (please follow these at all times)
- You will have to discover clues, break codes and solve puzzles to find the key to the Vault, and then present the map and any keys you find to win the game.
- You have one hour to complete this task.
- Think carefully about what you need to find – what does each puzzle call for in order to be solved?
- All clues are no higher than eye level. There is no need to climb on anything.
- A notepad and pencil have been provided for your use.
- Please pay attention to all signs and instructions. Some drawers, cabinets, doors, etc. are sealed shut and/or locked. They are not meant to be opened.
  - Do not break open, force open or remove anything from the walls (paintings, models, etc.). WE SWEAR – there is nothing there for you!
- Additionally, no game pieces are to be broken open, torn, or otherwise altered.

We read the rules out loud and left a copy in the room…had no problems with any group. Even those grown-ups!

Your Game Time begins now!

- Pre-Game Player Q&A
  - Player questions will vary depending on the skill level of your players and if they've done commercial rooms before, particularly if the goal is not escape.
  - Stress the rules for hints and help
    - If you are staying in the room, tell them where you'll be
      - We were in a corner on a chair, with a clock and our obnoxious hand bell.
    - Stress that you will not answer any direct questions.
    - Stress the 'make-believe-ness' for anxious players among teens and tweens.
      - "No one is really trapped. It's just a game."

And no matter what, everyone is getting some candy and one small jewel from the treasure chest.

Not the skull. We keep that!



Game Over!

- Keep track of the end times for teams across the entire program
  - Everyone wants to know how they did compared to others
    - Prizes?
      - We had prizes for teens: Invisible Ink pens that we found on Amazon, which had blacklights on the caps.
      - We also kept a bowl of candy in the 'Vault' alongside the treasure map for all ages

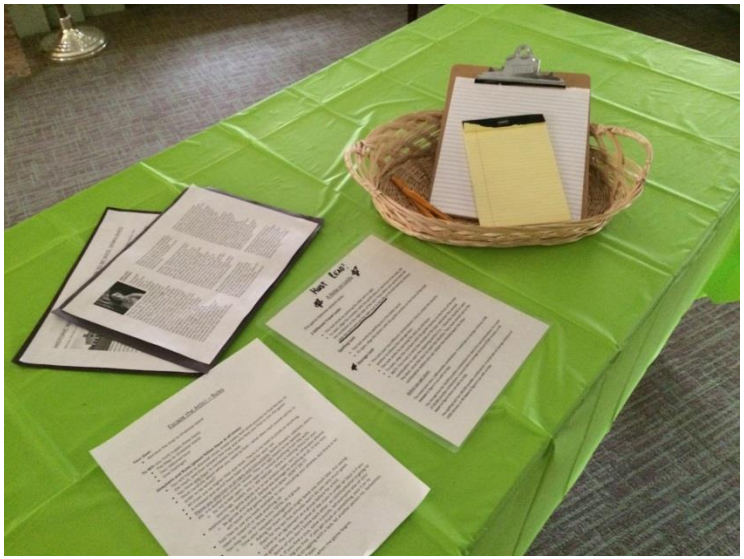
  - The post-game walkthrough
    - All teams, including those that 'won,' wanted a walkthrough of how it worked.
      - If you choose to do this, stress the importance of teams not sharing spoilers if you are running sessions across several days.
        - You will spot any 'spoiled' players right away…this is where continuous editing can come in handy.

Our final and smallest, drop-in group (it was a school holiday) and a very, very tired, not-dressed-up teen librarian



Game Over! More Advice…

- Are you running multiple sessions on the same day?
  - Give yourself at least an hour to reset the room each time.
    - We gave ourselves 45 minutes between sessions to pick up and reset. Bad call!
  - The rooms will be torn up! This is where restricting your red herring props and décor will be most useful to you.
    - Be vigilant about garbage and other debris left behind by players. Things always turn up. One of the advantages of being in-room during the game is that you can snatch up those random things they inevitably find before they get mistakenly derailed!



Don't forget to remove any written-on pages on notepads or around the room that earlier teams might leave behind! You don't want them as inadvertent clues for new teams.

FINALLY!

- Keep editing as you go!
  - We kept refining our game after each day we ran it, reducing extra clues, simplifying others, as we began to see patterns in what teams responded to or missed completely.
  - Don't worry about it not being perfectly consistent for each group, especially for your first few sessions.
    - Things will happen that you could never predict. Be open to change, correction and above all, improvement for your players and yourself in terms of making things more streamlined and easier to manage!



THAT'S A WRAP!

Thanks for taking the time to go through this INSANE amount of info…

I bet you have questions! Please ask!

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