

# **ESCAPE ROOM OF DOOM**

An escape room room escape by Sarah Willson ([sarahwillson@gmail.com](mailto:sarahwillson@gmail.com))

## **Notes**

Rules are only breakable once the players have correctly solved the Vampire's Den escape room flow. Before that point, emphasize that this is a job interview and breaking the rules is ill-advised.

## **Introduction**

You are escape room enthusiasts, and you know all there is to know about escape rooms—after all, you've already played a dozen of them. Lately, your love of escape rooms has got you thinking...maybe it would be fun to open your own escape room company! Of course, it would be good to know if you enjoy the business side before you dive in. So when you see a company called Boxed In Escapes advertising a gamemaster position, you send off an application.

You get a reply from the owner right away. Instead of a job interview, he's invited you to play one of his games for free to see if you have what it takes to work at Boxed In. He also mentions that he's hiring to replace an employee he suspects of stealing money from the tip jar. So...that seems like a lot of red flags, but what kind of enthusiast would you be if you said no to a free game?

When you arrive, a chipper young man in a Boxed In T-shirt introduces himself as Kirk, your gamemaster. When you explain why you're there, he looks surprised—obviously no one told him they were hiring. But the Vampire's Den escape room is ready for you. He reads you the rules, hands you a walkie-talkie, and helps you stow your phones in a locker, and you're ready to begin.

As soon as you step into the narrow room, you can see why their Groupon price was so low: between the fluorescent lighting and the dingy drop **ceiling**, this vampire's den looks more like a sad office, only painted black. As Kirk chains your ankles to a plywood coffin, you remind yourself that at least you aren't paying for this. He points out the emergency exit button and reminds you that he's available by walkie-talkie if you need any hints. Then he steps back into the lobby, locking the door behind him.

You entered through the door in the south wall, and the **coffin** you're currently **chained** to is on the east side of the room. The only other furniture is a set of two **lockers** in the southwest corner. There's a large **fan** set into the west wall, and underneath that is a small **vent**. On the wall next to the coffin is a clear plastic **maze**. Next to the entrance door is, of course, the **emergency exit button**, and on the north wall across from the entrance is another **door with a padlock** on it. When you stretch the chain out as far as it goes, you can reach the **entrance door**, the maze, the near side of the lockers, and of course, the coffin.

## Observable Items

**Ceiling:** Whoever built this room must have been counting on the fact that most escape room players never look up, because a bunch of the ceiling tiles are stained or damaged. **[if the second room has been unlocked]** As you look around, you notice that one of the tiles above the table is slightly askew.

**Chain:** It's a lightweight metal chain with an old-fashioned padlock attached. You could probably weasel out if you really wanted to, but you might as well play along and find the key that opens it.

**Coffin:** The coffin was constructed out of plywood and painted black. It has metal bars running along the side, always convenient for handcuffing escape room players to.

**Door with directional lock:** The only interesting thing about this door is the padlock holding it shut. It's a directional lock which requires an up-down-left-right sequence to open.

**Entrance door:** There's nothing special about the door itself, but there is a poster on it listing the rules of the escape room. Underneath the six rules, it looks like there was something else at the bottom of the page that was torn off. **[Show supplementary torn rules image.]**

**Exit door:** There's nothing particularly noteworthy about this door, except some more spooky red stickers that spell out "EXIT." Maybe that's so the vampire doesn't forget how to leave his den?

**Emergency exit button: [before solving the Vampire's Den]** It's a conspicuous green plastic button mounted on a panel in the wall. You'd better not touch it if you want to win this escape room. **[after solving the Vampire's Den]** When you look more closely, you see that the panel it's on has little hexagonal holes in each corner.

**Fan: [from inside the escape room]** It's a big square fan that's been installed in a recess in the wall. It's currently blowing cool air into the room. You don't see any controls, but it's plugged into an outlet below, next to a red sticker that says "Do not touch." **[from the storage room]** This must be the back of the fan you saw earlier. You can see light coming through from the Vampire's Den. There don't seem to be any controls on this side either.

**Lockers:** It's a set of two beat-up metal lockers, the tall kind with the vents and padlocks on the front, like you might see in a high school—or a vampire's den, sure, why not. The one on the left is locked with a four-letter combination lock, and the one on the right looks like it requires a key. Most pertinent to your situation, though, is the horseshoe magnet clinging to one side, just within your reach.

**Maze:** It's a big 3D plastic maze hanging on the wall, because no vampire's den is complete without a big 3D plastic maze. You see an old iron key at the bottom, and the way out is at the very top. It's covered with a big sheet of Plexiglas, so there's no way to reach inside, but the maze is laughably simple—there are only three dead ends. Plus the outside is scratched where past players rubbed something against it, revealing the solution. You could solve it with your eyes closed (by which I mean there is no supplemental image for this maze).

**Notes:** In the dim lighting, you squint to read the notes:

The first note was typed on a typewriter. It says in block letters, *Employees: Please make sure shift paperwork is secure and up to date per your contracts. In case you forget, here's a hint for the alternate safe code—* But underneath that, the rest of the paper is blank.

At the very bottom of that page is a sticky note that says, *I dropped the hex wrench in the Vampire's Den and it disappeared somewhere. Sorry!* (It's signed "Kirk.")

**Postcard:** It's a Halloween postcard with some skeletons on it. Sort of spooky under the right circumstances, but not the scariest thing you can imagine finding in a coffin. You flip it over, and on the reverse side are three letter stickers in a dripping red font that's supposed to look like blood, spelling out "LRD."

**Poster:** It's a hand-drawn picture of a tombstone with "RIP" written in the same dripping blood stickers you've become familiar with by now. **[Show supplementary poster image.]**

**Rug:** It's a smallish rectangular rug, black with a big blotchy red rose in each corner. It's sort of goth-looking, but it doesn't exactly scream "vampire's den."

**Safe:** You haven't seen this model of safe before, but you recognize it as the kind of safe with a numeric keypad on the front that locks you out if you enter an incorrect code three times.

**Saucers:** The three saucers are arranged in a row towards the back of the tabletop. When you try to pick one up, you find that they're glued on and you can't remove them. But when you touch them, they jiggle up and down a little bit, kind of like they're on scales. Also, each one has a little light in front of it, but none of them are currently lit.

**Sofa:** It's a small satiny sofa, more like a loveseat really, in a salmon pink that clashes with all the red and black in the room. It's shoved into a little alcove in the corner.

**Speaker:** As you take a closer look, you trigger the spooky laugh again. It's coming from a little black box that seems to be a battery-operated speaker, probably once part of a Halloween decoration. Apparently the "do not touch" sticker wasn't enough deterrence for overeager escape room players, because it's securely bolted onto the coffin lid.

**Stickers:** It's an open pack of stickers shaped like letters in a spooky font that looks like it's dripping with blood—the same stickers you saw on some of the props in the Vampire's Den. **[When asked, the stickers that are missing are D, E, E, E, G, H, I, I, I, K, L, P, R, R, R, T, U, U, W, X, Y. Between the letters on the tombstone, the directional lock code, and the exit door, there are still eight missing letters that weren't used somewhere in the room (E E G H I K W Y).]**

**Storage cage/supplies:** This is basically a chain-link fence that walls off the tools and supplies from unauthorized personnel. Unfortunately, it's shut tight and you don't see any way to unlock it. The shelves behind it are filled with tools and supplies. You see a couple of old monitors, a stack of mismatched saucers, some spare padlocks, but you can't reach most of it. The only things you *can* reach through the fencing are a small flashlight and a pack of stickers.

**Table:** It's a roughly constructed wooden table, lightweight but sturdy. The tabletop is unusually thick, presumably to hide some kind of mechanism, but when you look underneath, you find it's been permanently sealed shut. Clearly the saucers are what's important here.

**Vent:** When you look more closely, it's not so much a vent as a dark hole in the wall that slopes downward. It's pretty small, but wide enough to fit your arm into...if you dare.

**Walkie-talkie:** It's a basic battery-operated walkie-talkie, your lifeline to the gamemaster on the off chance you need a hint.

## Actions

**Coffin — opening it:** Being extra careful not to get any splinters, you open the lid of the coffin. At first it seems to be completely empty, until you notice a postcard sitting in the bottom. As you pick it up, you hear a tinny evil laugh coming from a small speaker on the inside of the lid.

**Directional lock — entering the code UURLRD or LRDUUR (whichever comes second):** The lock pops open. It makes no sense that this code worked and the other one didn't, but okay. Anyway, you push open the door to reveal...another sparsely decorated room much like the first. In an alcove on the west side of the room is a small sofa with a floral rug lying in front of it. Against the north wall is a table with three saucers on it. To the left of the table is another door, and to the right is a small safe sitting on the floor by itself. There's also a poster hanging on the east wall.

**Exit button — opening it with the wrench:** The wrench fits perfectly, and you manage to unscrew the casing from the wall. Just like the document said, there's a keypad underneath. It looks like a typical telephone keypad, with letters under each number, along with a star and pound sign. The red light in the corner is on, indicating that there is indeed power to the keypad. The corresponding green bulb next to it is off.

**Exit button — pressing it after solving the vial puzzle:** This definitely qualifies as an emergency. But when you press the button, it feels hollow inside, like it isn't really connecting with anything. Is this all part of the test? Or did Kirk forget about you and go home early? You silently curse Boxed In Escapes, then you turn back around and gather your thoughts. You'll do what it takes to get out of here, rules or no rules. **[From now on, breaking the rules is fair game!]**

**Exit door — opening it after solving the vial puzzle:** You head over to the exit door, ready to celebrate your win. But when you try the handle, it won't open. You bang on it a few times—nothing. But you're sure you solved that puzzle correctly. Is it locked from the other side? This is very strange.

**Fan — unplugging it (from the escape room side):** You boldly unplug the fan, and its blades slowly whirl to a halt. It's now somewhat warmer in the room.

**Fan — counting the blades: [from inside the escape room]** It's too dark behind the fan to see much of anything from this angle. **[from inside the storage room, if unplugged]** You take another look at the fan and count four blades. You're about to turn back around when you catch sight of something: There's a small stack of cash shoved inside the base of the fan. Maybe the owner was suspicious for a reason. You pry open the casing and pull out the cash—it's probably a couple hundred dollars in small bills. And it looks like the culprit left some evidence: a single long red hair.

**Flashlight — turning it on without batteries:** You click the button, but it doesn't appear to have any batteries. Looks like it requires three AAAs.

**Flashlight — installing all three batteries in the flashlight:** You take out all the batteries and install them in the flashlight. It works! But it doesn't look like an ordinary light...it gives off the telltale glow of a blacklight.

**Keypad — typing in 6833824# (#HAVEFUN backwards):** Refer to conclusion!

**Locker — searching more thoroughly:** You find no other way inside the locker except the ventilation holes on the door. When you peek through, you can barely see some writing on one of the inside walls, and it looks like the same bloody red stickers that you've seen elsewhere in the room. It's too dark in there to see what it says—all you can see is that it's been written on two lines.

**Locker — unlocking the letter lock with the code DARK from inside the vent:** The lock clicks open, and you pull open the locker. Disappointingly, there's nothing inside at all, except for some (more) blood-dripping stickers in the back spelling out "UUR."

**Locker — unlocking the padlock:** Looking more closely, you can see that someone broke a key in the lock and it's totally jammed. There's a "do not touch" sticker pasted on the lock, so apparently this isn't part of the game.

**Maze — fishing the key out with the magnet:** Using the magnet, you deftly retrieve the key from the maze. **[players unlock the padlock]** You unlock the padlock and pull the chain off the coffin. You are now free.

**Notes — looking at the blank paper with the blacklight:** You shine the blacklight over the blank paper, and it reveals a list of words you didn't see before. This owner is *really* careful with his codes. Now it says:

*In case you forget, here's a hint for the alternate safe code:  
blades & flowers & dead ends & clue inside right locker*

**Rug — looking under it:** Underneath the rug you find a vial tucked into a little crack in the floor. It's almost half full of bright red liquid. Judging from the stains on the underside of the rug, it seems like the proprietors figured out the hard way that people tend to step on rugs before they look under them.

**Safe — unlocking it with 281#:** The light turns green and you hear a beep. When you open the safe, you find a small compartment that contains a vial of fake blood. It has a small amount of liquid inside.

**Safe — unlocking it with 44316#:** You close the safe and punch in this new code, and the light turns green. Amazingly, when you open the safe, you find a different, larger compartment. It's the most clever thing in this escape room, and it's not even part of the game. Inside you find a notebook. **[players open notebook]** You open the notebook to find a detailed employee shift calendar. Flipping through the pages, you see Kirk's name, among several others. There's nothing else especially interesting about the calendar, but tucked into the back you find a post-game photo of five smiling young people holding a sign that says "Team Gamemasters." Kirk is standing right in the middle; then there's a woman in an anime T-shirt high-fiving a woman with long dark braids; on the other side is a guy pretending to drink one of the blood vials, and kneeling in the front is a smiling woman with long red hair. There's something else you notice in the photo too: The picture was taken in the Vampire's Den, in front of the door with the list of rules, but there's one more rule written at the bottom, along with an arrow pointing at the emergency exit button. **[Show supplementary complete rules image.]**

**Saucers — placing the vials lightest to heaviest:** The final light turns green, and you hear victory music playing faintly from somewhere, but nothing else happens. Was that really the final puzzle? After a second, you hear a lock pop open on the door next to you.

**Saucers — determining the key's weight using the vials:** You try putting the key on the leftmost saucer, and it lights up. So the object itself doesn't matter—it's the weight that triggers the mechanism. **[When you put the key and the smallest vial on the center saucer, the light turns on. When you put the key and the two lighter vials on the rightmost saucer, the light goes on. Therefore, each vial weighs twice the previous one, which means the center vial weighs 32 grams and the key weighs the same as the lightest vial: 16 grams. For an extra hint, explain whether a combo is too light/heavy each time something is weighed.]**

**Sofa — looking behind it:** It looks like the sofa was pushed in front of a panel of some kind, but you can't see anything else of interest.

**Sofa — pushing or moving it:** In brash defiance of the posted rules, you heave the sofa away from the wall with all your strength. As you do so, you discover a hidden passage behind it hooking around to the southwest, just big enough for you to crawl through.

**Sofa — crawling into the passage behind it:** You crawl through the dark passage and emerge into a narrow storage room. The only light comes through the fan sticking out of the east wall, probably the back of the fan you saw from inside the escape room. On the south wall is a storage cage with a set of shelves behind it, containing various escape room supplies. To the west is a door with some notes taped to it. **[if players attempt to open the door]** You try the door, but it's locked from the other side. Of course.



**Sofa — searching or sitting in it:** Behind one of the cushions you find a vial. It's almost completely full of bright red liquid.

**Speaker — opening it:** As you approach, you hear the spooky laugh once again. The battery compartment is right there on the top. You open it up to reveal a single AAA battery, which you remove so as to not hear any more Halloween sound effects while you're stuck in here.

**Table — climbing up to look inside the ceiling:** Going against your well-honed sense of escape room etiquette, you climb up onto the table, push the ceiling tile aside, and reach into the blackness. Just beyond the opening, you touch what feels like a stack of papers. You can't reach anything else, so you grab the papers and hop back down to take a closer look. A cloud of dust fills the air as you flip through the pages: these seem to be early design documents for the Vampire's Den. A few things stand out as interesting:

- First, you find some puzzle designs. They're in rough stages, and you don't recognize most of them. But there's one paper with drawings that look just like the vials you found next to a layout of the saucer mechanism with a bunch of complex algebra scribbled underneath that you can't decipher. It looks like each saucer is mounted on top of a scale that's calibrated to trigger at a certain weight. Only the one on the right is labeled with a specific number: 64 grams.
- At the very bottom of the stack, you find a diagram of the emergency exit button. Apparently, they installed it over a keypad. Pretty bizarre security decision by the owner. The diagram shows how you can take off the button contraption with an L-shaped tool to access the keypad underneath and override the door lock.

**Vent — reaching inside:** You reach in the hole as far as you can, and you can't reach the bottom. But about a foot down you feel some textured fabric in the shape of letters. It spells out the word "DARK."

**Vent — shining the flashlight into it:** You still can't see much, but there's definitely a glint of something at the bottom of the hole, maybe a foot out of reach.

**Vent — reaching in with the magnet:** You swipe around in the vent with the magnet, but you still can't seem to reach the bottom.

**Vent — fishing with the magnet attached to the chain:** After attaching the magnet, you slowly lower the chain down into the vent, and you hear a metallic clink. You carefully pull the chain back up to find you've snagged a small L-shaped tool from inside the vent: an Allen wrench, or hex key.

**Walkie-talkie — opening it:** You open the battery compartment, and there are two AAA batteries inside.



**Walkie-talkie — using it to get help: [before solving the Vampire's Den]** Kirk says, "You need a hint already? I'm sure you can figure this one out yourself." That's...not very helpful. **[after solving the Vampire's Den]** You hold down the button and talk into the walkie-talkie, but Kirk doesn't answer. It looks like no one's coming to help you.

## Conclusion

As soon as you hit the pound key, the green light turns on. You try the door and...it opens!

You hurry out into the lobby, only to find your gamemaster Kirk sitting there watching videos on his phone. He jumps to his feet, and you can instantly tell from the look on his face that he sabotaged your game on purpose.

He shoves your belongings into your hands and tries to push you towards the door, but once he sees you're not leaving without answers, he finally caves. He admits that his boss has been acting suspicious and he's afraid he's going to get fired, so when he saw how fast you were, he decided to lock you in and tank your game so you wouldn't replace him. So basically, this is the worst customer service experience possible. You're already mentally composing your Yelp review.

But...you do have information that could help him. You could tell him you found the stolen money along with some evidence. Then again, he might not be the thief, but he's not exactly a model employee.

**[if players want to tell Kirk]** You tell Kirk about the money you found and the long red hair, and he's noticeably relieved. "Of course, it was Pam!" he says. "I always knew she was a little too perfect." He laughs and claps you on the back like he didn't just lock you into an escape room. "I don't know what came over me," he says. "It's just...this job is all I have. The owner doesn't do anything to keep this place running. I never even see him, he just leaves these annoying notes telling us what to do. But now maybe he'll finally cut me some slack. And of course I'll put in a good word for you if you want the job. We've got an empty space we're not using. Maybe you and I can design a new escape room! What do you say?"

**[only read if players accept the job; otherwise skip to next paragraph]** This place is a mess, but at least you can learn the business and test out some ideas without having to put up any cash. And whatever you end up making, it'll definitely be better than the Vampire's Den. After this unlucky 13th escape room, you know your 14th one will be better—because you're the one who's going to design it.  
**[END]**

**[if players don't want to tell Kirk]** This whole drama is not your problem. As you head out the door, you hear Kirk yell "Don't forget to review us on TripAdvisor!" before you leave for good.

Outside, you run down the list of everything else the Vampire's Den got wrong. Today should be all the proof you need that you've got what it takes to start your own escape room: If this place can do it, you can do it. **[if players took the money:** And now you've even got a little cash to help get you started.] Plus, now you have a great story about the time you broke all the rules and escaped an escape room...for real. **[END]**

## GM's Explanation

The first half is the Vampire's Den, the escape room within the escape room. You start off chained to the coffin, barely within reaching distance of the lockers. After grabbing the magnet off the side of the closest locker, you can maneuver the key through the wall maze and unlock yourself. Feeling around in the vent gives you the code "DARK," which unlocks the left locker and gives you the first part of the code to the directional lock; the second part is on a postcard inside the coffin. (Though calling them "first" and "second" is somewhat arbitrary, since there is no logical reason for them to be entered in that order. Dang escape room logic.)

After unlocking the second room, you find three vials: one under the rug, one inside the couch, and the third inside the safe, which can be opened with the code from the headstone poster in the second room (TO...ATE...WON...281). Placing the vials on the saucers in ascending order of weight (again, arbitrary) would unlock the exit door...if things were working the way they should.

Now that you're trapped for real, you can stop being polite. No more rules! At this point, if you want to get out, you're going to have to break every one of them (at least those visible on the torn rules sheet): move the furniture, climb and reach over your head, mess with the outlets, touch something that says "do not touch," tamper with the walkie-talkie, and press the emergency exit button (although, to be fair, it is an emergency).

Dragging the sofa away from the wall reveals a hidden passage to the storage room, where you'll find a flashlight and a pack of stickers. If you take two batteries out of the walkie-talkie and one from the speaker, you can power the flashlight—a blacklight. You can now read the hidden writing on the blank note on the storage room door, which provides a hint to the alternate safe code: entering the number of fan blades, the number of flowers on the rug, the number of dead ends in the maze, and the number clued by the writing inside the right locker should unlock a second compartment inside the safe.

But you can't see the writing inside the locker, because it's jammed. To determine what it says, you need to look at which letter stickers are missing from the pack (i.e., the ones from the RIP poster,

the directional lock code, and the exit door), then anagram the remaining letters to get WEIGH KEY. Indeed, you can experiment with the saucer mechanism to discover that the key weighs the same amount as the smallest vial, and each vial weighs as much as the last. But you'll need an exact number to figure out the weight of the key. By climbing on the table and reaching into the ceiling, you obtain some papers that give you the crucial piece of information: the largest vial weighs 64 grams, so the key weighs 16.

Another paper illustrates that there's a hidden keypad underneath the emergency exit button. But where is the hex key that opens it? The second note says Kirk dropped it somewhere in the escape room, and that somewhere is inside the vent. You'll have to attach the magnet to the chain (or something equally long and thin) to fish it out.

Meanwhile, now that you have the entire alternate safe code, you can access the employee paperwork inside, which contains a photo of the rules of the Vampire's Den before the bottom of the page was torn off. The final rule is "#HAVEFUN"—which doesn't seem like much of a rule until you realize the arrow underneath is hinting that it should be input backwards, allowing you to finally escape this escape room the hard way.