



ESCAPE THIS PODCAST

Game Master's Notes

The notes below are a guide for game masters. They contain all required information to run the specified room, including:

All room items

All puzzles and solutions

All correct (and some incorrect) player actions

Full room introduction and conclusion

Additional notes and tips

**Do not read these notes if you intend to play the escape room;
there are spoilers everywhere.**

These notes are for people playing the rooms with friends, family, enemies or strangers.

These notes are not to be used to create recordings, videos, or other media featuring the escape room. If you want to use these notes to make something cool or creative, please send us an email at escapethispod@gmail.com to let us know.

These notes are free. If you paid money to obtain these notes, someone was being very rude to you. I'm so sorry.

THE SUPERVILLAIN'S LAIR

Notes

As usual with an escape room, try not to break anything. In addition, for this particular room, try not to *lose* anything.

Write everything down. This room in particular is quite challenging, so you'll definitely need to keep track of little details.

Introduction

Not long ago, crime was rife in your city. Scammers roamed the streets during the day, and gangs did the same at night. Regular citizens feared for their lives whenever they set foot outside their front doors.

Then came the heroes. They swooped in and did what any good hero should: they cleaned up this town. They took out the crooks; they made people feel safe again. Of course, with any instance of heroes, there comes a maniacal villain or two, but they only target the heroes themselves, not civilians.

Of the big five heroes who frequent your city, none is more celebrated than Force of Nature, a masked vigilante with power over the earthly elements. Amazing though he or she has been, Force of Nature is not without his or her detractors. In fact, your area's most prominent news outlet has recently offered a staggering seven-digit reward for the identity of the caped crime-stopper. At first you showed very little interest. You have better things to do with your time than chase violent eccentrics in dress-up. But as time passes and nobody collects the reward, your sharp eyes and astute brains can't help seeing what everyone else has missed: where Force of Nature tends to show up, the direction they usually come from... little clues. And when even more weeks went by with nobody noticing these things, you can't resist. You're pretty sure you've worked out where Force of Nature's lair is. Perhaps not their permanent residence – they seem to be an international hero – but definitely their base while in town.

With the reward money on your minds, one evening you travel to the inconspicuous building you believe houses the lair. After searching for a while you locate a hidden panel, revealing an elevator that carries you down, deep down into the belly of the Earth. As it slows to a stop, you can't help yourselves: you give loud, celebratory exclamations of your success.

At the sound of your voices, the elevator stops.

Then a cross beeping begins.

Not liking that at all, you prise the doors open and find yourselves in a squat, low-ceilinged room. For a second you're ecstatic – there's no doubt whatsoever that this is a lair. In the corner opposite you is a large desk with a high-tech computer and a world map sitting on the surface, and stretching along the wall beside it is some kind of DIY chemistry lab. There's a large bookcase on the other side of the desk, and a small bed for when all the

hero work tires them out. But then a funny feeling comes over you. In the centre of the room is a chair with a coil of rope beside it, like it's been used for tying someone up and torturing them. On the wall closest to you is a series of photos, but they're hung in less of a 'family memories' way and more of a 'murderous stalker' way. To your left is a pedestal, on which sits a stationary, robotic prosthetic hand. Just behind that is a glass case that looks like it should hold weapons, and further back still is the most damning thing: a costume rack. But it isn't the costume of Force of Nature. It's the costume of Viperyon, the most heinous hero massacre-ist on this side of the planet.

Looks like you may have screwed up.

Now you're in somewhat of a sticky situation. You absolutely don't want to be here when Viperyon returns, but you have no idea how to get the elevator working again. Also, although you may have failed in your search for Force of Nature's lair, Viperyon is an expert at disseminating the identities of heroes and tracking them down. You might be able to get the information you need from here and still get that reward money. At the very least, you would need their full name and their home city.

Whatever you're going to do, do it fast.

Observable items

Bed: This is clearly not someone's first choice of sleeping arrangements. It's small and not well kept, and the sheets are paper thin. A couple of stray hairs litter the pillow, and one of the posts on this four-poster bed has been broken off, making it a three-poster. If you had to guess, you'd say it was Viperyon's old childhood bed, repurposed.

Bookcase: It's packed, but very neatly so. Each shelf is full but not overflowing – except one. The very top shelf has a single space between thick chemistry tomes where a very thin book could fit. It must be Viperyon's favourite.

Chair + rope: As you approach the centre of the room, you become aware of a faint humming in the air. You reach out with one hand for the rope/chair – and instantly draw back in pain. Something burned you! Something invisible. There's some kind of barrier stopping you getting too close.

Chemistry lab: The benches here look like something out of a crime show where they know very little about chemistry. Empty conical flasks and test tubes line the back wall, and there are three large beakers full of brightly coloured liquids, one red, one blue and one yellow.

Computer: Viperyon must have designed it themselves. It's impressively modern and fancy – flat screen, touch screen, holographic screen, the works. There is a mouse, too, but it doesn't seem to be working. And unfortunately, when you try to tap anything on the screen with your finger, you're prompted to give a password.

Costume stand: Now that you're getting a closer look, you see that this is Viperyon's backup costume. It's still sturdy and intimidating, but the colours are a lot more modest and the stitching more haphazard. The chest guard part looks like it opens up, and you notice a small panel around where the right ribs would be. There's a little screen there: it says, "Insert biological sample to activate."

Desk: This desk could have cost seven figures itself. It's all stainless steel and chrome,

completely futuristic. Lying on its surface is a map of the world, and just to its right are two large, gleaming buttons. Unlabelled.

Elevator: The doors snapped shut behind you when you got out, and you can't open them at all.

Map: It's a large map of the world, and Viperyon has left lots of scribbles and notes all over it. You can see several cities circled: Edmonton, Canada; Rosario, Argentina; Lyons, France; Bern, Switzerland; Netanya, Israel; and Volgograd, Russia. Scrawled on the bottom left corner of the map, in a blank patch of ocean, is a cryptic message: *"All city dwellers forsake honour. Justice keeps losing more often. Perfect."*

Photographs: There are five photos, stabbed to the wall a bit savagely. They're candid shots – very candid. The subjects clearly had no idea they were being watched. Each photo has a very different-looking subject. Photo 1 is a woman with glasses and long, blonde hair. Photo 2 is a man with an earring, and also with long, blonde hair. Photo 3 is a woman with glasses and short, brown hair. Photo 4 is a man with short, brown hair. And photo 5 is a woman with earrings and long, brown hair. Maybe these are Viperyon's victims? You really have no idea.

Robot hand pedestal: The robot hand is a great prosthetic, but it's not as technologically up-to-date as the cool ones you've seen on hospital shows. At the wrist of it are two small buttons, one labelled 'grip/release' and one labelled 'neutral'. Pressing the buttons does nothing, however: looking at the back, you notice there's a gap where a piece of wire should be.

Weapon case: It's locked. Well, at least Viperyon is a responsible weapons owner. The lock is a 5-letter combination code.

Actions

Bed – checking the underside: Written in marker on the underside is some sort of code! There's a question mark, a capital F, capital H, capital N, and another question mark. Underneath this are the words, *number of bedposts a giveaway?*

Bookcase – placing missing book (or books, if you've removed any) in its place: You feel a momentary shudder under your fingertips, and the entire bookcase begins to swing open. A full-on, Scooby-Doo-like secret door! You find yourselves staring into a vault, full of cabinets and cupboards, all of them labelled with the names of various world currencies. Dollars, Yen, Rupiah, everything. One area catches your eye: on a cupboard labelled 'Francs', there's an entire shelf empty. Viperyon must have cleared it out recently. **[If players don't know what countries use which currencies, feel free to tell them that Viperyon's computer has Google. But give them a chance to work this bit out on their own.]**

Bookcase - searching for a book on Modulanium: You find the book you're looking for on the bottom shelf: *Modulanium: the Secret to Modulating Your Own Success*. The first chapter is all about extracting pure liquid Modulanium from its natural compound. Scanning the pages, you understand what you'll need: in simple terms, not using any of the fancy names, you'll need to mix one cup of red liquid, two cups of orange, and one cup of green.

Chair + rope – spraying the area with fog spray: Fog fills the air in front of you. As it

spreads towards the chair in the middle of the room, you notice something strange: flickering red lights are starting to become visible. The fog is revealing a series of lasers surrounding the chair in a cage formation, shimmering, burning vertical bars from ceiling to floor, roughly a hand's width separating each one.

Chair + rope – reaching for rope AFTER spraying fog spray: You have to move slowly and carefully, but your arm fits through the bars of the laser cage and you manoeuvre the rope out without so much as a singe.

Chair + rope – examining the underside of the chair after switching off lasers: There's a message scratched into the wood:

He's gone for now, but he'll be back to finish me off at any moment. It's all over for me, but I'm writing this with my earring just in case Force of Nature is trapped here after I'm gone. Force of Nature, I'm warning you: this Viperyon is serious business. He's killed all the others – I can see Pure Platinum's hand over there, like a sick trophy. If you somehow get out of this laser cage, to make the elevator work you need to go inside and say the name of his last victim. I guess... that'll be me. But it has to be said in his voice. That's the only thing that triggers it. Good luck. The world needs you.

Chemistry lab – correctly mixing 2 cups red, 1.5 cups yellow and 0.5 cups blue: Following some strange rules of chemistry that you don't 100% understand, the mixture shines bright gold. It matches the picture on the cover of the Modulanium book exactly.

Computer – picking up mouse and looking under it: Well, that's why it's not working: there's a post-it stuck to the bottom. Written on it are four words: *Password: map's missing firsts.*

Computer – inputting password 'BEGIN': The computer loads up. There's virtually nothing on the desktop; one icon that says 'ShivTech' and one that says 'Heroes'. Clicking on ShivTech prompts you to enter another password. Clicking on Heroes opens a text document:

Of my five greatest enemies, only Force of Nature eludes me. But that will change very soon – nobody has ever unmasked the Big Five before, and certainly nobody's killed one, let alone four. It's taken time, and endless deductive reasoning, but I was more than capable, and I relish in the memories. As I reminisce, a few thoughts in particular stand out:

Jane Ewing was my first kill. Far easier than I expected killing a hero to be. Even with those thick glasses she didn't see my ambush.

Pure Platinum, the one with power over metal, should have gotten a haircut. Long hair made grabbing her all the easier.

While searching for Force of Nature, I learned they were blonde, unlike that Sam Howitz fellow.

I actually found myself coming to respect Taylor Prescott. Why? No needless jewellery. It's idiotic what some heroes wear.

I remember when I learned that Sam Howitz had power over fire. It was an exciting moment; before then I thought he was the one with power over wind or ice, and that Maxwell Martin had fire.

And of course, there was the moment I killed Avery Lee. I'll never forget it.

Then, at long last – but I won't write any more here. I doubt anyone will ever read this document, but I'm not foolish enough to risk it. I won't let anyone use my genius to procure that silly reward.

[If players know how to use a logic puzzle grid, give them the supplementary image. However, you may want to warn them: these clues are *not enough* to complete a grid. They'll need more information. Also, ensure they're careful about characters' genders. Some are clear, some are ambiguous.]

Computer – inputting secondary password 'SCRAMBLED BELOW': You type in the password, hit 'confirm', and just like that, the buzzing in the air is silenced. The lasers are off.

Costume stand – inserting a hair sample into the panel: You hear a satisfying click, and the chest of the suit swings open. There's a secret compartment inside, and it contains a slim book. You glance at the cover: *Close to your Heart: Bulletproof Books for Protective Purposes*.

Costume stand – using/trying on mask without Modulanium: It doesn't really seem to do anything. Your voice is unchanged. After a moment you hear a small, tinny voice in your ear. "Modulanium empty. Modulanium replenishment required."

Costume stand – using/trying on mask after inserting Modulanium: The mask is alive with power. The sound of your breath comes out deep and intimidating. You speak, and the modulated voice of Viperyon echoes through the room.

Desk – pressing button 1: You press it, and behind you, the elevator door opens up again.

Desk – pressing button 2: You press it and hear the sound of a door sliding open. At first you don't see where, but after a moment, there it is – a trap door has opened up in the floor just in front of the elevator. Looking at it closer, you see that it's too deep to jump in without risking serious injury, but not so deep that you can't see the bottom. There's something down there, some small piece of paper scrunched up in a ball.

Elevator – entering after opening door: It's still beeping, but the inside looks like an ordinary elevator. It has all the usual buttons, the weight capacity sign, the box with an emergency phone, nothing extraordinary.

Elevator – opening emergency phone box: The cord for the phone has been cut. Typical. But sitting in the box is a small piece of wire. It doesn't belong here, but it does look like it would be functional if put in the right place.

Elevator – saying Maxwell Martin's name with the voice modulator: Refer to appropriate conclusion!

Robot hand pedestal – inserting wire into the back of the hand: There's a small crackle of electricity, and the fingers on the glove twitch to life.

Robot hand – pressing the buttons: Pressing the 'grip/release' button makes the fingers ball up into a fist, then several seconds later, they let go. It repeats this action until you press the 'neutral' button.

Robot hand – setting it to 'grip/release', tying rope to it and lowering it into the trap hole: The rope is long enough that the hand comfortably reaches the bottom of the hole.

The fingers grab the piece of paper down there, and you hurriedly pull the rope up before they release. Looking at the paper, you see it's an official message, typed, delivered from some tech company:

This is the shutdown password for your ShivTech computer LASER system. Please memorise after reading and discard this letter for security purposes.

YOUR PASSWORD IS SCRAMBLED BELOW.

NHIRERG.

Weapon case – inserting code AFHNZ: The lock pops off, and you swing the door open. Inside there are lots of spaces for weapons, but it's almost completely empty at the moment. Viperyon must have taken them out for a while. The only thing he's left behind is an aerosol can labelled 'Instant Fog'.

Conclusion

[If they learned Force of Nature's identity and whereabouts:]

The angry beeping in the elevator stops. For a second there's total silence, then a deep rumbling shakes the elevator into action. Before you know it you're back at street level. You're free from Viperyon's clutches – but you can't say the same for poor Force of Nature, can you? As you hoped, you did gain a lot of information about her identity and whereabouts, so that reward could be yours... but you aren't really sure if you'll get it if she turns up dead tomorrow. There must be *some* way you can procure a good outcome for everyone here!

[If they didn't:]

The angry beeping in the elevator stops. For a second there's total silence, then a deep rumbling shakes the elevator into action. Before you know it you're back at street level. You're free from Viperyon's clutches – but you can't say the same for poor Force of Nature, can you? You haven't learned enough to procure your reward, or save them from Viperyon. Are you going to walk away, content with your own freedom? Or are you going to return to the lair and fix this?

GM's explanation

Okay. This one is tricky. Some of the puzzles are quite hard and there are loads of little puzzle loops to keep track of. Here's a quick diagram of all the loops:

Words on the map → password to general computer → logic puzzle clues related to photographs → tells you that Force of Nature is either Taylor or Maxwell.

Hairs from bed → activate chest of Viperyon's costume → reveal missing book to go into the bookcase → opens to reveal secret money vault → reveals Francs are missing, so you check the map for circled cities → tells you Viperyon has gone to Switzerland.

Code under bed → unlocks weapons case to reveal fog spray → use fog spray to reveal laser cage surrounding the chair and rope → reach through laser 'bars' for rope.

Button 1 on desk → opens elevator → phone box in elevator reveals wire → wire goes into robot hand.

Button 2 on desk → reveals trap door → combine robot hand and rope to reach into trap hole → robot hand grabs note to shut down laser system → inspect chair, see message from Maxwell → search bookcase for Modulanium book → make Modulanium with chem lab → use Viperyon's mask with voice modulation and password to escape.

I think that's everything. Phew. Now for the more detailed explanation.

The first things escapers will be able to find just by looking are the hairs on the bed, the puzzle under the bed, the buttons on the desk, and the puzzling words on the map. The two puzzles are a bit tricky; let's leave them for now.

When the escapers look at Viperyon's costume, they'll notice it requires a biological sample to activate it. A strand of Viperyon's hair from the bed will do nicely. This opens up a chest compartment in the costume, revealing a small book. It isn't of any relevance what the book is, just where it fits. If escapers slot it into the only empty space on the bookshelf, it will activate a secret door (unlike most bookshelf doors, which require you to pull a book *out*). If they've pulled out any other books, those will also have to go back in place before the door opens. Behind this door is a secret money vault; it's actually not necessary to be here to escape the room, but it's how they discover Force of Nature's location. In the vault they will see a cabinet labelled 'francs' has had a huge pile taken out of it. After examining the map, and hopefully knowing a bit about world currencies (they can always Google that part later), they will conclude that Force of Nature lives in Bern, Switzerland.

The buttons on the desk are fairly predictable for a villain's lair: one opens the elevator door, and one activates a trap door in the middle of the floor. Escapers won't yet be able to use the trap door, but they can see a scrap of paper at the bottom. It's too far down to reach or jump, and hopefully they don't throw anything down there. If they get back in the elevator, though, they'll be able to find a small wire in the box for the emergency phone. This goes in the robotic hand – which, again, cannot be used at this time.

Back to the puzzles. First, there's one under the bed: ? F H N ? . The weapons case has a five-letter combination lock on it, and that's what this code is for. A clue is that the bed only has three out of its usual four posts. The solution is that each letter of the code can be drawn using 3 lines. The two missing letters are A and Z, so the full code is AFHNZ. Of course, some people draw the letter Y with 3 lines, so make sure players know that because of its ambiguity, Y won't count. Opening the weapons case will reveal an aerosol can of fog spray. If escapers spray it near the chair, they'll be able to see the lasers forming a cage around it. Since they can now see the cage, they can reach through the laser bars to retrieve the rope on the floor.

With the trap door open, the robotic hand working and the rope, the escapers can lower the hand down to grab the scrap of paper down there. On the paper is a fake-out puzzle: it looks like a code, but really it's just the words 'scrambled below'. This is the password for the computer to shut down the laser cage. However, this can't be done until the main login password is discovered.

This takes us all the way back to the cryptic words written on the map. They're extremely stilted, which hopefully lets the escapers know they've been written for a reason besides clarity. Each word starts with a specific letter of the alphabet: A, C, D, F, H, J, K, L, M, O, and P. It's following the alphabet, but with a few letters missing. The missing letters spell 'BEGIN', which is the computer's login password.

With two passwords, the computer does two things. First, with the main login, escapers can open a document of Viperyon's ramblings about how he's going to track down and kill Force of Nature, just like he did the other four major heroes. He just has to discover their identity. With this comes a collection of random facts about Force of Nature and the other heroes, including their names, appearances and powers, and escapers may recognise this as a logic grid puzzle. However, Viperyon notes that he isn't writing down *all* the information, because he's not an idiot. This means escapers can only narrow down Force of Nature's identity to two people, Taylor or Maxwell.

With the second password, escapers can shut down the lasers, allowing them to inspect the chair up close. On the underside, they'll find a message scratched into the wood by an earring. This will tell them that Viperyon's most recent victim was Maxwell, meaning Taylor is the true identity of Force of Nature. This message will also tell them what they need to escape: to go into the elevator, and speak the name of Viperyon's latest victim in his voice. They know the name of the last victim (Maxwell), but they'll need a way to imitate Viperyon's voice. His mask on the costume rack contains a voice modulator. Unfortunately, it won't work unless the escapers insert a liquid known as Modulanium.

To create pure Modulanium, they'll need a book with instructions. Luckily there is one such book on the shelf, and it tells them they'll require 2 cups of orange, 1 cup of red and 1 cup of green mixed together. But the chemistry lab here only has primary colours! Escapers will need to mix carefully to get their proportions right. 2 cups of orange is really 1 cup red and 1 cup yellow; 1 cup green is actually 0.5 cups blue and 0.5 cups yellow. So altogether they'll need 2 cups of red, 1.5 cups of yellow and 0.5 cups of blue.

Once they pour this into the mask's Modulanium holder, it will work and they can escape!