

# Cookie Mystery Explained

## Introduction...

This adventure was years in the making. When I first started to work on it, I realized quickly I was overzealous and so did not make my initial deadline for Christmas 2023 and tabled it for a few months. Reinvigorated for some reason, I decided to finish what I started and created an hours long puzzle spanning across our childhood home to solve who had eaten all the cookies...

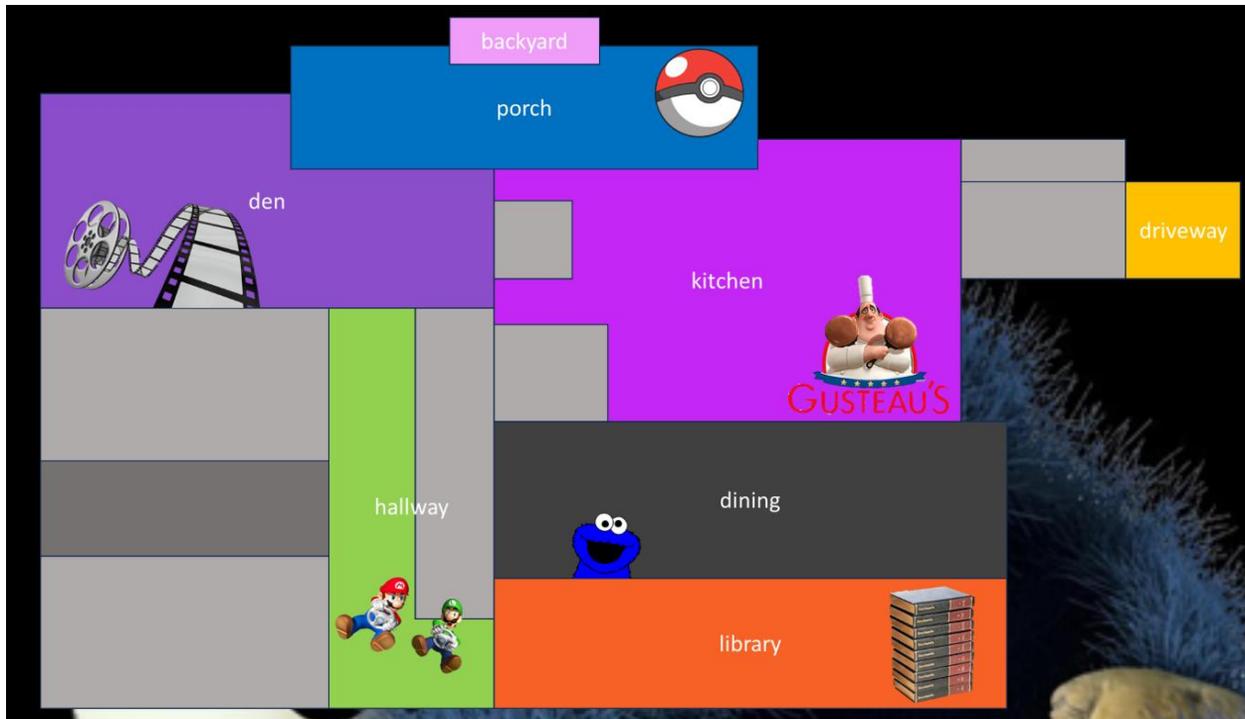
## Contents...

- A plethora of papers
  - QR code to website
  - Scraps of written clues
  - Pictures representing each role
  - Edited Mario Kart characters to go with players' roles
  - Pictures of kitchen items
  - A couple of printouts of ciphers
- Quarter papers colored to label each room
- A website with a storyline and some puzzles
- 6 DVDs in cases
- Cards of actors from the game Cinephile
- Marked ping pong balls
- 2 3D printed 3-digit cryptexes
- 6 letter metal cryptex
- Mario Kart themed racecars
- Bullet Bill candy tin from Mario Kart
- Hoodie with NPR logo
- 26 letter combination lock



## The setup...

When I first started building this puzzle, I created a crude map of the house to sort of keep a visual of where I wanted everyone to be and when...

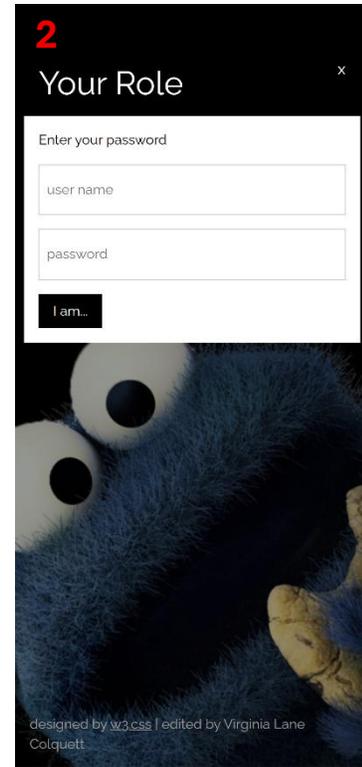
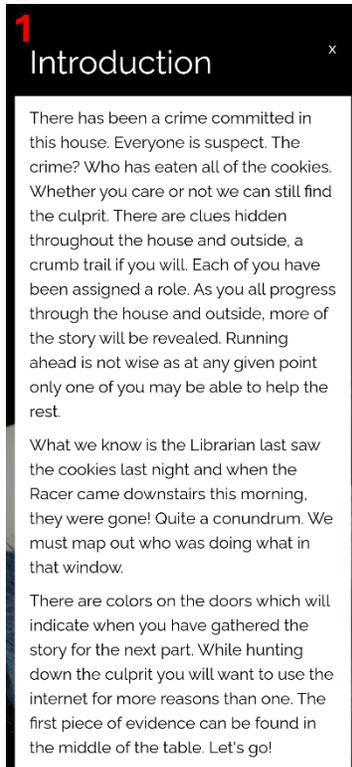


I had the players hang out in the dining room since that was the least amount of setup. To prepare for this, I printed out the story line that they would receive on the website as they progressed through the house with amended lines of what I needed to place in each room. I made each room a different “level” and denoted the color of the next room by a colored piece of paper on the door frame. The players knew when to go to the next room when their website background would change color. I also accounted for change in numbers so that the roles would be locked in and combined if need be. Maximum number of players is 7 and then minimum is 3 with logic to just combine roles with certain players. The easiest way to continue through this explanation is walking through each step that the players had to go through.

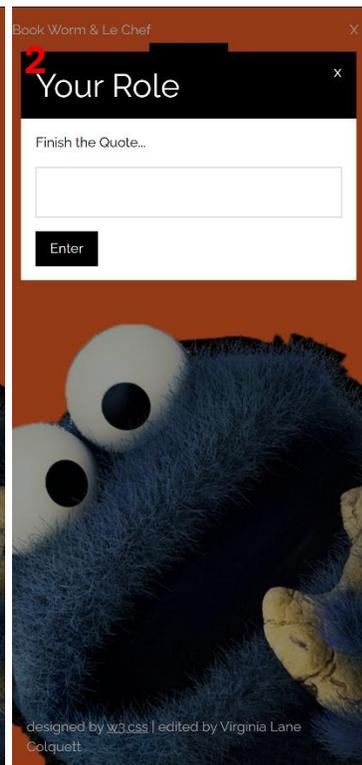
## Let the game begin...

### Room 1: The Dining Room aka The Story

With everyone already gathered in the first room, I presented notecards with roles and passwords on them. I had already set the website to 5 players but still only presented a single role to each user. I placed a cookie tin in the middle of the table which contained a printout of cookie crumbs and the QR code to the login screen. I read the introduction and gave a couple of pointers to get them started. They pulled out their phones and scanned the QR code to get them to the website...



Upon logging in, the background immediately changes to the color on the door frame leading into the library. There are other pieces to the website that changes throughout the progression...



The role(s) of the player appears in the upper left of the screen and while the buttons do not change, what they trigger does change. Depending on the role, the role button will either have a specific task or just to simply look around, i.e. the librarian's screen pictured above compared to the trainer's screen pictured below:



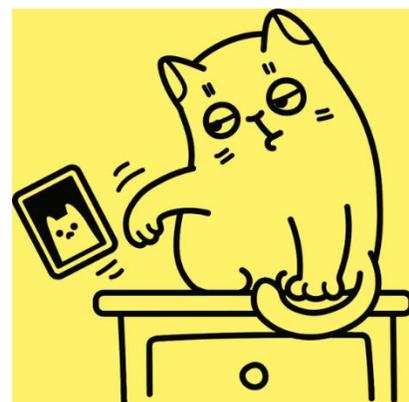
Okay! Now the players see these differences and head into the library.

## Room 2: The Library

Entering the room, not much looks different. However, when the players looked closer, they would notice a new picture frame, and something taped under the center table. Then there's a crude booklet of printouts in a drawer...



← framed | taped →





I printed these and made copies to have 30, then stapled together to put in drawer.

Each of these signifies a different book in the library: Twilight, The Cat Who book, and 30 A. D. Within each book had a slip of paper: Column 2, Row 3, Letter C. This pointed to the shelf with the encyclopedias and then specifically the C Volume. I placed a crossword in there under cookie. (I did not save the actual crossword but do have the answers and hints):

- Mario** Luigi's brother
- Pokémon** catch em all
- balloon** hot air \_\_\_\_
- Gusteau** quotes "anyone can cook"
- races** off to the \_\_\_\_
- director** first/last movie credit
- librarian** Evie quotes "I am a \_\_\_\_"
- athlete** the culprit is not the \_\_\_\_
- basketball** song "We're playing \_\_\_\_"
- lemonade** life hands you lemons
- guilty** innocent until proven
- bean** a baked!?! a baked \_\_\_\_!?
- croquet** redneck golf
- green** the G in ROYGBIV
- tina** "\_\_\_\_ you fat lard, come and get your dinner!"

**Jekyll** Dr. \_\_\_ and Mr. Hyde

**stirred** shaken not \_\_\_

**Pocatello** Gate City; in Idaho

**ages** Rock of \_\_\_

**McNutt** \_\_\_ Lake

The crossword has certain squares highlighted so that when they fill it in it gives them the letters to spell Jurassic. When they find that book on the shelf there is another slip of paper which quotes “LAW 28: ENTER ACTION WITH \_\_\_\_\_”. The blank is the word the librarian must enter to go to the next room. When the librarian puts in the correct word (**boldness**), their background changes and then the rest can refresh their pages to show change in background as well to go to the next room.

### Room 3: The Hallway aka Mario Kart

Right on the floor in front of everyone is a locked toolbox with one or two miniature Mario Kart character race cars on top of it. There is a checkered line printout in front of them and the website says they need to figure out who wins the race... after all are rescued from the locked toolbox. The hallway is decorated with a lot of Christmas since it is also the entrance to the house, so it was easy to stuff a few things in the garland for the players to find: a bullet bill candy tin which holds a key to one of the locks on the toolbox and two 3-digit cryptexes which hold some hints as to who wins the race. On the website there is a myriad of questions pertaining to the Mario world, and once each section is completed, three-digit combinations with turtle shells appear:



The turtle shells help denote whether it is one of the cryptexes or the other 3-digit lock on the toolbox. The small pieces of papers with hints on them form a logic puzzle...

*grey comes after green but before blue      blue cannot be ahead of black*

*yellow is either first or last      teal comes immediately before grey*

*green is not first or last      black comes after yellow but before teal*

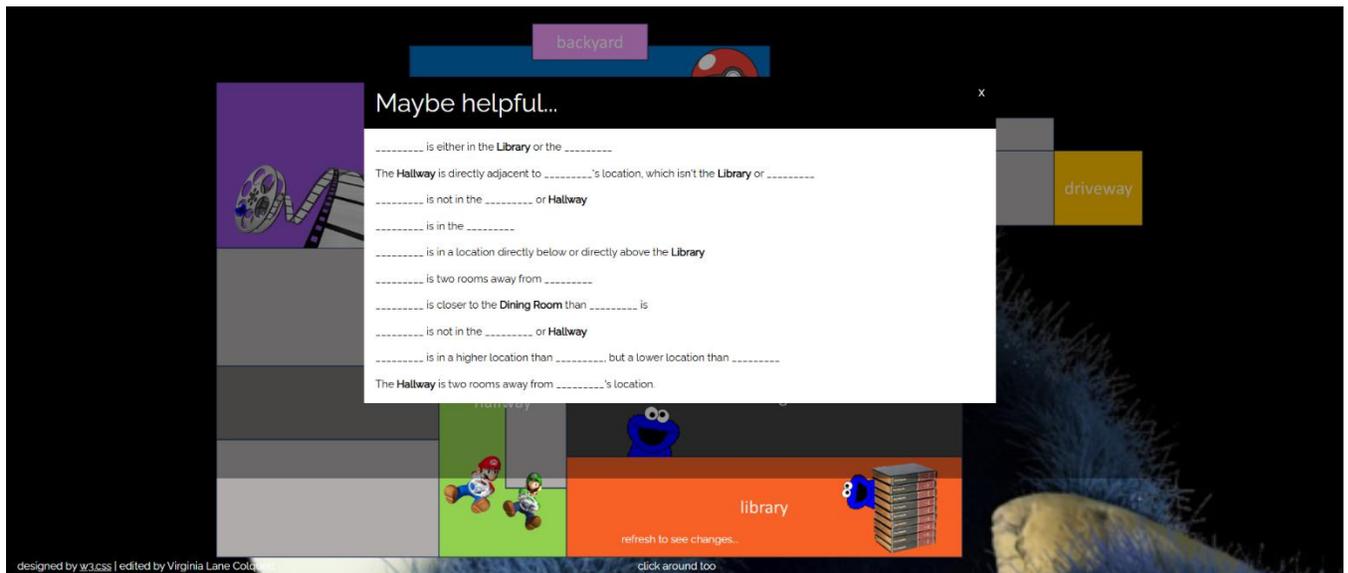
*blue is two positions after teal*

The colors can be matched to the bottom of each toy kart and with all the statements the players can conclude that **Koopa Troopa** is the winner. The racer role is the only player who can input this information, and when they do, the background changes to go to the next room. The rest can refresh their page and see their background changes too. Another piece that will be used later is cutouts of each Mario Kart character with an accessory to assign a role player with the character:



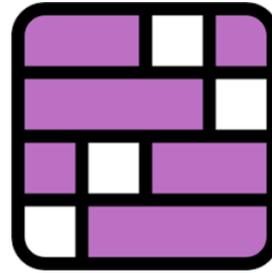
## Room 4: The Living Room aka Film Room

Setting this room up had a challenge... I wanted to give the players a new tool that had been upgrading while they were going through the rooms but did not have a clean way of doing so. My solution was to pair a laptop to the TV so that they will be able to easily see a large progress map and if they noticed on the map, it says to click around which also gives a pop-up of a little form which is only partially filled because they are only partially finished...

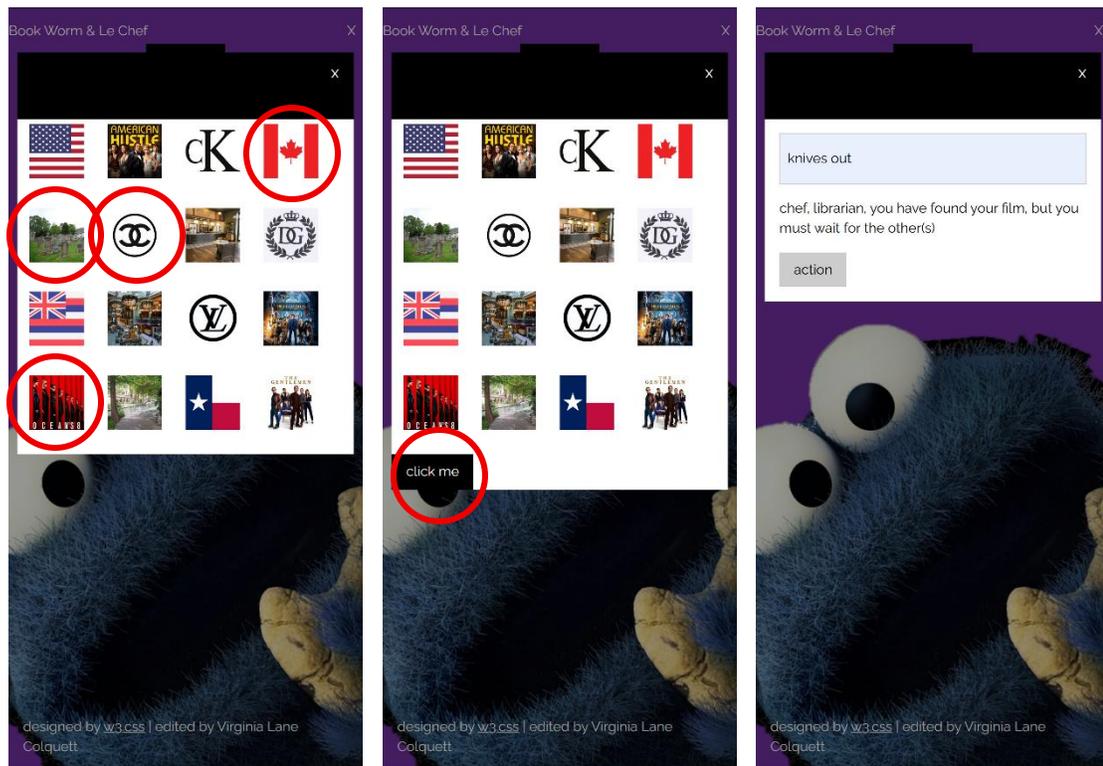


The other things in the room which were much more obvious was a stack of DVDs with each players' symbol of their role placed in the case and then a small yellow envelope in the center of a blank wall with the New York Times mini game Connections log on it:

- Silver Screen Icons - Athlete
- Death on the Nile - Fisherman
- Murder on the Orient Express - Chef
- Scooby-Doo - Racer
- Hoodwinked - Trainer
- Knives Out - Librarian



In the envelope with the NYT Connections logo is 16 cards with actors on them. On the website there was a four-by-four grid of pictures:



The actors:

Jim Carrey

Keira Knightley

Helena Bonham Carter

Cate Blanchett

Bill Paxton

Sylvester Stallone

Tessa Thompson

Amy Adams

Robin Williams

Marlon Brando

Sandra Bullock

Sean Connery

Rachel McAdams

Anne Hathaway

Ryan Gosling

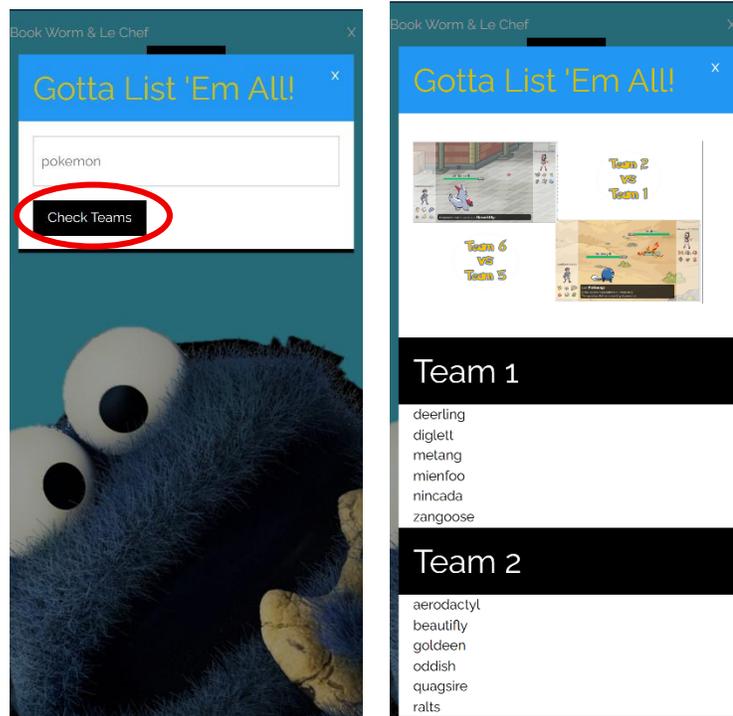
Keanu Reeves

This was a bit of a stretch, but the goal is to group the actors together and then by those groupings, the players would pick four pictures in the grid to solve the puzzle and in this instance, it would be the graveyard, the Canadian flag, the Coco Chanel logo, and the movie Ocean's 8. When any four pictures were clicked, a button would appear to click to check if the correct four were saved. If you, the player would be redirected to a new form that ask what movie they are. If not, it would just reset the images and say try again. The movie correlates with which case the role printout was in. Once all players entered their movie, they would be able to go to the next room. If one of the players was slow to the game, the rest would know how to help them.

The background for the last player will change then the rest of the players can refresh their webpage to go to the next room.

## Room 5: The Back Porch aka Pokémon

This next room had everything in plain sight since the players were going to have to work out a lot of things. On the main table is a medium-sized pouch filled with a lot of Pokémon figures and a sheet of paper that does not make a whole lot of sense along with a little cheat sheet of a list of all the Pokémon characters. On the doorknob that leads to the next room, outside, is another pouch that is locked. The website has a form that just simply says 'Gotta List 'Em All'. So, one by one, the players can type the Pokémon figures in the pouch, and they get assigned to a team on the webpage. When all Pokémon from the pouch are listed, a video pops up with all the battles and the brackets.



There is also the sheet of paper! When all the teams are listed out, the key points to a team, a Pokémon, then the character of the Pokémon name. When all letters are found, it spells out 'We caught zem all' for the Trainer to enter in their form on their webpage:

every character counts!

T5 P4 C5

T4 P4 C2

T3 P4 C8

T2 P1 C7

T6 P1 C2

T5 P1 C4

T6 P5 C4

T2 P4 C6

T3 P2 C4

T3 P4 C8

T1 P6 C1

T1 P1 C2

T1 P4 C1

T3 P4 C8

T4 P1 C1

T4 P5 C7

T5 P5 C2

T is the team, P is the player, and C is the character in the player's name. The background will change to go to the next place, outside, but the video continues to the next page because the 3-digit combination might still be locked. The players need to deduce the final three teams then they will be able to unlock the bag to find a map...

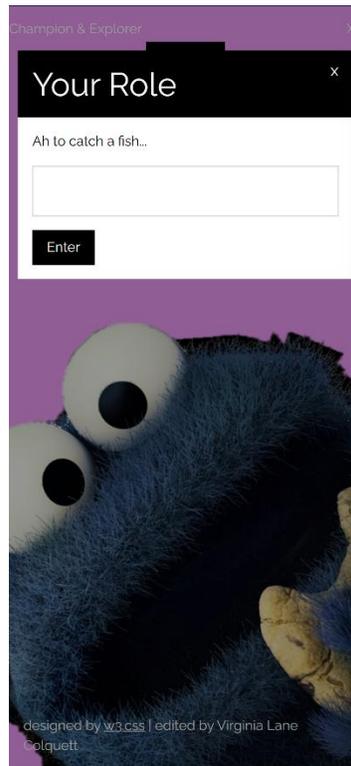
## Room 6: The Back Yard

find the pairs



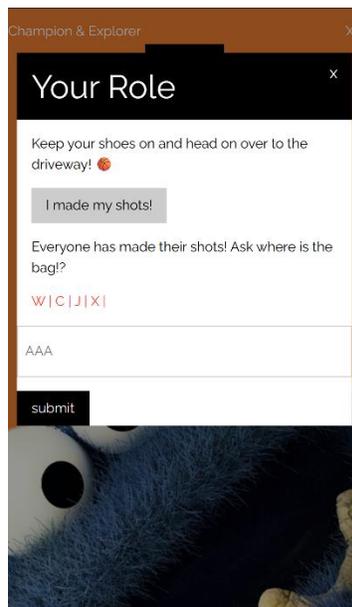
There are also three crayons in the bag along with the above map. The players need to go to each dot, and they will find a ping pong ball that is marked with a letter and a colored dot. When they find them all, they will need to color in the right colors for each dot then connect them. The lines will intersect in the middle marking the place of where I hid a 6-letter metal cryptex. They can get the letters from the ping pong balls and rearrange them to spell

'cookie'. The slip of paper found in the cryptex saying **“and to be fed for a day”** can be used to finish the quote on the Explorer’s page and go to the next place...



## Room 7: The Driveway... sort of

At this point I was getting ambitious in my building and when I was in crunch time to have it finished there were some things that did not quite make sense, but it does not affect the story... just my sanity. The players need to go to the driveway to make basketball shots, but I just gave them the button on the website to say that they made it. When all players click “I made my shots!” they each get letters in different colors along with a hint to ask me where the bag is – I put this in there so I could put the bag wherever was available when the time to set everything up came.



For this I put the bag in the mud room. The bag had a croquet stake attached with letters in similar format to what the players see in their screenshot. The bag is locked with a 26-letter combination dial lock.

A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N | O | P | Q | R | S | T | U | V | W | X | Y | Z

P | Z | I | Y | H | W | C | J | X | N | M | V | O | F | B | L | G | A | R | S | T | E | U | Q | D | K

The first line was cut out and taped to the stake and the players needed to deduce that the order of their letter segments matches the colors on the croquet stake. They then needed to notice the sweatshirt that I had been wearing the whole time which had three letters on it... N-P-R. When they line the letters up, they get the three letters J-A-S which unlocks the bag and moves them along to the kitchen...

## Room 8: The Kitchen

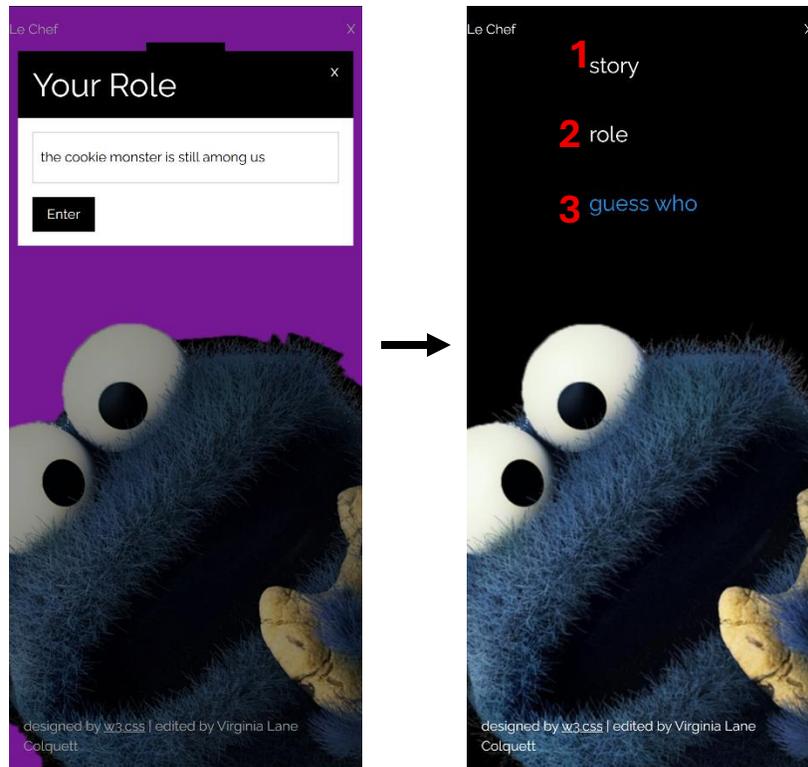
The contents in the bag are a printout of a cookie sheet, a UV light, and a sheet of paper with words lined to other words like so:

are	_____	cookie
chef	_____	green
outdoors	_____	color
a	_____	bake
movie	_____	change
we	_____	the
innocent	_____	still
key	_____	where
cookie	_____	us
boldness	_____	puzzle
sugar	_____	librarian
not	_____	monster
yummy	_____	among
blue	_____	dessert
all	_____	is
catch	_____	blame

The cookie sheet is a hint to look in the kitchen where the cookie sheets are kept. The players find another printout of the mixer and so on and so forth...



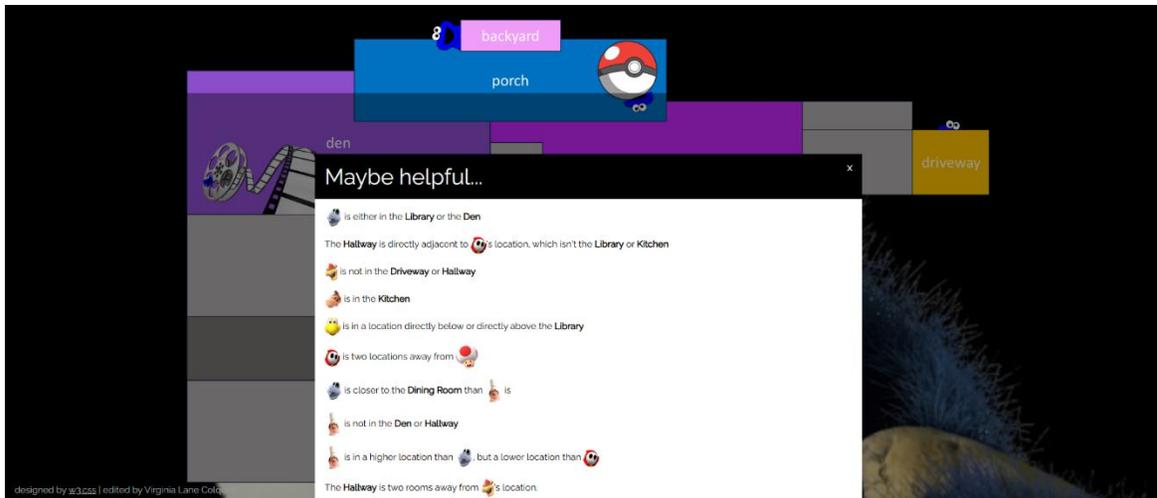
When the UV light is used against each printout there are words written in invisible ink on the back of each: **“we are not all innocent yummy cookie”** and when they use the sheet with the words lined to each other, they get **“the cookie monster is still among us”**. The Chef enters this new sentence on their webpage...



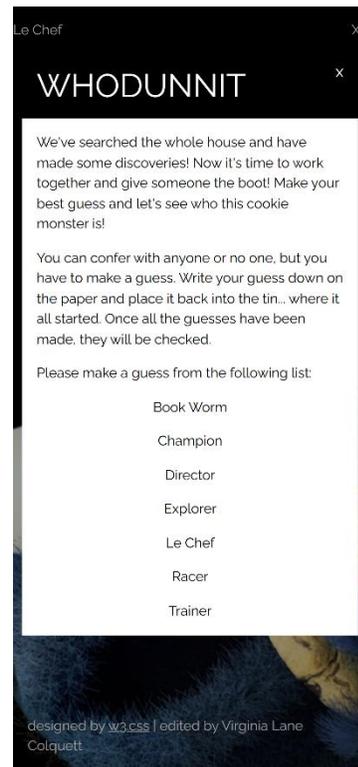
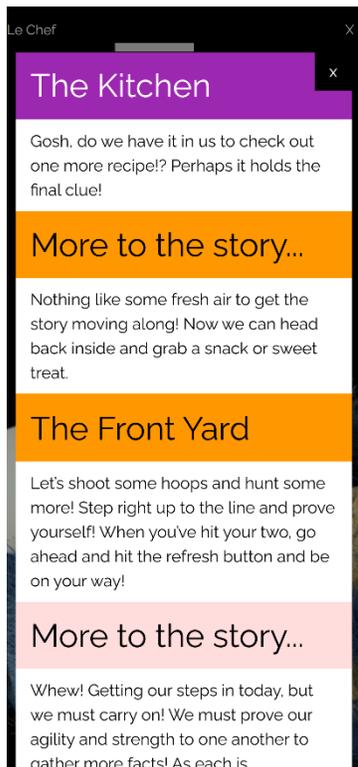
## Back to Room 1 for the Conclusion!

As denoted in the right picture above, a third button appears for guessing who the cookie monster is. This is also the final screen for the players, so they have everything they need even if they do not realize it. I did have to remind them of some of their resources like the webpage from the living room...



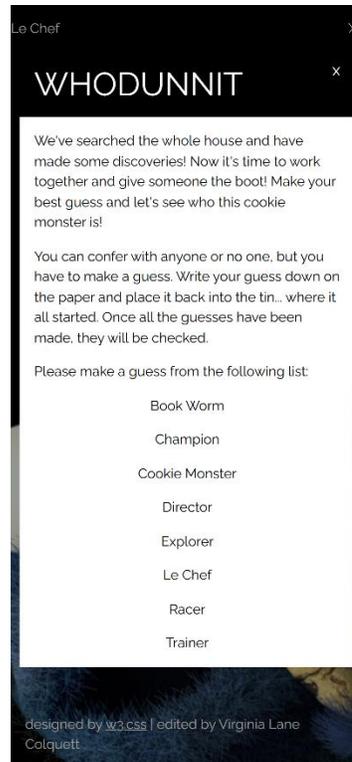


In the first image above, the cookie monster has been to all the rooms to confirm for the players, they are not missing anything there. Then when the players click on the map again, the helpful clues are all filled out. The Mario characters can be translated from the printouts under the table in the hallway. The players will also want to look at all the menus available to them...



The first picture is the storyline that updated throughout the puzzle. The second picture is a simple diagram to help with the clues from the aforementioned picture above and the third picture lays out how the players can win the game. I hid one last clue in the

third picture as the whole puzzle was a major setup like the movie Hoodwinked! If a player clicks on the words “cookie monster” at the end of the first paragraph they get an additional option to guess...



The players worked at the table to deduce the puzzle. I purposefully made the puzzle to have two end choices to further throw off the players. I gave them three tries and would theatrically count through their votes written on note cards and would end each round with telling them nobody has caught the cookie monster. After the three tries, I took them to the library and turned on the movie Hoodwinked! We fast forwarded to the end where the detective is surmising the events of the movie to come to the real culprit of the crimes. As the frog exposed the character, I took off my NPR hoodie to expose my t-shirt which was a cookie monster shirt 😂.

So, the hints were subtle and with everything that was happening with each room, I knew there was a slim chance they would actually guess me as the culprit, however, it was a very fun afternoon during the Christmas break and a fun project to keep me busy over the years!

P.S. The storyline was an anchor for me building the puzzles but did not really stick in the production of the game, so I am just putting it at the very end for anybody curious...



# The Story

## Introduction

There has been a crime committed in this house. Everyone is suspect. The crime? Who has eaten all of the cookies. Whether you care or not we can still find the culprit. There are clues hidden throughout the house and outside, a crumb trail if you will. Each of you have been assigned a role. As you all progress through the house and outside, more of the story will be revealed. Running ahead is not wise as at any given point only one of you may be able to help the rest.

What we know is the Librarian last saw the cookies last night and when the Racer came downstairs this morning, they were gone! Quite a conundrum. We must map out who was doing what in that window.

There are colors on the doors which will indicate when you have gathered the story for the next part. While hunting down the culprit you will want to use the internet for more reasons than one. The first piece of evidence can be found in the middle of the table. Let's go!

## The Library

To the library! Take a look around and you may notice a couple of things or not. Search over, under, and in too! Make sure you check your profiles and see if there is anything that may help you. We have a ways to go, but hopefully we can start off strong!

## More to the story...

That crossword was enlightening! It seems the Librarian has cleared the Athlete, but why? Perhaps they shared the spoils! We will have to keep an eye on those two as we continue..

## The Hallway

What is happening here!?! Looks like we have a finish line and one racer! I'm sure there's a few more racers around here somewhere and a clear winner too.

## More to the story...

We have a winner! But only 6 racers? Ah well, might not be important. We need to keep going to get more information!

## The Living Room

Action! Perhaps a plot will connect these findings soon. Like any director's home, there seems to be some messes that could have some of these connections.

## More to the story...

Wow! The Director has been busy with all of you and these projects! Perhaps even busier with some more than others... and someone has been taking notes too!

## The Back Porch

Battle time! So many activities in this house it is hard to keep up! The trainer has cultivated some awesome squads, but only one can come out on top!

## More to the story...

We will have vengeance! But on who!? We're only seeing pairs... The Librarian and the Athlete; the Director and the Trainer; but what about the other three? We gotta keep going!

## The Backyard

Time to go hunting! Slap on that adventure vest and perhaps investigate the contents for some guidance. It is a fairly expansive space so you all will want any help you can get!

## More to the story...

Whew! Getting our steps in today, but we must carry on! We must prove our agility and strength to one another to gather more facts! As each is completed, more will be asked! We are getting closer and closer to who has eaten all of the cookies, I know it!

## The Front Yard

Let's shoot some hoops and hunt some more! Step right up to the line and prove yourself! When you've hit your two, go ahead and hit the refresh button and be on your way!

## More to the story...

Nothing like some fresh air to get the story moving along! Now we can head back inside and grab a snack or sweet treat.

## The Kitchen

Gosh, do we have it in us to check out one more recipe!? Perhaps it holds the final clue!