

MR BRAIN

PUZZLE ESCAPE

THE
SHADOW MANSION



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The Prologue

It was a crisp autumn morning when the letter arrived at my doorstep. The envelope was heavy, made of thick cream vellum, and sealed with a deep red wax stamped simply with a sharp, angular 'K'.

I recognized the name immediately. Professor Kray. In the circles of high logic, Kray was a ghost, a man of immense, cold brilliance who had vanished from public life years ago. I had heard Dr. Alpha speak of him once, with a tone that bordered on warning. Yet, the letter was the height of sophistication:

Mr. Brain, I have followed your recent work with... curiosity. It is rare to find a mind that values pure deduction over simple luck. I invite you to Vinclum Manor this Friday evening. Let us share a dinner, a fine vintage, and perhaps a few problems that only men of our caliber can truly appreciate.

I should have listened to that old feeling of unease. But the prospect of meeting a legend was too tempting. I packed my bag and headed for the manor, unaware that the "dinner" was merely the bait, and I was the guest of honor in a very different kind of ceremony.

As I arrived, Kray greeted me with a polite, measured smile and led me directly into the grand dining hall. We took our seats at a massive central table, encircled by four smaller side tables, each laid out with a different dish.

Over the clinking of silverware, our conversation turned to my recent boat trip to Pillar Island, and how I had stumbled upon that long lost secret chamber hidden beneath the cliffs. Kray listened with intense, unblinking fascination, hanging on every word of deduction I shared, as if measuring the exact limits of my mind.



The last thing I remember was the silver flash of a dessert spoon and the Professor's eyes, glassy and cold, watching me from across the candlelight.

"Pity," he had whispered as the world began to spin. "You have the spark, Mr. Brain. But you lack the steel. I read all about your deduction on that island in the newspaper. The sheer praise that you get... I don't think you deserve any of it. I find it insulting, frankly. But let's put your deduction to the test."

When I finally opened my eyes, the smell of lavender and expensive tobacco was gone, replaced by the scent of damp earth and stale air. I was lying on a bed in a stone cellar. The only light came from a single, stubby candle placed on a wooden crate.

Beside the candle sat a book. It wasn't a novel or a diary. It was Kray's Manual of Elementary Logic.

I reached for it, my fingers trembling slightly. Kray hadn't just imprisoned me, he had turned my own life's work into a taunt. I realized then that the only way out of Vinculum Manor was to play his game, and to play it better than he ever imagined.



I have always found the "instructions" given to the public to be insultingly simple. However, seeing as your brain is likely clouded by the sedative, I have provided this primer. Try not to stain the pages with your desperation.

K.

- **The Objective:** Each room in Vinclum Manor is a lock. To move from the Cellar to the Library, and finally to the Lobby, you must solve every challenge in order.
- **The Logic:** Use only the clues provided. Assumptions are the refuge of the weak minded.
- **The Keys:** Certain puzzles will yield a "Key Component." Keep a record of these. You will not escape without them.

The Cellar

My head throbbed as I pulled myself off the damp bed. Through the iron bars of the cell door, I could see the rest of the cellar, dark, cold, and smelling of ancient paper. The lock on my side was a heavy iron lock with an oddly shaped keyhole. I reached for the manual Kray had left on the crate.

On the first page, Kray had circled a section in red ink. "I find it fitting," the note read, "that your freedom is hidden right before your eyes, yet you likely lack the focus to see it."

I looked at the wall opposite my bed. A patch of stones had been smoothed down and engraved with a grid of letters. This wasn't just a wall; it was a map. It looked like a madness induced cipher, but as I stared, the chaos began to resolve into order. Hidden within the mess of letters were the very things surrounding me.

Personal Notes: Word Search Protocol

- ◇ *Locate all hidden words from the provided list within the letter grid.*
- ◇ *Words can be spelled in any straight, unbroken line: horizontally, vertically, or diagonally. And can run either forward or backward*
- ◇ *Every word must follow a single, straight trajectory without bending, curving, or jumping across cells.*

After a quick look around the room, I took note of the key objects:

BED,

BARS,

WATER PITCHER,

ROPE,

CLAY,

BOWL,

SACK,

WOOD STOOL,

PIPE,

IRON RING,

MATTRESS,

CANDLE,

BUCKET,

CHAIN,

BARREL,

DRAIN,

CRATE,

DRY STRAW,

NOTEBOOK,

FLINT BOX,

BOTTLE,

SHELF,

HAMMER,

HINGE

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

After crossing off every word from the grid, a scatter of unselected letters remained. I read them in sequence from top to bottom, left to right, and smiled. Aha. I knelt by the drain, the foul water soaking into my trousers as I fished out the four heavy iron keys. They felt identical in weight, cold and slick with grime. I wiped them clean on a dry patch of straw.

"Four keys, Kray? Really?" I muttered.

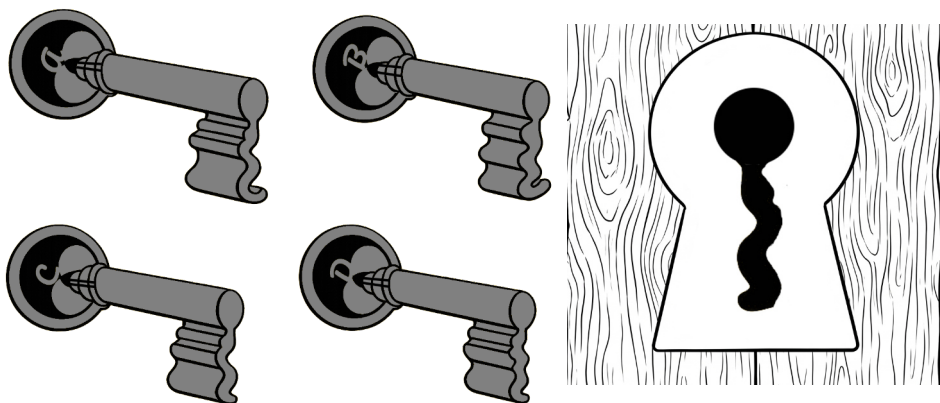
I crawled back to the door and held my candle up to the lock. This wasn't a standard keyhole. The opening was uniquely notched with precise, jagged angles. I looked at the "teeth" of the four keys in my palm. Only one would match the negative space of that lock. If I chose wrong and jammed the mechanism, this cell would become my coffin.

I took a deep breath and lined them up.

Which one to pick?

Personal Notes: Silhouette Key Protocol

- ◇ *Match the physical shape of the target keyhole against the shadows cast by the available keys on the ring.*
- ◇ *Account for inverted cuts, notch orientation, and key depth. A key's shadow must match the lock mechanism's profile in both shape and scale.*
- ◇ *Only one key on the ring casts a shadow that perfectly aligns with every notch and ridge of the lock without obstruction.*



The heavy cell door clicked shut behind me. I stood in a cavernous, damp cellar. The air was thick with the smell of old stone and ozone. Across the room stood a massive steel door, my only way out, but it was dead. No handle, no keyhole. Just a sleek, modern electronic button that looked completely out of place in this medieval tomb.

Beside the door hung a metal junction box, its door swung open and wires ripped out like entrails.

Suddenly, a speaker in the corner crackled to life. Kray's voice was smooth, cold, and mockingly impressed.

Congratulations, Brain. You found the drain. You found the key. You even managed to walk ten feet. But don't get comfortable. This mansion is a living machine, and right now, the heart is stopped. If you want to see the sky again, you'll need to play electrician. Check your notebook... I believe I left you a 'cheat sheet' for your first lesson.

I opened my notebook. On the first page, scrawled in Kray's sharp handwriting, was a message:

To escape the cellar, you need the wires. You will need every part of your brain... and then some more.

The air was stagnant. My candle flickered, casting long, dancing shadows against walls lined with rusted pipes and empty racks. I scanned the floor, the corners, the ceiling. Nothing.

"The wires, Kray," I hissed, my voice bouncing off the damp stone. "Where are the wires?"

I looked around again, more slowly this time. The room wasn't empty; it was just full of things that weren't wires. Old crates, a workbench covered in dust, and a singular, tall cabinet made of dark, polished wood that looked entirely too dignified for this dungeon.



I approached the cabinet. No handle. No hinges on the outside. Just a brass strip across the middle with four rotating letter wheels.

"Check your notebook," I reminded myself, my fingers trembling slightly as I flipped to the page Kray had mentioned.

Kray had sketched a small, dead leaf at the top of the page. Underneath, his handwriting was sharp and predatory:

To find the spark, you must return to the source. Before the carpenter's saw, before the polisher's cloth, this box had a heart that beat with the seasons. It stood tall while empires fell, yet it was silent.

I have a skin, but no blood. I have limbs, but no gait. I have rings, but no fingers. What am I?

I stared at the riddle. My mind raced through a dozen complex metaphors before I caught myself. Don't overthink it, Brain. He's testing your fundamentals.

Personal Notes: Textual Riddle Protocol

- ◇ *The target answer consists of exactly four letters.*
- ◇ *Interpret the clues as double meanings or properties of a single physical object or concept.*



"Skin... limbs... rings," I muttered. The answer clicked into place. It was almost insulting.

I reached for the brass dials.

The oak doors of the first cabinet yielded with a groan, revealing four copper wires coiled like sleeping snakes. It was a start, but a far cry from the complex wiring the main exit door required.

"You're hiding the rest, aren't you, Professor?" I whispered.

My eyes darted to a cold, grey metal box mounted to the damp stone wall. It looked like a primary fuse hub, but curiously, no conduits entered or exited its frame. I rushed toward it, my boots clicking on the uneven floor, my mind already calculating the next connection.

But my enthusiasm hit a wall as hard as the stone.

The box had no keyhole, no handle, and no hinges. Instead, there was a deep, triangular indentation in the center of the faceplate, a void where a specific tool or "key" was meant to be seated. I pressed my thumb into the recess; it was cold and empty.

"A minor setback," I muttered, forcing my breathing to stay even. "If the key isn't here, it's in one of your other toys."

I turned my back on the silent metal box and fixed my gaze on the opposite side of the chamber. There, resting on a stone plinth, was a smaller, iron bound chest.

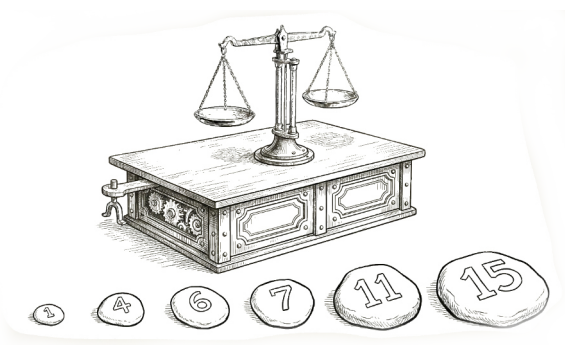
I crossed to the far side of the cellar. Built into the lid of the chest was a mechanical scale with two brass pans. Beside it lay six heavy, blackened stones, each carved with a deep, silver inlaid number: 1, 4, 6, 7, 11, and 15.

My first instinct was to simplify. I tossed the 6 and the 1 on the left, and the 7 on the right. The scale leveled perfectly, but the chest remained stubbornly locked. I heard a faint, mechanical hiss. The scale wasn't just checking for balance; it was measuring the total load.

"All of them, Brain," I muttered, my eyes narrowing. "I have to use every single one of them. Total equilibrium."

Personal Notes: Balance Scale Protocol

- ◇ *Place all provided weight stones onto the two scale pans so that both sides achieve exact numerical equilibrium.*
- ◇ *Every single stone must be used; no weights can be left unplaced or discarded.*



I watched the brass beam of the scale. It wavered, dipping left and then right, before finally settling into a perfectly horizontal line. For a second, the cellar was deathly silent.

Clack, thud.

The internal latch of the small chest retracted. I lifted the heavy lid, expecting perhaps one or two more strands of copper. Instead, sitting atop a bed of velvet, were six thick wires.

"Ten wires total," I murmured, feeling the weight of the metal in my palm. "A solid foundation, but the junction box needs a full heart to beat."

I reached back into the chest and pulled out the second prize: a small, heavy triangular prism made of solid brass. It caught the flickering light of my candle, its sharp edges a perfect match for the void I had seen on the wall earlier.

I looked back across the dark expanse of the cellar toward the grey metal fuse box. I had the key. Now, I just needed to see what Kray was hiding behind the steel.

I rushed back to the grey metal box on the wall, my pulse quickening. I lined up the brass prism with the triangular indentation and shoved it firmly into the slot.

Nothing happened. No mechanical hum. No shifting steel.

A cold spike of dread hit my stomach. I reached out to pull the prism back, but my fingers slipped. The brass block had slid flush against the metal faceplate. It was a perfect, vacuum tight fit. There was no handle, no ridge to grab onto. It was completely stuck.

"Damn it, Brain, think," I hissed, scanning the floor. I spotted a thin, discarded steel scraper on the dusty workbench. I wedged the edge of the blade into the microscopic gap between the prism and the frame, prying with all my strength. With a harsh metallic ping, the prism popped free and clattered to the stone floor, but the scraper's blade was completely bent out of shape, ruined.

I picked up the prism, my heart hammering. I only get one more try at this. If it jams again, I don't have another tool to pry it out.

Holding my candle dangerously close to the metal box, I inspected the triangular dent more closely.

In the low, flickering light, I finally saw them: three tiny, barely visible letters scratched into the inside edges of the rim.

Top edge: C

Left edge: X

Right edge: L

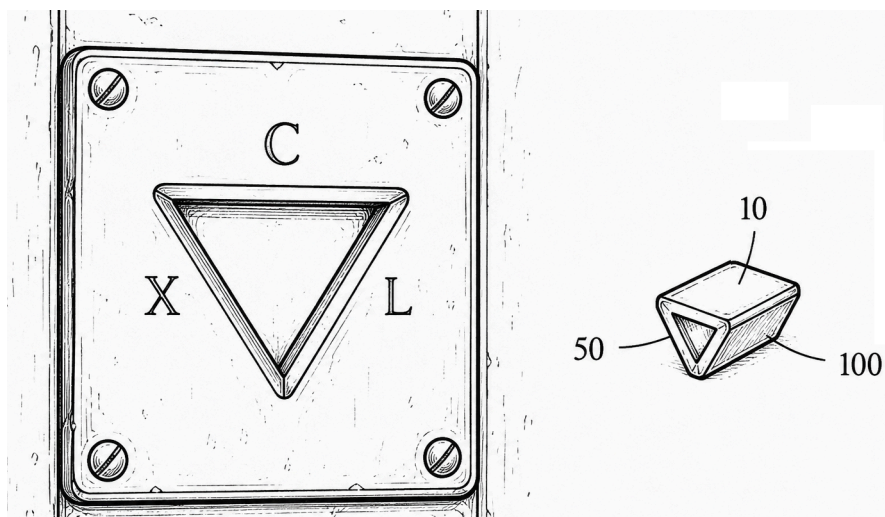
I flipped the brass prism over in my hand, examining its long rectangular faces with narrowed eyes. Sure enough, Kray's dark humor was at work. Etched into the brass sides of the prism were small numbers: 100, 10, and 50.

I gave a short, quiet chuckle in the dark. "You thought you'd confuse my mind, Professor, but you only confused my eyes."

It was a translation alignment. I just needed to match the letters and numbers. How many times do I need to rotate it clockwise to match the sides correctly?

Personal Notes: Prism Rotation Protocol

- ◇ *Rotate the prism along its central axis to align its etched markings with the corresponding symbols on the surrounding box*



Carefully, making absolutely sure the numbers and letters line up, I slid the prism back into the void.

Clack, thud.

The mechanism didn't just unlock, the faceplate slid upward into the stone wall, and the box forcefully ejected the prism, sending it dropping safely into my waiting palm. Behind the steel casing, resting in a pristine velvet tray, were 8 more copper wires.

I tucked the eight newly acquired wires into my pockets and turned away from the fuse box. My eyes swept the lower perimeter of the cellar until they caught a dull metallic reflection near the floorboards. Tucked into a recessed alcove was a heavy, compact steel safe. I knelt down, brushing away a thick curtain of cobwebs. The face of the safe featured a mechanical dial requiring a 3 digit combination.

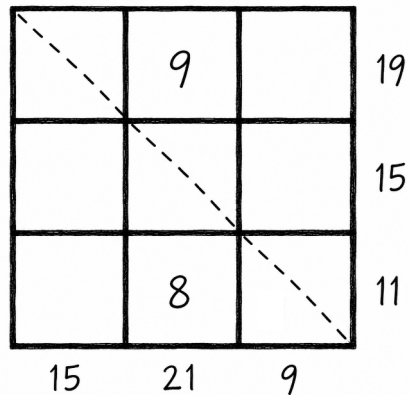
"No keyholes, no handles," I muttered, pulling out my notebook. "Let's see where you hid the numbers, Professor."

I flipped to the page labeled 'The Safety Net.' At the top, Kray had sketched a perfect 3×3 grid. The diagonal line stretching from the top-left corner to the bottom-right corner was heavily shaded with dark ink. Beneath the grid, his neat cursive read:

I love keeping my safe combinations saved in a safe space from other people. Fill the matrix with the missing digits to satisfy the outer sums, Brain. The dashed line reveals the code, read from top to bottom.

Personal Notes: Math Square Protocol

- ◇ Fill every cell in the 3×3 grid using the numbers 1 through 9 exactly once without repeats.
- ◇ The numbers in each individual row and column must add up precisely to the target values printed along the outer edges of the square.



"A basic cross sum grid," I murmured, a dry smile touching my lips. "And the combination is hiding right along the main axis."

My fingers went to the cold iron dial of the safe. I turned it clockwise, settling on the first digit, then counter clockwise for the second, and a final turn for the last.

With a heavy, satisfying clunk, the internal deadbolts retracted. I pulled the thick steel door open. Inside, lying flat on the steel floor, was a neat bundle of 5 more copper wires.

I pocketed the five wires from the floor safe and stood up, scanning the upper perimeter of the cellar. My candle beam splashed across the damp brickwork until it hit something completely bizarre. Hanging on the wall was a framed piece of paper. It featured a chaotic, ugly tangle of intersecting black lines that looked like someone had tested a leaky pen, or perhaps a toddler had dropped a marker and dragged it across the page. Calling it "modern abstract art" would be a massive insult to artists everywhere, it was just a terrible scribble, completely out of place in this subterranean tomb.

"Why on earth would anyone frame a toddler's scratchpad and stick it on a dungeon wall?" I muttered, stepping closer to inspect the cheap wooden frame.

When I lifted the bottom edge, a hidden hinge groaned, and the hideous drawing swung outward. Tucked into the wall behind it was a small electronic keypad protecting a second flush safe. There were no notes this time. Just a small sticker next to the LED screen showing a triangle symbol Δ followed by an equals sign $=$.

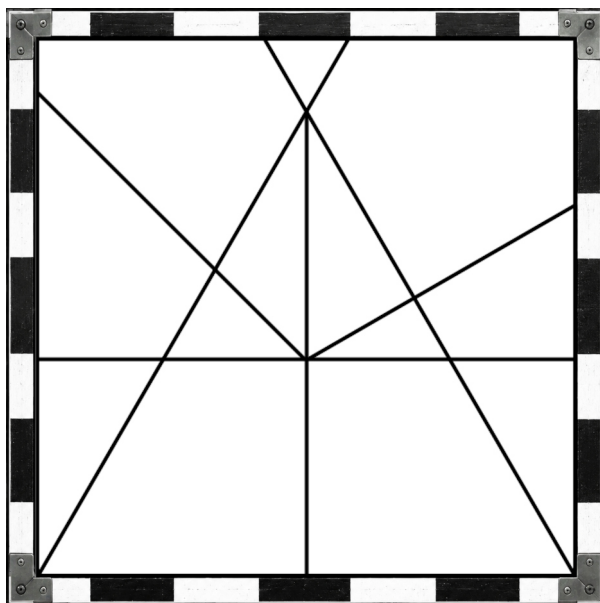
"What triangles?" I muttered, glancing back at the framed mess. I stared at the cluster of chaotic lines. I saw one large triangle formed by the intersection. Then two smaller ones inside it. Then a third...

A slow realization dawned on me. I remembered Kray's obsession with keeping things "safe" right in front of my face. The joke wasn't the quality of the drawing, the joke was that the answer was hidden inside the mess.

It wasn't a code I needed to calculate; it was a count I needed to perform." Ah, you old fox," I muttered, leaning in until my nose nearly touched the glass. "Let's count those triangles."

Personal Notes: Triangle Counting Protocol

- ◇ *Identify and count every distinct triangle hidden within the geometric diagram.*
- ◇ *A valid triangle can be a single, isolated geometric unit, or a larger shape constructed by combining multiple smaller internal triangles and polygons.*



I systematically traced the lines with my fingernail, grouping the smaller shapes into larger ones so I wouldn't lose my place. Kray was relying on visual fatigue. If your eyes skipped just one overlapping boundary, you fail.

I turned to the digital keypad and firmly pressed the digits.

A sharp beep emitted from the safe, and the electronic latch clicked open. Inside the velvet lined pocket of the wall safe lay a bundle of 4 more copper wires.

I counted the heavy strands of copper weighing down my pockets. Twenty seven. The master junction box by the door still had too many empty, gaping terminals. I was short. My eyes fell upon a massive, iron strapped wooden shipping crate tucked into the darkest corner of the cellar. I had been avoiding it. It was completely sealed with thick iron nails, and there was no dial, no keypad, and no riddle attached to its rough timber. There was nothing to interact with. As I stepped closer, a chilling mechanical click echoed from a small loudspeaker hidden in the ceiling rafters. Kray's voice crackled to life, dripping with smug satisfaction.

Did you think everything was going to be pure brain muscle work, Mr. Brain? Ha! Hahaha! A genius still needs a spine.

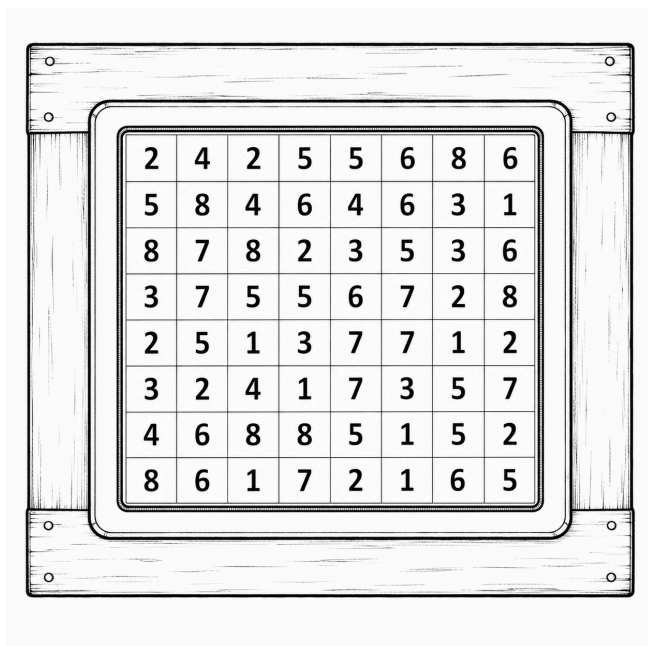
The recording cut out with a sharp pop. I turned back toward the wall safe behind the hideous line scribble. I had left the heavy iron crowbar leaning against the stonework, thinking it an absurd thing to find stashed next to high end electronics. Now, the old fox's logic was painfully clear. I hauled the heavy iron bar over to the dark corner and jammed its hooked end beneath the top floorboards of the crate. I threw my entire body weight against it.

CRAAAACK.

Wood splintered. Nails groaned and popped free. I ripped away three heavy planks, expecting to find smuggled contraband or machinery. Instead, mounted directly into the packing straw inside, was a small, glowing digital screen displaying a grid of numbers. I pulled out my notebook, flipping to the page matching the crate. Kray had titled it with a sneer:

After Workout Protocol:

- ◇ *Shade out cells so that no number appears more than once in any row or column.*
- ◇ *Shaded, eliminated, cells cannot touch each other horizontally or vertically.*
- ◇ *All remaining white cells must form a single, unbroken network connected horizontally or vertically.*



"A game of elimination," I muttered, wiping a bead of sweat from my forehead. It took me less than a minute to apply the Hitori rules, shading out the duplicate digits until the screen flashed a bright green, and the lid popped open with a satisfying click.

I reached inside, my fingers closing around... another damn box.

This one was a small wooden locker, completely solid, tucked inside the wooden box like a sick joke. I pulled it out, my teeth grinding together so hard my jaw ached. "A box inside a box," I snarled, slamming my fist onto the wooden casing. The echo rattled mockingly.

"A box inside a box? Really, Kray? Are you twelve?"

I didn't just feel fatigued; I felt insulted. I flipped to the notebook page to find the next step in this nested torment. It was labeled: "Pegs and holes"

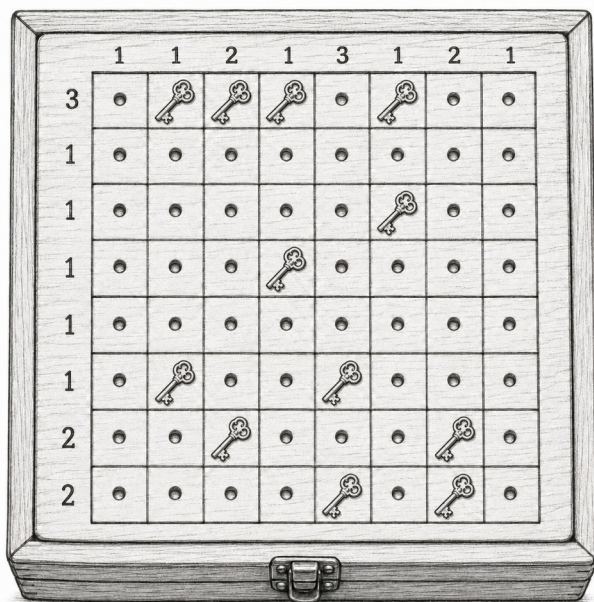
The face of this inner wooden box didn't have a keypad. Instead, it featured a shallow, recessed wooden grid. Engraved into certain squares were keys. Surrounding every single square in the grid was a small, deep hole drilled into the wood. Resting in a tiny trough beneath the grid were twelve small wooden pins, the "pegs."

Kray's handwritten note at the bottom was practically laughing at me:

Place the pegs correctly to release the latch, Brain. Don't play with matches.

The Protocol of the Blind Lock:

- ◇ *Every engraved key must have exactly one wooden peg assigned to it, but it can have multiple pegs around it. This peg must be placed in a hole directly adjacent to the key, either North, South, East, or West , never diagonally.*
- ◇ *No two pegs may ever touch one another, not even diagonally.*
- ◇ *The numbers stamped along the right side and bottom edges of the wooden frame dictate the exact number of pegs that must occupy each respective row and column.*



My hands were shaking slightly from a mix of exhaustion and pure, unadulterated irritation. I picked up the first wooden pin.

I systematically pushed the pegs into the tiny holes. Thunk. Thunk. Thunk. Each one slid into place with a tight, friction filled scrape.

On the final pin, a loud, heavy THUMP echoed from inside the core of the small wooden box. The final latch dropped, the bottom drawer slid open, and a heavy canvas sack rolled out. I pulled the heavy canvas sack from the false bottom of the box and dumped its contents onto the dusty floorboards. Out fell a thick bundle of 11 copper wires... and a tightly rolled cylinder of translucent drafting paper.

I unrolled it quickly, using two heavy stones from the scale puzzle to pin down the corners.

"The master layout," I breathed, my heart quickening.

It wasn't a map of the room, but a complex electrical schematic for the main exit door. The schematic showed a series of circular terminal nodes, the "junctions", scattered across a grid. But the wiring paths themselves were completely missing. Kray hadn't drawn the lines. Instead, inside each circular junction, he had printed a single bold number.

I flipped open my notebook to the final page, titled "The Junction Ledger." Kray's neat script read:

The Coupling Protocol:

- ◇ *The number inside each circular junction node dictates the exact number of wires that must connect to it.*
- ◇ *Connections can only run horizontally or vertically between adjacent nodes. No diagonal crossovers allowed.*
- ◇ *No more than two individual wires can run parallel between any two given junctions.*
- ◇ *The entire network must form a single, unbroken circuit. You cannot have isolated, self contained sub loops.*

"The ultimate bridge network," I murmured, staring at the schematic. "He's not just asking me to plug the wires in. He's asking me to rebuild the entire power grid from scratch."

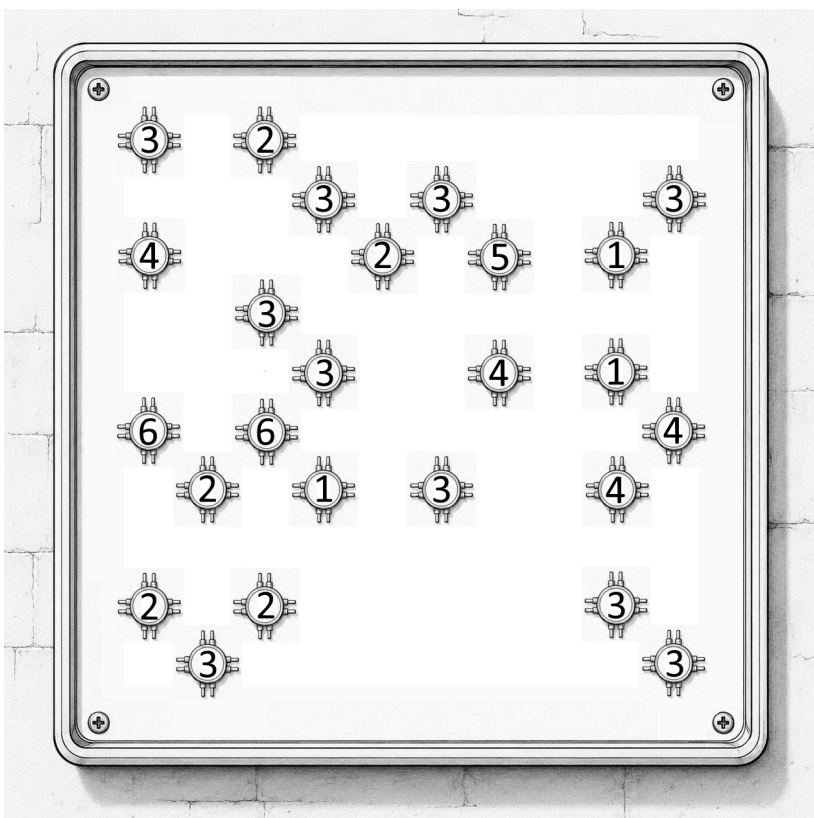
I rolled up the schematic, grabbed my massive haul of 38 copper wires, and marched across the damp stone floor toward the heavy, iron reinforced oak door that led out of the cellar.

I stood before the exit door. Mounted to the stone wall beside the heavy iron hinges was a massive, open steel terminal panel. Dozens of empty ceramic slots gleamed under the light of my candle.

I unrolled the blueprint next to the panel. My fingers sorted through the 38 copper wires in my canvas sack.

I took a deep breath, gripped my first double wire strand, and prepared to fix the power grid.





The cold air from the ventilation shaft hissed against the back of my neck, but my hands were steady. I spread the schematic map across the flat top of the terminal housing, pinning it down with the heavy iron crowbar.

"Twenty five terminals," I whispered, looking at the complex grid of copper clips inside the box. "And a single, massive web to connect them all." The numbers on the blueprint matched the raised ceramic nodes inside the steel casing perfectly.

Kray had designed the panel so that one wrong connection could overload the system. If I routed even one wire to the wrong node, a short circuit would fry the entire panel, locking the door permanently and leaving me to rot in the dark. I had to see the whole network in my mind before I pushed a single wire into place.

"The domino falls from the edge," I smiled, a cold wave of focus washing away my exhaustion. "Let's bring this circuit to life."

Snap. Click. Snap.

I pushed the final double strand of copper into the upper left terminal. The wire hummed instantly, a vibrant, low frequency vibration that rattled through the bones of my fingers.

For a second, nothing was happening.

Then, a blinding, emerald green arc of electricity shot across the central node, blinding me for a split second. Inside the thick oak door, heavy, hydraulic deadbolts began to pull back one by one. It sounded like a sequence of small explosions deep inside the wood.

THUD. THUD. THUD.

The massive door slowly creaked outward by a fraction of an inch, breaking a seal as if they had been closed for decades. A blast of fresh, warm air carrying the faint, sweet scent of old paper and leather swept over my face. I grabbed my notebook, slung the heavy iron crowbar over my shoulder just in case, and pushed the door wide open.

In front of me appeared the narrow flight of stone steps cutting upward into the dark. I stood at the bottom for a long moment, listening. No footsteps. No ticking clocks. Just a heavy, dead silence. With a deep breath and a growing sense of unease, I began to climb.

At the top of the stairs, the stones gave way to polished, creaking mahogany floorboards. I stepped out into the room and held my candle high. The light swallowed the shadows, revealing walls that weren't made of stone or brick, but entirely of books. Towering shelves stretched twenty feet up into the darkness, packed with thousands of leather bound volumes, ancient folios, and crumbling blueprints. Spiral iron staircases wound up to narrow mezzanine walkways overhead. In the center of the room sat a massive, green felt reading desk littered with brass lamps, magnifying glasses, and a stack of freshly opened letters.

"The Library," I whispered, my voice swallowed by the thousands of pages around me.



You've Reached the End of This Edition

Thank you for joining Mr. Brain at the start of his adventure!

In this edition, you followed him through the first part of his escape. But the adventure is far from over!

In the next chapter, Mr. Brain continues his escape with the help of new puzzles and challenges.

- ◇ Continue the adventure with the Supporter — BrainBreeze membership on Patreon and unlock the next chapter.
- ◇ Join the Brainstorm tier on Patreon to follow the complete escape through the library and lobby.
- ◇ Find all available editions and puzzle solutions on Patreon.

Thank you for solving!

Mr. Brain's escape continues....