AFTER HOURS / CASE CLUB

CASE 001 / SPOILER-FREE PREVIEW

The Blackwater Signal



THE LIGHTS FAILED. THE WEIGHT NEVER CHANGED.

An original fictional theft investigation for 1-2 players.

READ ON SCREEN OR PRINT A4 / NO HOST REQUIRED

THE BLACKWATER SIGNAL / CASE BRIEF

A compass without a north

The storm has pressed the harbour into a sheet of black glass. Inside the Blackwater Maritime Gallery, the guests have gone, the catering trays are cooling and a display cabinet is attracting rather too much attention.

At 20:18, curator Nora Bell opens the cabinet containing the Northstar Compass. The object inside has the right weight. It is not the right object. The real compass is a 480 g instrument with a blue enamel pointer and the engraving NORTHSTAR / 1896. The replacement is a plain brass disk.

The gallery exits are secured before any shipment leaves. Investigators establish that the compass is inside exactly one of three tagged crates. Your job is to identify the thief, reconstruct the substitution window in gallery master time, locate the crate and decode the intended collection point.

HOW TO PLAY

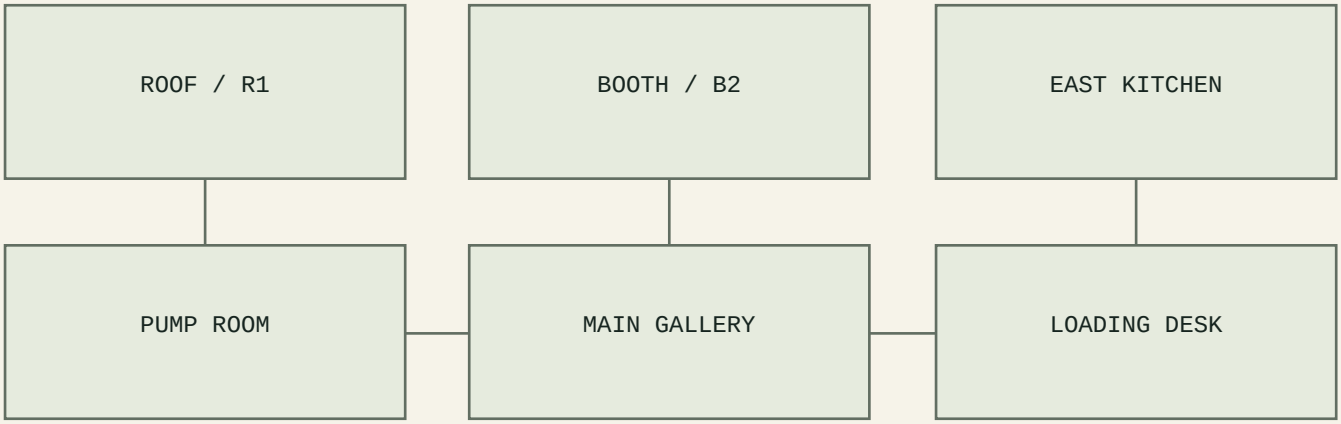
Read the evidence in any order. Compare records, make notes and use the separate hint file only when you want help. No web search, specialist knowledge or extra props are needed. A pencil and scrap paper may help.

The rules of this fictional case: one of the four named suspects personally made the swap and packed the stolen compass. There are no accomplices, remote swaps, secret passages or unlisted intruders. Technical records and independent observations are complete and accurate. Suspect statements and handwritten annotations can be mistaken or dishonest. Some device clocks differ; the clock-check sheet lets you reconcile them.

Playing together: one person can follow the timeline while the other follows the cargo trail. Compare your explanations before opening the solution. The case contains theft and deception, with no graphic violence.

PERSONNEL / ACCESS / FLOOR PLAN

The gallery after closing



Person / badge	Role	Cabinet access
Nora Bell / NB-01	Curator	Physical key
Ada Fen / AF-02	Photographer	Physical key
Rafi Moss / RM-03	Duty manager / caterer	Emergency key
Leon Cross / LC-04	Technician	Maintenance key

All four keys were issued legitimately. A key allows a person at the cabinet to open it; possession alone is not proof of theft. The cabinet has no electronic record of which key was used.

The roof has one monitored stair door. The pump room has one monitored door and no windows. The booth and kitchen have no opening into the cabinet. Walking between the main gallery and loading desk takes less than one minute.

Imogen Vale, the independent conservator, has no cabinet key. Her movements are continuously corroborated by the security guard from 19:55 until the discovery. The guard cannot open the cabinet either.