

Sample Adventure —“The Lights Flickered”

The following is a sample scenario that can be played in one night of gaming as part of an ongoing campaign or as the beginning scenario of a campaign. There is a good amount of role-playing possibility and quite a bit of investigation. This scenario is geared to four characters of Cliffhanger level. For Noir level, take out half the thugs; for Pulp Hero level characters, replace the thugs with more competent enemies.

Introduction: An innocent man, framed for a murder he did not commit, contacts the heroes. Can they find the real murderer before his execution in the electric chair?

Background: An innocent man, Julius Heller, sits on death row in San Quentin prison awaiting execution. Julius was framed by a well-respected lawyer named Martin Blank. Blank, a real heavy drinker and a womanizer, was taken by a young woman named Daliah Black who sang at an underground nightclub called “The Tip Top Club”.

Blank made advances toward Daliah who was involved romantically with Julius Heller, a drifter and bartender at the club. When Daliah rejected Blank’s advances, he followed her home and stabbed her to death late one night after she and Heller were seen leaving the club together.

The Crime: It was commonly known amongst employees at the club that Heller and Daliah were involved. One night after closing, Heller and Daliah left together and Blank followed them. When they got to Daliah home, Blank spied them through her window in a lover’s embrace. Blank was heavily intoxicated and his temper was running high. He waited until Heller left then went to Daliah’s door. He asked to talk but quickly began to argue. When Daliah refused to accept Blank’s affections, he flew into a rage and stabbed her seven times with a bar knife that he stole from the club.

When Blank realized the gravity of the situation, he ran to the only person he thought could help, Mob Boss Luigi Castilone (the owner of the Tip Top Club). Castilone used Blank from time to time as an attorney and decided it would be beneficial to help him. Castilone sent a thug named Francis Delong to plant the knife in Heller’s apartment under the bed. When the police were questioning those who Daliah knew, they found the knife in Heller’s apartment (in truth, the police were tipped off to look under Heller’s bed by a stool pigeon working for Castilone). Heller was tried quickly and sent to prison where he now faces execution in two days.

Characters Involved: The following is a list of the statistics for all the NPCs the characters may interact with in this scenario. Other NPCs may be referred to in the text, but their statistics are irrelevant, as they will not be expected to be combatants.

Martin Blank, attorney and murderer.

Blank is of average height and weight. He has brown hair and hazel eyes. He is pushy and controlling and short-tempered when he drinks. He has a small private practice downtown with no partners.

PHY	50	INT	70	DIS	30
AMR	55	AML	10	REF	50
INF	65	ALL	50	PULP	30
TOUGH	3	STAM	11	HEALTH	40
DC	A	DEF	25	MOVE	5
Skills	Legal, Latin, Streetwise.				
Novice	Streetwise, Driving				
Skills					
Advantages	Official Powers (Lawyer)				
Powers	None				
Attacks	Knife (REF+5/1d4+2/DEF: 30)				
Size	--	He has access to a .38 revolver at his office in a drawer.			
Bonus					

PHY --
Bonus

Francis Delong, Enforcer for Luigi Castilone.

Francis is small but looks like a human version of a shark. He has a mouth full of large teeth and angular features. He smiles a toothy grin just before he pulls the trigger.

PHY	60	INT	60	DIS	40
AMR	60	AML	20	REF	80
INF	60	ALL	40	PULP	40
TOUGH	3	STAM	13	HEALTH	50
DC	A	DEF	40	MOVE	7
Skills	Streetwise, Dirty Fighting, Stealth, Sleight of Hand, Climbing.				
Novice	Shadowing, Smuggling, Lock-picking				
Skills					
Advantages	--				
Powers	--				
Attacks	Baretta M1925 (Rate: 1d3 Damage: 1d10 Load: 7)				
Size	--	Black Jack REF+15 1d6+4 Subdual			
Bonus	DEF: 40 (DC: A)				
PHY	+1	Gear: Toothpicks, Extra Clip for Baretta.			
Bonus					

Thugs, working for Luigi Castilone.

Each of these thugs can be customized by adding a quirk (see Character Quirks).

PHY	50	INT	40	DIS	30
AMR	55	AML	20	REF	50
INF	50	ALL	50	PULP	30
TOUGH	2	STAM	10	HEALTH	40
DC	B	DEF	35	MOVE	5

Skills Streetwise, Brawling.

Novice Skills Shadowing, Driving

Advantages --

Powers --

Attacks .38 Revolver (Rate: 1 Damage: 1d8 Load: 6)

Size Bonus -- Knife REF+15 1d4+2 DEF: 40 (DC: B)

PHY Bonus --

Chapter One “Please help me!” How the heroes are contacted by Heller depends on the nature of the characters. However he makes contact, Heller will ask them to come to the prison where he will explain his case and ask for their help.

- Heller could be an old friend of one of the characters, who lost touch with Heller while he was drifting from place to place.
- A reporter character could become involved with the case as part of a story. Heller makes a convincing case and if he can be proven innocent it would make a great headline.
- An NPC could ask the characters to look into the matter. This could be a contact or an important city official who does not want to become involved personally.
- Lastly, the characters could read of Heller’s plight in the paper and decide to intervene on their own.

Chapter Two “Death Row”. Visiting Heller in prison should be a dramatic scene. When the characters arrive a convict is being dragged kicking and screaming to his end in the electric chair. As the man is executed, there is a bloodcurdling scream and the lights in the prison flicker (thus the title). After that, the whole of death row becomes silent as a tomb.

Heller sits alone in his cell. He will be solemn and quiet until the characters begin to speak. He will explain his story, describing his involvement with Daliah and his employment at “The Tip Top Club”. As he speaks of Daliah he will choke on his words and become quite emotional. He will end up begging for the characters to find the real killer—even if they are too late to save his own life.

- From Heller the Heroes can learn where he lived, where Daliah lived, and the location of the Tip Top Club.
- The characters may notice with a **GOOD INT roll (Forensics)** that Heller is left handed.

This tells the characters that he would NOT stab straight into the heart of the victim if the attack came from the front.

Chapter Three “Investigation”. The following are clues and encounters to be found at the individual locations throughout the scenario. This chapter covers Heller’s Apartment, Daliah’s Apartment, the Coroner’s office, and clues to be found at the Police Station. The Tip Top Club is a separate encounter.

Heller’s Apartment (542 Green Street, apartment C): Since the trial and imprisonment of Heller, the apartment has been cleared and the landlord is cleaning the place to rent it out again. He has done his best to keep the fact that a convicted murderer recently lived here a secret.

- The landlord is a crotchety old man named “Smithers”. He is currently staining the hardwood floor after sanding away the bloodstains left by the knife.
- Smithers complains that Heller smashed out his own window the night of the murder. Characters can make an **INT roll (Forensics)** of MAJOR to notice that there are small bits of glass inside the room but they will find no glass outside the window.

This indicates that someone broke into the apartment then cleaned up the evidence

- There is no evidence of blood in the bathroom, nor will Smithers report finding any.

This reveals that Heller probably did not clean up after himself at home as there was no blood on the sink.

Daliah’s Apartment (625 Parker Street, apartment 2D): Daliah’s apartment has been rented in the months since the murder occurred. The new tenant knows nothing of the murder or Daliah. He (Parker Frederickson) is new in town.

- The landlord of the building is the one who discovered the body and is rather shy about the whole incident. He (Mathew Dirge) had never seen a dead body before and was quite fond of Daliah, he was sorry to see her go.
- He will know that when he renovated the apartment after the murder, there was a lot of blood in the kitchen.

This indicates that the killer went to the kitchen to clean up.

- The landlord also knows that the girl was found at the front door and there were no drag marks from the kitchen, just a few drips.

This tells us that the body was either carried to or killed at the front door then the killer dripped blood while heading to the kitchen to clean up.

Coroner's Report for Daliah Black

Dated March 13, 1930, by Dr. Albert Tombs

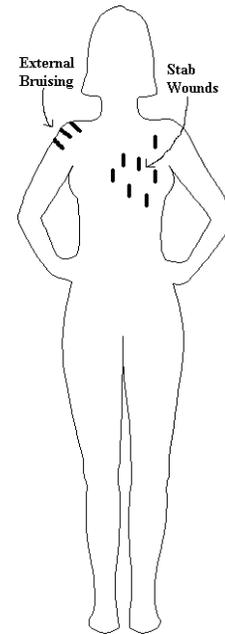
Sex: F Race: Caucasian Height: 5'5" Weight: 123 lbs. Hair Color: Black Eye Color: Green Blood Type: A Body Temp: 94 Degrees Age: 26 yrs.

External Examination: Subject was in perfect health before incident, slight bruising on shoulder indicates force used to restrain while stab wounds were inflicted to chest; abdominal stretch marks show signs of previous pregnancy.

Head and Brain: No damage.

Thorax: Seven Stab wounds clean and straight into chest/heart region.

Remarks: Death was caused by several stab wounds and chest trauma. Weapon used was a long, thin kitchen knife indicated by clean straight wounds. Body temperature and post-mortem blood settling indicates death to be at approximately 2:30 am.



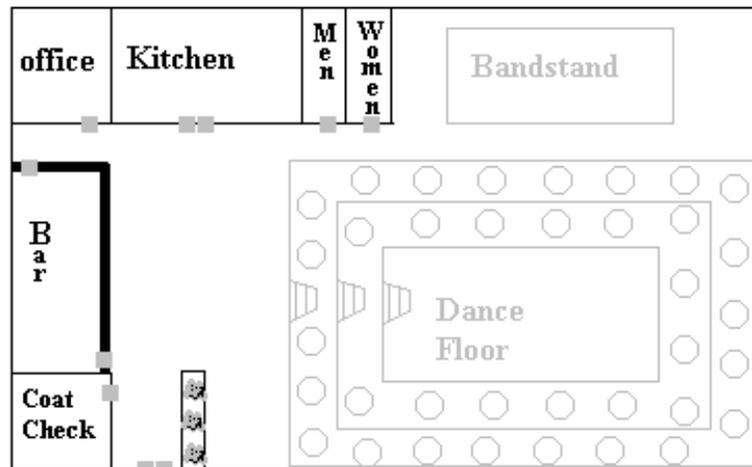
Police Report for March 13, 1930. The following information can be found at the Police Station (if the characters have either Police or P.I. powers or a contact at the police station).

Daliah Black (26), Singer at Tip Top Club, 547 Broadway. Lived at 625 Parker Street Apartment 2D.

Stabbed to death (Seven wounds). Coroner's report indicates time of death to be 2:30am. Body found after disturbing noises were heard by landlord Mathew Dirge (apartment 1A).

Investigation: **Police Detective Michael Pack** entered apartment 2D at 3:45am to find Ms. Black's body in entry way lying on her back. Blood drippings from kitchen indicate body Ms. Black was murdered in Kitchen and dragged to entry way.

Chapter Four "The Tip Top Club" (547 Broadway): The Tip Top Club is a well-respected nightclub that serves thinly disguised alcoholic drinks. Each type is indicated by the staff as different types of iced tea (Jamaican, Mexican, Southern, etc.). Martin Blank takes care of paying off any police who get too interested (this may be why he was saved by Castilone).



The club consists of a large room with a multi-tiered dining area, each of the levels has rows of tables. The very bottom is a dance floor.

- Bouncers at the door will pat down the characters and remove any weapons. (Use thug statistics for them.)
- Gaining information from the Staff requires an INF (Streetwise) roll of POOR.
- Asking for information from the staff will gain a +1% modifier to INF rolls for each dollar used to bribe.
- The Staff, in general, knows that Heller and Daliah became fast friends when Daliah got the job here a few months ago. It did not take long for the two to become romantic.
- The Staff also knows that Daliah was not seeing anyone else.

- The Bartender and some of the regular customers know that a lawyer named Martin Blank had eyes for Daliah from the moment they first met.
- Anyone on the staff can tell the characters that Blank left shortly after Heller and Daliah left on the night in question.
- A shifty looking man with plenty of teeth watches anyone who asks too many questions. If the bartender is asked too many questions, the character will have to make a **MAJOR INF roll** (Streetwise) to keep him from telling the shifty man (Francis Delong).
- Another man of note stands near the office door along with other men (thugs). This man is Luigi Castilone. Castilone is unapproachable unless the characters want to get into a fight with two bouncers and two thugs.

Chapter Five “Martin Blank”. Once the characters hear of Martin Blank they will no doubt start to investigate him. The following is general information and locations where Blank may be found.

- Blank is well-respected in the community, though a **GOOD** (Streetwise) roll will indicate that he is frequently in the company of Luigi Castilone.

Martin Blank’s Office (613 Sansome, suite 7C): Blank’s secretary is loathe to let anyone in to see her employer unless they have an appointment. If characters force their way past, she will call two security guards (use thug statistics). Blank will be evasive and state that he barely knew Daliah or Heller. He will admit that he has done some financial consulting for Castilone in the past but that is over now.

- Blank keeps records of his dealings with Castilone, all are legitimate-looking.
- In his safe (-10% to open) Blank keeps a ledger of payments to the police on Blank’s behalf.
- If pressured, Blank will call for security. He will save his pistol as a last resort.
- Also if pressured, he will call Castilone after the characters are gone and ask for help.

Martin Blank’s home (1435 Ingleside Drive): If Blank is home, he will be cordial until he can get rid of the characters. Once alone, he will call both the police and Castilone. He will give the same answers as above.

- If Blank is not around, his wife **Abel** will answer the door. Abel is a good looking woman of 45.
- With a **INF roll** of **GOOD** (Wooing or Official powers) Abel will state that her husband is a drunk and she has suspected him of having affairs in the past. She does not know anymore information.

Chapter Six “Interference”. This chapter of the scenario deals with the ramifications of the character’s actions. If Castilone has been informed of their actions or questions, a group of three thugs led by Francis Delong will be sent to rough them up and discourage them from continuing their investigation.

- The attack could come on the road with the thugs masquerading as motorists with car problems.
- Another suggestion is to have Delong set up an ambush after calling with an anonymous tip.
- The attack should be non-lethal unless the characters pull guns immediately.

Chapter Six “A Shocking End”. The scenario ends when Blank is sent to prison or killed. A fitting end is to arrange for him to be executed in the electric chair. The following are acceptable ways to get enough evidence to convict Blank.

- Get one of Luigi Castilone’s men to testify.
- Trick Blank into confessing in front of witnesses.
- Bring the evidence collected by the Characters to the District Attorney’s attention and ask him to reopen the case. In this instance, Blank will bargain a lower sentence such as life imprisonment.

Chapter Seven “Aftermath”. The following events will occur once the main body of the scenario is over.

- If Heller is cleared, he will become a Vested Contact for one, or all, of the characters and remain loyal for the rest of his life.
- Most likely, the characters will make an enemy out of Luigi Castilone.
- Abel Blank will be available as a contact from now on.

Experience: At the end of the Adventure, award each character 10xp if Blank is brought to justice or punished in some way. Award additional points for clearing Heller and arranging an appropriate end for Blank.

If the GM wishes a more detailed approach to Experience (See the Experience Chapter in the Pulp Adventure Rules).

Continuing the Adventure

Once your heroes are finished with the preceding scenario, there may be loose ends or future adventures that are tied to the events of "The Lights Flickered". The following suggestions may be used to stretch the existing scenario or to use for follow-up adventures.

- Luigi Castilone could be fleshed out as the "real villain" of the piece and a final encounter with him and his mobsters could be added to the scenario.
- Luigi Castilone could become a major villain in game. He could start out by hiring an out of town Hit-man to kill the heroes (and thus draw them into another adventure).
- Martin Blank's wife Abel could turn out to be the real murderer, jealous of her husband's affairs.
- In another scenario, Abel Blank could blame the characters for her husband's death (or imprisonment) and come back in another adventure as a villainess bent on revenge.



Martin Blank gets quite a shock!

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