
GUMSHOE NEON CITY

NEON CHARADE

STARTER ADVENTURE

v 1.5

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Hush now, gumshoe!

This section's locked tighter than a casino vault on double-zero night. Only the Storyteller's allowed past this point, where secrets sprawl out like a spilled deck of cards, each one revealing a tantalizing glimpse of the Neon City Starter Adventure.


Why the cloak-and-dagger routine, chum? Because the key ingredient to a stellar game ain't fancy dice or tricked-out miniatures – it's a world that feels real, a place where every neon sign whispers a story and every flickering street lamp casts an air of mystery. So, players, best turn back now. This ain't your alley. But for the Storyteller ready to craft an unforgettable adventure, step right in. The shadows hold a tale waiting to be told.

FOR STORY TELLERS ONLY!

THE SET UP

GAME START

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

1. First, note that Action Moments indicate a place where you should let the Players take over and attempt certain actions within the Starter Adventure. 
2. Keep an eye out for items marked in **Maroon** these are special notes for the Story Teller only! **Don't get a big head about it, bub!**
3. Text displayed in the following format is Story Text meant to be read and shared as part of the Starter Adventure:

Neon City, a city of glitz and vice carved from the rocky coast.

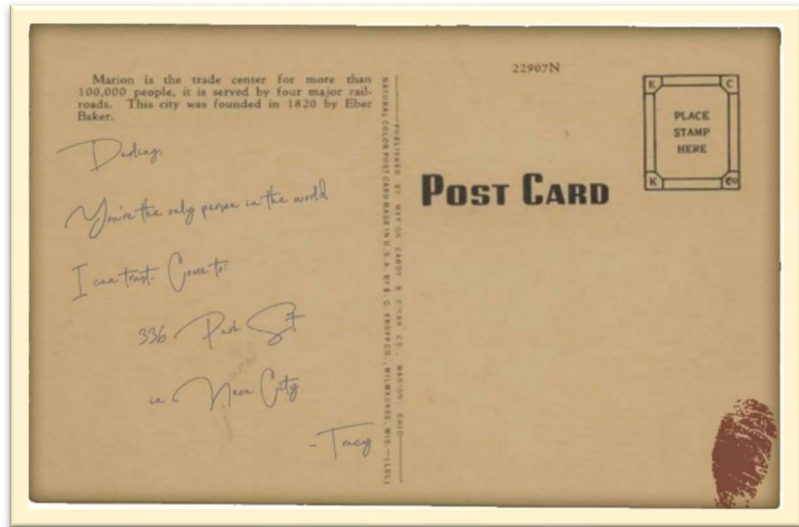
4. Lastly this is meant to be used as a guide and storyline that you can follow as rigidly or as flexibly as necessary. The details in this story are purposefully vague and not well defined. You should fill in the details to work with your play style. So set the scene, get your dialogue ready, and tell a story your players won't soon forget!

Don't forget to read the Story Teller Section of the Website. This has lots of details about Neon City, Gameplay, and NPCs to craft your very own adventure!

NEON CHARADE

INTRO

“The postcard, yellowed with age and travel, was a tangible ghost: her familiar scrawl whispering promises from a city that shimmered with both chrome and sleaze



- A city that had swallowed men whole.”

THE POSTCARD

Five years bled by like a neon sign on the fritz, flickering memories of Tracy the only constant in the dull hum of Charlie O'Dell's life. Then, a postcard arrived, a stark white rectangle amidst the grimy brown of his mailbox. Bloodstained like a casino chip after a particularly rough night, it held a message scrawled in a desperate hand – Tracy's. It shouldn't be possible. He'd seen her snatched,

ripped from his grasp by something that defied logic – like a chrome nightmare from outer-space tearing through the sky.

They called him crazy back home, a reporter clinging to a ghost story. But Charlie knew what he saw. They labeled it "an unfortunate accident," a cover-up thicker than a coat of neon paint on a billboard actress.

Note the Characters class of Reporter

The truth, that elusive dame, was always somewhere out there, and Charlie, honed by years of chasing down leads and sniffing out scandals, was determined to find her. Neon City, a glittering labyrinth of secrets and shadows, whispered her name on the wind. He hadn't been there, but its chrome pulse resonated deep within him. Time to grab his fedora, sharpen his wit, and face the neon abyss. Tracy was alive, and the truth, like a juicy headline, was waiting to be splashed across the front page of Charlie O'Dell's life.



Note we have established a backstory, a motivation for wanting to start the investigation, and a Character Trait about Charlie: Paranoia Pal.

The 13-hour train ride to Neon City stretched before Charlie like a neon sign with a busted bulb – long, flickering, and offering little comfort. He sank into a booth, the rhythmic clickety-clack of the train a dull counterpoint to the storm brewing inside him. Suddenly, a commotion erupted a few cars down. A woman's voice, laced with panic, rose above the guttural snarls of two thugs. Charlie, ever the hero (or maybe just a sucker for a damsel in distress), steeled himself. Ignoring the herd of bystanders content to play voyeur, he ambled towards the scene, a plan forming in his head as smooth as a fresh coat of lacquer. With a swiftness that surprised even himself, he disarmed the situation, leaving the would-be assailants sprawled on the floor like discarded dice.

AM – First Action moment. Even though Charlie decided to get up and help it doesn't mean your players will or should do the same. You can always find away for him to meet Ruby another way. Find out how the players want to handle the situation and roll necessary Success and Failure dice. Move forward based on those.

His unlikely rescuee, a young, aspiring jazz singer with a voice as smooth as velvet and eyes that hold the wisdom of the

streets. She introduced herself as Ruby Dubois. Turns out, fate (or maybe just a shared destination) had brought them both on this rickety metal serpent headed for Neon City. Over shared drinks and hushed conversation, they discovered a shared sense of purpose – both chasing shadows cast by the neon glow. An unlikely alliance was born, a beacon of hope flickering amidst the train's grimy underbelly. Maybe, just maybe, this dame wouldn't be another dead end in Charlie's search for the truth.



Moments like this are best time to let the Players Roam Free and explore this new world you've created for them!

NEON CITY

The groaning metal beast finally shuddered to a stop,

spewing steam and weary travelers into the humid embrace of Neon City.

Charlie disembarked, his fedora pulled low to shield his eyes from the assault of garish neon signs that bled into the twilight sky. The air crackled with a chaotic symphony of traffic, music, and the constant undercurrent of human energy. Beside him, Ruby adjusted the strap of her worn leather satchel, her gaze flickering nervously across the throng of faces.

Charlie caught her unease. "First time in the city?" he asked, his voice barely audible over the noise from the station.

*Ruby
defiance in
doesn't
friendly*

*He
gotta know
dame. And
Even though he
Charlie knew how*



*shrugged, a hint of
her eyes. "Just
seem very
here."*

*chuckled, "Just
where to look,
who to avoid."
had never been here,
the streets and big city
operated. A place like this wasn't for the faint of heart. He
would need to keep a watchful eye on Ruby so she didn't fall
prey to the vultures that circled this city waiting for the naïve
young carcass to pick.*

As they navigated the bustling station, a prickling sensation danced on Charlie's skin. He couldn't shake the feeling of eyes boring into him from somewhere in the teeming crowd, a cold, unseen gaze like a predator sizing up its prey. Was it just paranoia fueled by years of chasing shadows? He couldn't be sure.

THE SKYLARK BUILDING

The Postcard mentioned the Skylark Building. They could head anywhere, but his gut was pulling him there. They arrive to a dizzying assault on the senses. Charlie and Ruby pushed through the throngs, the weight of the city pressing down on them both. Their destination, the imposing Skylark Building, loomed ahead, its gleaming chrome facade a stark



contrast to the grimy street below. But as they drew closer, a growing knot formed in Charlie's gut. Yellow police tape cordoned off the area, flashing lights painting an unsettling strobe effect on the crowd of onlookers. "What's going on?" Ruby muttered, her

voice tight with concern. Charlie couldn't answer. He felt a cold dread slither down his spine as he spotted a figure covered in a white sheet amidst the gathering officers.



His eyes fixated on a single exposed detail, a swirling blue and green tattoo that snaked around the right wrist – Tracy's. His world tilted on its axis. No, it couldn't be. The police chief, a gruff bulldog of a man, barked orders into his radio, his face grim. Nearby, a man with a silver

mane of hair argued heatedly with an officer, the monocle glinting on his weathered face – Reginald Skylark. The news hit them like a sucker punch. It wasn't a fall. The body, even under the sheet, seemed far more mangled than a simple plummet from the Skylark's dizzying heights. This was murder. A commotion on the periphery



drew their attention. A man, reeking of stale alcohol and desperation, pushed through the police barricade, his eyes burning with a wild intensity. Frank Hodgkins, a washed-up detective with a reputation for chasing shadows and a moral compass as straight as a razor, was clearly out of sorts today. He argued with the officers, demanding answers, his raspy voice cutting through the din. He was a loose cannon, but the desperation in his eyes sparked a flicker of hope in Charlie.

As the crowd swirled around them, Charlie and Ruby exchanged a silent glance. This wasn't the reunion Charlie had dreamt of. They had come for answers, but all they found was a dead end... or was it a new, horrifying beginning?

In the midst of the chaos, a pair of eyes watched them from a high window in the Skylark Building. Young Ferris Skylark, a smirk pulling at the corner of his lips, held a glass of whiskey, the setting sun glinting off the liquid like spilled blood.



– Players can do a variety of actions here to find clues. Let them explore the area, roll Skill checks,

Here are some places and people at the Crime Scene the players can interact with:

Skylark CrimeScene

1. The Victim – Clue/Shards
2. The Skylark Building – Info
3. Reginald Skylark - Info
4. Ferris Skylark - Info
5. Drunk Detective - Ally
6. The Rooftop – Clue/Metal Box

For our Story Charlie decides to try and persuade the drunk detective NPC to help their cause first.

Charlie felt a surge of anger hot enough to melt the neon signs around him. Tracy, alive in a bloodstained postcard just days ago, was now a mangled corpse draped in white. Grief battled with a fierce determination to find her killer. He needed in, past the police tape and the swarm of officers buzzing around the scene like agitated hornets. That's when the drunk detective, Frank Hodgkins, caught his eye. His erratic behavior and belligerent questioning of the police might be just the key they needed.

Charlie nudged Ruby. "See that guy? His name is Frank Hodgkins. Ex-cop, washed up, but maybe desperate enough to listen. I read an article about him a few years back"

Ruby, ever the pragmatist, nodded curtly. "Desperate might be good. Let's try."

Weaving through the crowd, they approached Hodgkins, who was now engaged in a heated exchange with a particularly officious-looking officer. Seizing a brief lull in the argument, Charlie stepped forward.

"Mr. Hodgkins? Charlie O'Dell, reporter. I couldn't help but notice your... passionate take on the situation."

Hodgkins squinted at him, his bloodshot eyes glinting with suspicion. "Reporter, huh? This ain't a story, son. This is a tragedy." His gaze flickered to the body, a flicker of pain crossing his face.

"Maybe," Charlie conceded, "but the truth is a story worth telling, especially when it involves someone powerful." He lowered his voice, a conspiratorial glint in his eye. "Rumor has it Skylark Industries is pulling some strings here. Think they have something to hide?"

Hodgkins snorted, then considered Charlie for a long moment. "Listen, kid," he rasped, "I may be down on my luck, but I ain't blind. This ain't a clean fall. Something

stinks to high heaven here. You want the truth, and I want justice. Maybe together, we can stir this pot enough to get some answers."

In this story Charlie was able to get a clue about the victim by talking with Frank. This confirms his theory and gives the Player the first of 4 Clue Tokens about the fall. The players won't have to Search for this, it's a freebie.

Maybe together, we can stir this pot enough to get some answers."

With an unsteady nod, Hodgkins offered a surprisingly firm handshake. "Alright, partner. But let's keep this under wraps. The brass on this case wouldn't like any muckraking reporters poking their noses around."

With their unlikely alliance forged, Charlie and Ruby followed Hodgkins through the police tape, flashing a press badge Charlie had managed to scrounge up.

The crime scene itself was a grim tableau – shards of glass, like twisted tears, littered the cobblestone road, the smell of

Crouching near the body, Ruby carefully examined the sheet-covered form. "No signs of a struggle, no defensive

wounds, from what I can see, but it's fairly mangled. This looks like a clean push, or maybe a jump, but..." she trailed off, brow furrowed.

Charlie was able to get a Clue token about the fall from Frank a moment ago. The next option while investigating The Victim would be the Shards listed below. This is a Moderate Clue! Two more and our players can use them to get a piece of the bigger picture!

Charlie leaned closer, his stomach churning. He spotted them then, tiny shards embedded in the white canvas stretching over, glinting like malevolent eyes in the harsh street lights. The material wasn't glass; it was smooth and strangely warm to the touch, unlike anything he'd ever encountered. Looked like a little like molasses, but more transparent. He carefully plucked a shard from the sheet, pocketing it for later analysis.

Meanwhile, Hodgkins, with a gruff charm and years of experience under his belt, managed to coax information from a tight-lipped security guard. Apparently, Tracy had been seen arguing with a young man, identified as Ferris Skylark, moments before her fall. A company party where things got a

little wild wasn't out of the ordinary for The Skylark Automobile Company, something that Reginald paid quite a bit of money to keep a tight lip on.

As their investigation continued, a cold dread settled in Charlie's gut. This wasn't a simple suicide. Tracy had been murdered, and the killer had gone to elaborate lengths to make it look like an accident. But why the strange glass-like shards? And what role did Ferris Skylark play in this macabre drama? The pieces of the puzzle were scattered, an enigmatic picture waiting to be assembled.

They would need to speak to Reginald to get an idea of what happened. Frank whispered some words to Reginald's assistant and they found themselves ushered into Mr Skylark's opulent office.

REGINALD SKYLARK

Sunlight streamed through panoramic windows, bathing the room in a golden glow. Reginald Skylark himself was a picture of old-money charm, his silver hair neatly combed, his tailored suit a testament to his status. His monocle poached precariously between his eyebrow and cheek. A faint scent of expensive pipe tobacco hung in the air.

"Mr. O'Dell, Ms. Dubois," Reginald greeted them with a warm smile, his voice a soothing baritone. "Such a tragedy about poor Tracy. She was practically family, you know."

Charlie met his gaze, searching for any flicker of remorse, any hint of guilt. The man seemed genuinely bereaved. Was he that good of an actor, or was his grief genuine?



The players can choose to interact with Reginald in a variety of ways. Charlie chose to ask questions above.

"Mr. Skylark," Charlie began, choosing his words carefully, "we understand there was an altercation between you and Tracy before her... accident."

Reginald sighed, a theatrical display of despair. "A heated discussion, perhaps. She was... passionate, about certain projects. Unfortunately, some of her ideas were simply unrealistic." He gestured vaguely. "But that doesn't mean I wished her any harm."

The air crackled with unspoken accusations. Hodgkins, never one for subtlety, leaned forward, his voice gruff. "So you say she 'accidentally' jumped off the roof after a 'heated discussion'? Sounds fishy to me."

Reginald's smile faltered for a brief moment, but he quickly recovered his composure. "Detective, with all due respect, the facts speak for themselves. Tracy made a tragic mistake."

His words left a bitter taste in Charlie's mouth. There was more to this story, he could feel it in his gut. But Reginald, it seemed, wasn't going to crack easily.

Deciding to change tack, Charlie asked, "Mr. Skylark, did Tracy ever mention a young man named Ferris? We heard they were seen arguing shortly before the incident."

Reginald's eyes narrowed for a fleeting moment. "Ferris? My son? He's... impetuous, to say the least. They probably disagreed about something trivial. Nothing to worry about."

"Tracy was always getting worked up about something. She was brash and sometimes and very bull-headed. The arguments, from afar, could appear heated, but that was just her personality." Reginald continued.

Frustration gnawed at Charlie. Everywhere they turned, it was another dead end. However, Reginald's reaction to Ferris' name sparked a new line of inquiry. Maybe the son wasn't as innocent as his father painted him to be.

"Thank you for your time, Mr. Skylark," Charlie said, rising. "We may have some follow-up questions for your son."

Reginald's smile turned strained. "Of course. However, Ferris is... indisposed right now. The Skylark Phantom launch party is still in full swing, and he's quite the social butterfly and we wouldn't want to offend our investors."

The Skylark Phantom? The name rang a faint bell in Charlie's head. He wasn't a car aficionado, but something about it seemed...off. He made a mental note to look into it later.

As they exited Reginald's office, Hodgkins grunted. "Something doesn't smell right about that old coot. But sons can be a handful too. Maybe the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. When I was still wearing that bronze badge I had some runs ins with the boy. He likes the hooch, and even

though prohibition has been continued under Roosevelt, the Skylarks money can get them just about anything. "

With a plan B forming in his mind, Charlie turned to Ruby. "We need to talk to Ferris Skylark, and I have a feeling he won't be happy to see us."



The players can Choose exactly how to get to Ferris.

"Crashing the party seems like the only way to get to Ferris," Charlie admitted. "But how do we get past Skylark security and his entourage?"

Ruby straightened, a glint of determination in her eyes. "Leave that to me. Ferris Skylark might be used to charming his way out of trouble, but a good listener can break down walls faster than a pretty face."

She wasn't wrong. There was a quiet confidence in Ruby, a keenness that could disarm even the most guarded individual. Perhaps, Charlie thought, that was the key – not manipulating Ferris, but building a bridge of trust long enough to get the information they needed.

FERRIS SKYLARK

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Their plan was simple – find Ferris Skylark, separate him from the throng, and hopefully get some answers. Easier said than done. Security guards with robotic precision scanned invitations at the entrance, and Ferris, as Reginald mentioned, was likely the center of attention.

Charlie, ever the reporter, spotted an opportunity. A gaggle of socialites, their faces plastered with bored expressions, were huddled near a bar overflowing with exotic cocktails. He recognized one of them as a gossip columnist known for her insatiable thirst for drama.

"Excuse me, Ms. Fontaine," Charlie intercepted her, flashing his most charming smile. "Charlie O'Dell, Sun City Daily. Fascinating party, isn't it?"

Ms. Fontaine, always eager to dish the dirt, readily engaged him in conversation. Charlie, all the while appearing genuinely interested, subtly steered the conversation towards Ferris. He learned about his playboy reputation, his penchant for fast cars, and his strained relationship with his father. More importantly, he discovered that Ferris was currently holding court near the newly unveiled Skylark Phantom – a sleek, aerodynamic marvel that seemed to defy the era's clunky car designs.

Charlie used things like his Persuasion Checks during the conversation to get that information. Not all information is considered Clues and only when explicitly stated should they be deemed a Clue Token!

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sleek, aerodynamic marvel that seemed to defy the era's clunky car designs.

With a silent nod to Ruby, Charlie excused himself and made his way through the throng. He spotted Ferris, a smug grin plastered on his face, surrounded by admirers who fawned over the Phantom's features. Charlie, however, couldn't shake the feeling that something about the car was...wrong. The sleek lines, the advanced technology– it all seemed a little too futuristic for Neon City's grimy streets.



As Ferris regaled his audience with tales of the Phantom's prowess, Ruby approached, her gaze unwavering. The other admirers, sensing an interruption, began to drift away.

"Mr. Skylark," Ruby addressed him, her voice a smooth melody, "I couldn't help but overhear your fascinating

presentation. The Skylark Phantom is truly groundbreaking."

Ferris, taken aback by her beauty and direct approach, preened under the attention. "Indeed it is, Miss...?"

"Ruby Dubois," she replied, extending a hand. "My father was a mechanic, I'm just a fan. The Phantom, it's unlike anything I've ever seen. The wood panel dashboard, the engine efficiency – it's revolutionary."

Ferris's smirk faltered. Here was someone who actually seemed interested in the car's mechanics, not just its flashy exterior. He found himself, to his surprise, intrigued.

Over the next few minutes, Ruby engaged Ferris in a conversation about the Phantom's features, subtly weaving in questions about its development process and the source of its unique technology. Ferris, initially guarded, began to loosen up, basking in the unexpected attention and the chance to talk about his "masterpiece" with someone who seemed to understand.

Hodgkins told Charlie to keep in the loop, but he had some other leads to look into. "If you need me I will be at the

Starlite Motel, it's near the harbor on Fisher Ave. And keep your ear to ground, it's the only way to hear trouble coming."



While Ruby gathers info and distracts Ferris now would be a good time for the Players to Search for clues, gather intel, and explore!

Charlie weaved through the throng of Skylark partygoers, Ruby's fiery red dress a beacon in the sea of chrome and sequins. Her conversation with Ferris was a carefully orchestrated performance, drawing the young heir's attention while Charlie orchestrated his own move. Scaling a social ladder wasn't his forte, but scaling a building – that was his specialty.

He spotted his opportunity near the back entrance, a secluded corner guarded by a single, bored-looking security guard. A discarded tray laden with half-empty champagne flutes presented itself as the perfect distraction. As the guard's gaze flickered towards the tinkling sound of crystal shattering on the floor, Charlie slipped past, a practiced ghost flitting through a forgotten hallway.

The service elevator was a cramped metal box, its ascent accompanied by a symphony of groans and protests. Charlie punched in the highest floor number, his heart thudding a frantic rhythm against his ribs. Each floor seemed to stretch

on forever, the silence broken only by the rhythmic hum of the aging machinery.

THE ROOFTOP

Finally, a metallic clang announced his arrival. The elevator doors slid open to reveal a deserted rooftop. A cool breeze whipped at Charlie's face, carrying with it the scent of exhaust fumes and a faint, metallic tang. Neon signs bled their harsh colors into the night sky, painting the cityscape in a distorted palette.

He scanned the rooftop, his eyes adjusting to the darkness, slowly. He didn't see much of anything, but the most intriguing sight was tucked away in a far corner – a locked metal crate, its surface emblazoned a strange symbol, an impossible triangle with no beginning and no end.

Adrenaline surged through Charlie. This wasn't just some elaborate car showcase anymore. This was a conspiracy, and Tracy, somehow, was entangled in it all. He scanned the roof for another means of access, his eyes landing on a nearby air conditioning unit.

With a practiced agility born of countless scrapes and dives, he clambered onto its rusted frame, the city sprawling beneath him like a dangerous dream. Reaching the crate, he

fumbled for his lockpicks, his fingers trembling with a mixture of fear and anticipation.

Disappointment gnawed at Charlie as he stared at the locked metal crate. Picking a lock was outside his skillset. He needed muscle, someone with a talent for bypassing security measures. Hopefully, Frank knew someone.

Slipping back down the service elevator, Charlie rejoined the party, scanning the throng for Ruby's fiery red dress. He spotted her across the room, still holding court with Ferris Skylark. Their conversation seemed animated, and a flicker of satisfaction warmed Charlie's chest. Ruby, despite her initial reservations, was playing her part perfectly.

Reaching her side, he leaned in close, his voice barely audible over the din. "We need to talk. Got something urgent." Ruby, ever the sharp observer, picked up on the urgency in his voice and excused herself from a bemused Ferris.

Pulling her discreetly away from the crowd, Charlie filled her in on his rooftop adventure. Ruby listened intently, her brow furrowed in thought.

After a moment she decided they should call Frank and see if he knew anyone that could get past a strong lock. With

luck he did. Someone named “Pops” Johnson. He hung owned a rundown Jazz Club called The Rusty Trombone.

Leaving the party with a stolen glance back at Ferris, Charlie and Ruby navigated the streets, the city a cacophony of sound and light.



This is a great time to let the players explore the city. You can create some interesting locations like Jazz Clubs, Burlesque Halls, Casinos, Speak-Easys and more!

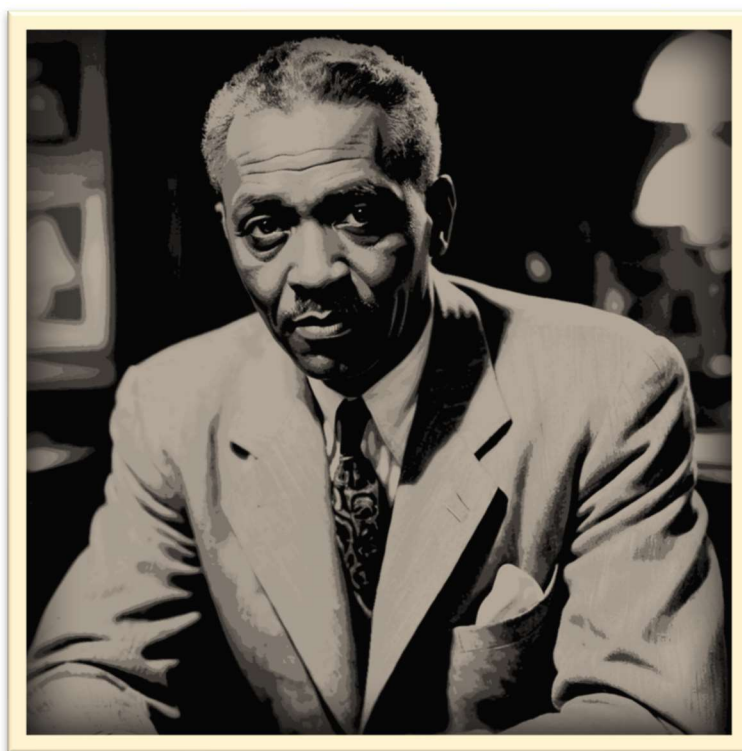
THE SQUEAKY SAXOPHONE

Reaching "The Squeaky Saxophone," a jazz club reeking of stale smoke and questionable clientele wasn't easy on foot, next time they'll catch a cab. He spotted his man, "Pops" - a weathered African American man with a smile as warm as the amber whiskey he “definitely” (wink, wink) didn't sell.





While Charlie uses Frank to get info about Pops, you can use a wide variety of hooks to get them to The Squeaky Saxophone. Give them chance to look around and talk to the patrons. It's also a great



way to check and see what questions the players will ask. Maybe they are clueless as to what they are doing, these are great ways to check in. If necessary, use the Allies like Frank and Ruby to guide the player towards your story and goal when needed.

Pops shook his head at their predicament.

"Locked box, huh?" he rummaged behind the bar, emerging with a battered toolbox that whispered tales of countless repairs. "You young bucks always find trouble, don't you?"

"Ain't seen nothin' like this before," he muttered, finally choosing a slim metal pick. A few deft clicks and the lock yielded with a satisfying snap. Charlie leaned forward, anticipation a tight knot in his gut.

Inside, nestled in velvet lining, was a strange smooth metal device, glinting dully under the bar lights. Hope flared in Charlie's chest. This could be the missing piece, the key that unlocked the mystery surrounding Tracy's death and Skylark Industries' secrets, but what was it?

When your players get access to the strange device make sure and give them a Clue Token. Your players should have a Max of 3 Clue Tokens so far. The freebie about the Victim's fall, The odd shards, and the strange device.

But their moment of triumph was short-lived. The door of the club creaked open, admitting a gust of cold night air and three figures, their faces shrouded by shadows. It was The Rusty Spikes, a notorious gang that held



the streets of Neon City in their vice.

The lead Razor Rick Ricci, a man with a cruel glint in his eyes, swaggered towards their table.

"Heard there's some outsiders snoopin' around, askin' questions they shouldn't be." His voice was a gravelly rasp, heavy with menace.

Charlie met his gaze, his heart hammering. This wasn't a bar brawl he could talk his way out of. These guys were professionals, and the gleam in their eyes promised violence. Pops, his face etched with worry, placed a reassuring hand on Charlie's shoulder. "These folks are just passin' through, ain't nothin' here for you boys."

"We got ways of findin' out. Now, hand over whatever you found in that shiny box you brought in."

-not sure how they heard about the box, but someone in here was rat. One of the faceless patrons, they brushed past in anticipation of their reward betrayed them, not surprisingly, Charlie thought.

Ruby, ever quick on her feet, shot a glance at Charlie. Their options were limited. A struggle here, in front of Pops, wouldn't end well. With a shared look of understanding, Charlie pushed back his chair.



Charlie is going to get them outside so a brawl doesn't disrupt business and get innocents hurt, but here your players can choose their own path!

"Alright," he sighed, his voice feigning resignation. "But let's talk this over outside. Less chance of scaring the customers."

Rick hesitated, suspicion flickering in his eyes. But seeing no immediate threat, he nodded curtly. "Fine, but don't get any wise ideas."

They followed the Rusty Spikes out onto the dark street, the neon glow of the cityscape casting harsh shadows. Charlie knew they couldn't outrun them, not in this maze of narrow alleys. He needed a distraction, a way to slip away. As they rounded a corner, a flicker of movement in the darkness caught his eye. A figure, shrouded in shadow, darted across their path.

"There!" One of the gang yelled, breaking into a run. The other two, momentarily distracted, gave chase.

Charlie saw his chance. "Come on, Ruby!" he hissed, grabbing her arm and yanking her into a side alley. They sprinted through the labyrinthine backstreets, hearts pounding against their ribs, the sounds of pursuit echoing behind them.

They weaved through overflowing garbage cans, dodged drunken revelers, and scrambled over rusted fire escapes, finally collapsing into a deserted doorway, lungs burning. The sounds of pursuit had vanished.

The players would need to roll a successful Deception check to hide here!

Catching their breath, they surveyed their surroundings. The neighborhood was deserted, the only light flickering from a broken streetlamp. Charlie pulled out his crumpled city map, cursing under his breath.

"We're lost," he groaned, frustration gnawing at him. He'd almost forgotten about the data chip, the reason for the whole mess. The night had gone sideways, fast.

"Relax," Ruby said, a surprisingly calm. She hand clamped onto Charlie's shoulder, her voice a hushed whisper, "Look." She gestured across the street, where a beacon of salvation pierced the grimy landscape.

Atop a squat, two-story building, a faded neon sign pulsed with a desperate defiance against the night. It depicted a lonely astronaut, eternally reaching towards a single, defiant star. Below, in chipped blue neon, glowed the words "Starlite Motel."

While a bed for their weary bones would be nice, it doesn't seem like it was in the cards. It may be the end of the night, but it's just the start of the Game!



They crossed the narrow street, the uneven pavement sending tremors up their already shaky legs. The Starlite Motel exuded a weary charm. Its white paint was peeling, revealing the weathered brick skeleton beneath. A single flickering bulb

cast an anemic glow on the dusty office window.

Pushing open the creaky wooden door, they were greeted by a dim lobby, the air thick with the scent of stale cigarette smoke and something oddly sweet. Behind a chipped counter sat a weary-looking man with a smile on his face. A small young girl seemingly organized paperwork on a desk behind him.

"Can I help you?" he rasped, voice like sandpaper on gravel. He took a drink of water, hoping to prevent that from happening again.

"We're looking for Frank Hodgkins," Charlie said, trying to keep his voice even.

His eyebrows shot up in surprise. "Frank? Ain't seen him all night. Said he was headin' out to meet some folks." Disappointment settled in Charlie's gut like a lead weight. Their rendezvous point was compromised.

Suddenly, a flicker of movement in the corner of Charlie's eye caught his attention. A lone shadow, barely discernible in the dim light, detached itself from the wall and melted through a back door leading to a narrow hallway.

A surge of adrenaline coursed through Charlie. Could that have been the shadowy figure from before? Were they a friend or foe? He felt a now-familiar tugging sensation on his jacket sleeve. Ruby's gaze mirrored his own suspicion.

"We might need to reconsider our plans," Charlie murmured, his eyes fixed on the dimly lit hallway.

"Wait," Ruby hissed back, her voice barely audible. "There's a note on the counter." She pointed towards a crumpled piece of paper, half-hidden beneath an overflowing ashtray.

Charlie snatched it, his heart pounding against his ribs. The paper was scrawled with Frank's messy handwriting: "Meet me at The Rusty Spikes hideout on Elm Street. Got something big."

A fresh wave of unease washed over Charlie. Heading to the hideout of the city's most notorious gang was about as far from their original plan as he could imagine. But then again, given the night's events, "normal" seemed like a distant memory.

He locked eyes with Ruby, a silent question hanging in the air. They were in too deep to turn back now. With a shared grimace, they stepped out of the Starlite Motel and back into the neon-drenched labyrinth of City, the faint glow of the astronaut sign casting a long, hopeful shadow over their path.

Somewhere out there, in the heart of a criminal underbelly, a shadow watched their every move, a silent guardian cloak, but wearing the very same Triangle on his jacket like a badge. Whether they were friend or foe remained a mystery, but one thing was clear – Charlie and Ruby were no longer alone.



The Players can choose to get a room, head towards the Rusty Spikes Hideout on Elm, or just

explore another part of the city. This is a great place to let the Players explore and find their own way. It allows them to feel in control of the story and you to see their play style and motivations. Also a great place to put in side quests and other missions that don't have much to do with the main story. For our Starter Adventure we just keep it simple.



THE RUSTY SPIKES

Razor Rick Twitch Tommy Tonelli The Jackals

The stench of stale sweat and fear clung to the abandoned warehouse like a second skin. Here, bathed in the flickering glow of flickering fluorescent bulbs, the "Rusty Spikes" surveyed their latest haul – a mountain of stolen goods ripped off from a shipment meant for a rival casino. The Rusty Spikes were the embodiment of Neon City's

underbelly, a gang as cruel and ruthless as a broken bottle in a dark alley.

Their territory stretched from the grimy docks to the seediest bars, a swathe of Neon City stained with violence and despair. They extorted shopkeepers, ran protection rackets, and dealt in anything from bootleg booze to stolen pharmaceuticals. Their methods were as efficient as they were vicious – a broken kneecap here, a slashed face there, a message scrawled in blood on a rival's door.

To Be continued...

This Adventure is Presented in 3 Parts representing roughly 3 full length gaming sessions. You can do more or less as needed. This one ends quicker to allow set up time and character building. The following adventures will be posted soon. Follow us on Twitter for updates.