

**THE  
BIG CRIME**  
*Film Noir Roleplaying*

**Death Kisses  
Coldly**

A film for two players and a Director

# “Death Kisses Coldly”

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## The Scoop

It is presented in two formats. The first uses pregenerated PCs and is very structured; this is so the Director and players can jump right in and start getting their hands dirty in the grimy world of... *The Big Crime*. But, we also acknowledge that some players and Directors resist this sort of structure and rules; that they are live-on-the-edge types who want to play by their own rules. Well, for those guys and dames, we’re presenting *Death Kisses Coldly* in a much looser format, ready for a Director to customize and equally ready for players to bring in their own PCs and start telling their

stories of life in the dirty city. If you’re the type that is not going to want any part of the Theatrical Release, you still need to read through it and get a feel for how it works.

## Film Summary

Jimmy Crane is a war veteran-turned-husband who is mistaken for someone who murdered a lady working at an all-night diner. With mounting evidence pointing to him, he flees so that he can clear his name before the cops can catch him. His police detective friend, Ralph Becker, has a tough decision to make, as one complication after another arises.

# Theatrical Release

## Number of Players

*Death Kisses Coldly* is a film for two players. The PCs are provided below and on the following page.

If you end up with only one player, the remaining PC can be used as a Major SC. The player should be encouraged to take on the role of Ralph Becker, but it can work with Jimmy Crane being the sole PC as well. You just might have to work a little harder.

Having more than two players is a smidge more difficult, as the entire game system was really designed to accommodate three or less players. Still, it's not impossible. The other players can take on new characters; the tough part will be fitting them into the story, but don't say we didn't warn ya!

### JIMMY CRANE

**Shade:** Light Gray

- Wears an eyepatch
- WWII veteran
- Unfaithful to his wife

**Body:** Normal (Athletics, Fighting, Toughness)

**Finesse:** Normal (Reflexes, Shooting)

**Smarts:** Normal (Ingenuity, Knowledge – Military, Perception, Memory)

**Spirit:** Normal (Persuasion)

**Special Rules:** Right Gee, Way With Words

**Items:** Eyepatch, wallet, cigarettes, lighter, \$10



## **RALPH BECKER**

**Shade:** Light Gray

- Honest Cop • Loyal
- Handsome Fella

**Body:** Normal (Fighting)

**Finesse:** Normal (Coordination, Reflexes, Shooting, Skulking)

**Smarts:** Good (Investigation, Knowledge – Law Enforcement, Perception)

**Spirit:** Normal (Persuasion, Resolve)

**Special Rules:** Right Gee

**Items:** Pistol, billy club, handcuffs, badge, wallet, cigarettes, lighter, \$5



## **What's With All the Snow?**

Throughout this film, you'll find that we often mention the fact that it's snowing outside. Why?

Snow hides secrets.

Snow reveals mistakes.

Snow insulates.

Snow is cold.

The silence when snow is falling is palpable.

Snow fills people with excitement and dread.

Snow is unrelenting.

The air is crisp.

Bodies tighten, muscles ache.

Relief can be had, by covering up, or retreating.

In short, the snow frames the story, creating a frigid atmosphere that sets a distinctive mood. Mood in film noir is essential.

# Act One

## Scene 1

Title Screen: DEATH KISSES  
COLDLY

This scene is a cutscene. The players have no control over what happens here and are simply observers. You should read the following paragraph verbatim or sum it up in your own words.

It's winter in the city, but the streets are quiet. It's late. We see a clock in front of the closed bank. 2:15. There's no snow falling right now. A truck drives by. Unmarked. Delivery truck of some kind. It splashes slush up onto the sidewalk and onto the leg of a man who was walking. His cigarette goes out. He stops. He's across the street from Bertelli's Diner. There is one customer inside... a man. His right eye is covered in an eyepatch. He's looking at the waitress. She's all alone, buttering some toast. The sign says "open". The man outside takes off his glove and reaches into his pocket to get another cigarette. He starts to light it and the wind blows out his match. He takes another match from the box,

looking up, he sees the man in the diner reach across the counter and smash the waitress's head into the counter and he stabs her. Again. And again, and again. He leaps over the counter. We see his body rise and strike again and again. He smashes open the cash register and takes the money. The man with the cigarette steps back, away from the street lights, into the shadows, dropping the box of matches. The murderer looks around and bolts out the back of the diner. The man drops his glove and dashes across the street into the diner. The camera moves to the open sign as another track passes, and everything fades to black.

With the conclusion of this cutscene, you can cut away to Scene 2.

## Scene 2

The setting is the interior of a police station. We see two officers talking to a man whose back is turned to us. The man is an older gentleman with loose, weathered skin, short, grayish hair and perpetual 5 o'clock shadow.

The old man says, "... and that's everything I saw." This is to indicate that the opening cutscene was, in

fact, how he described the events as they supposedly unfolded. Officer Duffy nods in response. He then hands the man a piece of paper; “So, this is the man you saw last night?”

The camera moves to an artist’s sketch of the murderer. The camera pans up; we see the witness from the opening scene. The witness affirms that the sketch matches the visage of the murderer.

Ralph Becker (the PC) is the other officer present.

As you begin the scene, explain to Ralph that when he sees the picture

for the first time he has to make an unopposed Spirit/Resolve vs. 4d10 check to keep his cool. You see, the picture is a spitting image of his best friend, Jimmy Crane. Failure on the check will possibly bring about suspicion from Duffy and possibly some uncomfortable questions (“Say, Ralph, why’d your eyes bug out like that? You know this crumb?”).

Using Officer Duffy and Roald as tools for exposition, you need to convey the following facts:



- Sara Delaney was killed last night, around 2:15.

- She was stabbed 5 times.

- She was in the diner alone, as was the norm for a Tuesday over-night shift (the death technically occurred in the early hours of Wednesday morning).

- She was attacked by a customer. The amount of detail the man had was incredible – the type of coat he was wearing was a red plaid hunting coat, he wore a pair of black boots (not brown), he had an eyepatch, etc.

- Roald was out at that hour, as he doesn't sleep much and he finds that the cold air does him well and helps him calm down. He even knew Sara, as he would sometimes stop at Bertelli's during his outings.

Roald is telling the truth about a lot of these details. He might even namedrop the paper-stand down the next block, as he knows the owner (Mick) and he frequently picks up the paper when Mick shows up. Actually, he helps himself to a paper and waits for Mick to show and pays him and helps him open the stand. Roald is

a lonely man with some demons; that is why doesn't sleep.

But the whole truth of the matter is this: Roald killed Sara. He killed Sara and he is setting up Jimmy Crane for the murder.

Let Ralph interact with Duffy and Roald for a while, but don't let it drag. Film noir moved along at a no-nonsense pace, so try to follow suit. Anyway, explain that Ralph and Duffy will hand over the statement to the detectives, since they will be the ones to investigate this crime.

When it feels right, have Duffy clock out and say, "I hope the double doesn't get the best of you, Becker. You only have eight more hours to go." As the watch commander for the morning shift comes in, he hands Ralph a coffee and starts looking through the folder. Halfway, sitting on his desk, the watch commander says, "This case looks like a good fit for Detective York. He's just the kind of stickler a mess like this needs."

The camera pans up. We see that it is 7:00 in the morning. Becker is stuck at work until 3:30 in the afternoon.

### Scene 3

This is a cutscene. Read or paraphrase the following paragraph:

We're in the coroner's office. The camera is behind one man standing in front of a body covered by a white cloth. It zooms in over his shoulder and down. The cloth is pulled back. Revealed is the cold, dead face of Sara Delaney. The camera pulls back and we see a man; a thuggish sort of man. His eyes well up. We see the officer behind him trying to console him with a hand on his shoulder. The crying man falls to his knees, pulling the cloth down. As is appropriate for the time, the

camera teases us; teases that we might see a naked body, teases that we might see gore. But skillfully, we avoid seeing either, though our memory might tell us otherwise. The police officer moves to one knee to console the grieving man, but he is pushed away. The folder in the policeman's hands falls to the ground, dropping the sketch. The man picks it up, glaring with intensity at the picture. The officer and the coroner try to calm him down, but the man stands up and walks away with grief and rage filling his eyes. The camera moves to the crumpled cloth on the floor. Fade to white.



### Scene 4

A sedan pulls into a detached garage. The camera moves with the car into the garage. Once the car is stopped, the camera moves forward, as it turns to the left, it pans by some paint cans on a shelf. Behind one can is a crumpled stash of money with something on it. Is it... blood? The



camera keeps panning. A man gets out of the car, walks out of the garage door and into the front door of his house. He turns left into the living room, though the camera continued to move, directly into the kitchen, where a woman in an apron is cooking dinner, frying up a steak. She flips it and we hear the



sizzle. She then opens the freezer, taking out an ice tray, she loosens the ice cubes from the metal tray and drops three of the cubes into a high ball glass. Next comes the rye. We follow her as she walks into the living room, glass in hand. The man is now seated in an easy chair, reading the paper. He puts it in his lap and greets her with a warm smile as she approaches. Once the newspaper is no longer blocking our view, we see that it's the man with the eyepatch from the police sketch. The woman hands him the rye and gives him a kiss on the forehead. "It's cold outside, honey," she says with a warm smile

of her own. She picks up his jacket from the couch and we see that it's a red plaid hunting jacket. As she is hanging it up, a sedan can be seen through the window, pulling up in front of the house. Ralph Becker gets out of the car.

"Honey, Ralph is here," the woman proclaims. She opens the door to greet Ralph, offering to take his coat. "Would you like to stay for dinner, Ralph? I'm sure you're exhausted after last night." Ralph looks a bit nervous, but accepts. The snow is beginning to fall on this winter evening.

Let the PCs interact with each other. Ralph will likely drive the

scene, because he's likely going to want to talk to his pal about the murder and the fact that Jimmy matches the murderer's description to a tee. In all likelihood, Ralph will suggest talking in private. If so, Jimmy's wife, Mavis, will suggest they go to the garage; she might even say that she just bought some Schlitz beer for the refrigerator out there, and of course, Jimmy needs to wear his jacket.

Whatever the case may be, Mavis has to overhear Ralph and Jimmy talking. If the two men go to the garage, Mavis will use the intercom to eavesdrop. It would be rather high-tech for the time period, but with Jimmy working in the garage so much, it would make sense so she could call him in for dinner. If they go elsewhere to talk, she'll listen in the old-fashioned way: with her ear to the door.

Jimmy does have an alibi for the time of the murder, but it's not exactly one he wants to use. You should discreetly let Jimmy's player know that Jimmy was with his mistress, Maggie Parker, at her place that night and that he told Mavis that he was out with Ralph. This could be relayed to the player in a note or via whisper.

Whether he discloses this information to Ralph or not is entirely up to Jimmy's player. It's

probable that he will, due to the fact that it could mean the difference between living and getting the electric chair. This adventure assumes that he lays it all out to Ralph. If he doesn't, it shouldn't be hard to adlib; Ralph can always find out about the affair some other way. Be creative.

Either way, do your best to make Jimmy squirm. When Mavis serves up dinner (steak and potatoes with peas from a can), she will stand while they eat, smoking and drinking a glass of wine from a juice glass. She will ask if they had fun last night. This will make for a very awkward moment if Jimmy has not yet explained to Ralph that he was his alibi. If, for some reason, Mavis wasn't able to eavesdrop on their earlier conversation (for example, if they went for a drive to talk), the question was asked out of ignorance, unless she already suspected that something didn't add up. If she did overhear their conversation, she was asking just to put Jimmy in the hot seat.

For fun, you might roll some dice while they are lying. But then have Mavis turn on the charm. She would rather have them nearby talking about their schemes than far away, so she wants to make them feel welcome.

## Scene 5

This is a cutscene. Read aloud or paraphrase the text below:

Snow is falling in the city. It's dark. It's dirty. It's cold. The camera is shooting from up high. We are following a man. It's early in the evening. There are people on the streets, moving quickly, trying to not be outside. The man is walking with purpose. We recognize the clock outside the bank; it's just after 6:00 pm.

We see Bertelli's. It's busy. Dinner rush. Single fellows, dock workers, nurses, lonely people enjoying a meal before going home to their solitary existences. The man enters the diner, but the camera stays outside, depriving us of the sounds coming from inside. He talks to the manager. An older fellow, balding. The man appears very upset and reaches across and grabs the manager. Some of the customers look. Some do not, willingly oblivious to what is going on around them.

The manager calms him down. He writes something down and hands it to the man, who then turns and leaves the building.

It is the man from the coroner's office. He looks mean. He looks

mad. But he also looks like he knows what he is going to do.

The camera moves up into the night sky. The snow is falling harder than before. Fade out.

## Scene 6

This is a cutscene. Read aloud or paraphrase the text below:

We see a plainclothes police detective walking in the hallway of an apartment building. It's not a nice building, but it's not the worst either; somewhere between shabby and comfortable. He stops at a door and knocks. The old man from the police station, the eyewitness, answers, only opening the door enough to see who it is.

"Mr. McNabb? I'm Detective York. Can I come in?"

The man, Mr. McNabb, seems slightly surprised, but he unlatches the door chain. "Of course, come in."

York takes off his hat, causing some snow to fall from it. "I'm the lead detective on the murder case and I always like to follow up with any eyewitnesses."

The old man shrugs. "I gave all the information, my statement, at the station, I don't know anything else."

The apartment is slightly cluttered. The sink is full of dirty dishes and it's apparent that he's a bit of a packrat. The walls are almost entirely devoid of any decoration, save a photo of a slightly younger McNabb, his wife and a young man who is obviously their son. The son is in an army dress uniform. The camera pans slightly, revealing a US flag folded up and placed in a case beneath the picture. It's clearly a memorial for a fallen soldier.

"I know you did, sir," says York as he casually examines the photo. "I just like to touch base with any witnesses. That's all."

The old man scoffs slightly. "But, the murderer, he's out there. Aren't you afraid the trail is gonna get cold?" There's something in McNabb's voice; he's being pushy, nervous.

"This is the first crime like this. Nothing matches the MO – the multiple stab wounds, the taking of the money. And, given the time this occurred, the killer's a night owl, so, there's not much to be gained looking for him in the middle of the day." York reaches in his pocket and takes out a business card. "Here's my card. If you need anything or remember anything else, you let me know.



I'm sorry to have disturbed you."

"No, no, it's a problem. So, uh, you think he's a night owl?" The question seems odd. It seems off.

"Let's just say that most folks aren't getting a cup of Joe at two in the morning," says York.

"Yeah, yeah, sure, of course."

"Anyway, Mr. McNabb, thanks for your hospitality." he reaches out to shake his hand. "Semper Fi. I'm sorry for your loss". York nods in the direction of the picture and flag.

McNabb is shaken. "Thanks. Semper Fi. Yeah. Thanks." McNabb shakes York's hands with both of his. York leaves the apartment, closing the door behind him.

## Act Two

### Scene 1

Snow is still coming down. It's accumulating.

Ralph is clocking in. It's the morning. The watch commander hands him an envelope. "Becker, York left this for ya... he's working that diner murder."

Hand Ralph's player the note handout found at the end of this book.

No one at the station has any more information. York clocked out just past 4am.

What is Becker going to do? What does Jimmy Crane do? He works. He works at a job where he is at a desk. It's nothing great, just a job down by the docks. He's a foreman. He works with rough-looking types, but he wears a shirt and tie, but his sleeves are usually rolled up, and the tie is loosened a bit. That's what he does. Mostly, he works the day shift. Sometimes he works overnight, if a big shipment is coming in at an odd hour.

Ralph is in a real jam, though. His loyalty to his friend and his duty as a police officer should battle each other in his head. Ultimately, let

Ralph's player dictate where things go. Is Ralph gonna go see Jimmy? Are they going to go see Maggie?

As Director, you have to convey and emphasize that Jimmy has an alibi. He was with Maggie all night. He told his wife he was with Ralph, but Ralph was on duty, so that isn't going to fly. York's a good detective. Ralph knows this.

The next scene might be the two of them talking. Or it might be them going to see Maggie (though she won't be at home). There might be several scenes, but in terms of the story structure, the next scene is going to be Becker and York. Let things play out according to the players' decisions. Let them be completely in the driver's seat and if they do something that isn't exactly accounted for in the film proper, let them run with it and improvise as needed.

### Scene 2

It's possible that Becker might try and duck York. But like any good detective, he will find him. Ralph should be feeling very torn. Play that aspect up by reminding Ralph's player of it from time to time.

In truth, York already knows about Jimmy. He knows that Jimmy and Ralph are friends. He

also knows that a pal of Ralph's (a stand-up cop) is likely to be a good guy. He wants Ralph's help. Of course, he has to question Jimmy. He fits the description. So, York is going to keep his cards close to his chest, but in order to calm Ralph, he is going to tell him he knows that he and Jimmy are pals. And that tonight, at around 6, the two of them will head over to Jimmy's. Just in case, though, York isn't gonna let Ralph out of his sight.

The tension should be building.

It's possible that Ralph will suggest they go talk to Maggie. York will decline, saying he wants to hear from Jimmy first. "I like to talk to a suspect first, in person. It's a good way to get the truth. You do want to find the truth, don't you, Ralph?"

This scene should be short and sweet and can take place anywhere. It could be at the police station, at Ralph's place or anywhere else. This allows you to make sure that it happens, because it's absolutely crucial to the advancement to the story.

### Scene 3

It's evening now and the snow is still relentlessly pummeling the city. Ralph and York exit from a black sedan just down the street

from Jimmy's house.

York will tell Ralph, "I like to talk to suspects alone. I'm gonna have you come inside with me, but then I'm gonna ask you to leave. Go out to the garage, have a smoke or something. Okay?"

He knocks on the door and Mavis answers. "Good evening, ma'am. I'm Detective York. Do you mind if we come in?"

Mavis looks a little perplexed. "No, no, of course not." She then notices that Ralph is with him and confusedly asks, "Ralph?"

York is one very cool customer, and knows exactly how to set the stage for getting what he wants. Here's how he does it:

He will make a small amount of chitchat. He will reach into his pocket for his smokes, only to pull out an empty pack.

"Mavis, is it? I have to talk to your husband, and I don't want to make a scene. I don't want to have to bring him down to the station. But I need to do chat with him alone. And... could I ask you to be a doll and go down to the store and pick me up a pack of Winchesters? It'd be much appreciated."

Mavis will comply. Of course she'd like to stay here, but she knows she really has no choice in the matter.

After Mavis leaves, York will ask if Jimmy has anything to drink in the house. Grape juice or anything? While drinks are being poured, York pipes up again. “Officer Beckerer, would you mind stepping outside? I know the two of you have a relationship, but I do need to talk to Mr. Crane alone.”

Once York has Jimmy alone, he will take out his notebook and talk to him. This is straight up roleplaying. He’ll ask all the usual questions (“Where were you at between 2:00 and 3:00 on Wednesday morning?”, etc.). If Jimmy is uncooperative, you can call for a drama scene.

As things start to heat up, switch over to Ralph in the garage, which is where York asked him to go while he talked to Jimmy. One way or the other, Ralph should find the bloody money from the diner tucked away behind the paint cans on a shelf. Maybe he wanted to light up a smoke and needed to find an ashtray or perhaps he just catches a glimpse of it out of dumb luck.

Poor Ralph is always being put in these hard spots, but such is the life of a good cop in film noir. If he hides it from York, you might even give him a Temptation Point.

Let him contemplate his course of action, but before he gets too

complacent, have Mavis show up through the outside door into the garage. She is shivering from the cold air

“Ralph, you want a Schlitz?” she’ll ask, opening one and taking a sip before handing it to him and lighting a cigarette. Surprisingly, Mavis doesn’t ask too many questions, or address the elephant in the room at all.

And then, you can go back to questioning Jimmy.

York needs to get Maggie’s name from Jimmy. This is key. This is his rock-solid alibi. Once he does, he assures Jimmy he won’t tell the wife anything, winking at him. Upon acquiring some information from Jimmy (or not, if Jimmy wins a drama scene), he’ll go tell Ralph and Mavis to come back inside.

The scene ends as Ralph and York drive off on the snowy roads.

## Scene 4

Becker and York pull up front of a building. There’s a hardware store. It’s closed.

The door next to hardware store is what the camera focuses on, however. The number on the door is 347.

York gets out of the sedan. He goes to the door. Beside the door

are apt numbers. There are only 3 apartments here. One per floor, above the hardware store. He buzzes number three. No response. He buzzes again. No response.

“Maybe she’s out,” York says to Becker. Maybe it’s a question. Maybe he is making a comment about Maggie and the type of woman she is. York is intimidating in his own way.

York will suggest breaking in by picking the lock. If Ralph balks (after all, they don’t have a search warrant), he’ll say, “Stop worrying so much. You want to be a beat cop

the rest of your life? I’m priming you for detective, Becker. Take advantage of this opportunity. A little on-the-job training. You’re a good cop, Becker.”

Let Ralph’s player determine the next course of action. Perhaps he wants to pick the lock and let himself in. This requires an unopposed Finesse/Coordination vs. 4d8 check. Or perhaps he wants to kick the door in, which requires an unopposed Body/Strength vs. 4d8 check. Waking a neighbor up is another possibility. The only check required for this would be





to convince the neighbor to let them. It would be an opposed Spirit/Persuasion or Manipulation or Intimidation vs. Spirit/Resolve check. The neighbor has Normal Spirit and Resolve. Showing a badge will give Ralph's player a bonus die.

Maggie's apartment is on the third floor (out of four). Like the door downstairs, her apartment door is locked. This can be picked or broken down, using the same checks as mentioned previously.

It's a surprisingly nice apartment inside. Maggie was a sweet girl and had a good sense of decor. No sign of anything in the living room or kitchen. As they push the bedroom door open, though, they find her. Her corpse is sprawled out on



the bed. The sheets and mattress are soaked in blood. She's been stabbed. Several times. But the blood has dried some. She's been dead awhile. York will tell Ralph to call it in.

As Ralph heads to the living room and starts to call, build the tension. Ask if he is calling the station or maybe someone else? Who? Jimmy, maybe? Describe him dialing the phone as you ask the question. Just as he finishes dialing, though, York rushes out. "I'll call it in."

York wasn't expecting to find Maggie dead. And certainly not killed the same way as Sara. But there is no way Ralph should make the call. York has got to keep an eye on him. He doesn't say this. Ralph is along for the ride. After the other cops arrive, York will take Ralph with him. He won't say where he is going. But as they drive down the snowy roads at night, maybe a bit too fast, it will become obvious to Ralph, they are going back to Jimmy's.

## Scene 5

York's sedan pulls into Jimmy's driveway. The car slides to a stop. We are watching the initial part of this scene as if we were a nearby

person. There is a filter on the lens, maybe it even blinks for a moment, as if eyes blinking. But who is watching? What did Ralph do with the money he found?

Now the point of view switches back to Ralph and York.

“Come on. I know he’s your friend, but we gotta take him in.” York gets out and takes out his gun. He moves quickly up the walk to the steps and knocks on the door loudly. The gun is at his side, but he’s making no effort to hide it.

Mavis answers the door. “Detective York?” she seems surprised to see him again.

“Mrs. Crane, is your husband home?” he pushes his way in.

Jimmy is in the kitchen. Begin the scene.

Jimmy is going to get arrested. Mavis is shocked. She will stand by, taking this all in. Give Ralph and Jimmy a chance to roleplay. Build the tension, build the drama. But, the way you can throw a monkey-wrench into everything, and the way the scene needs to climax is with Mavis screaming out, “He was with me!” Let the surprise settle in for a moment before she more calmly explains. “He... he has these blackouts. Jimmy was with me the night of the murders. We’re trying

to have a baby, see? He was with me all night!” This might happen as a cuffed Jimmy is being led out the door. It might happen if things look like they might get violent (i.e., Ralph turns on York, Jimmy decides to resist, any number of things might go horribly wrong).

And then, York will have to respond “I’m sorry ma’am, I have no choice. I have to take him in. You can talk to the judge in the morning about bail.”

This will end the scene. Now, we have planted all sorts of seeds of doubt. Jimmy has blackouts. Mavis said Jimmy was with her, but Jimmy said he was with Maggie. Who is telling the truth? What is the truth?

## Scene 6

We’re at the police station. Jimmy is in a jail cell. Allow Jimmy and Ralph to talk. This should be interesting, to say the least, because even Jimmy’s player will probably doubt Jimmy’s innocence. This kind of doubt is so very “film noir”.

At some point during their conversation, York will come back to the cell. “Anything you want to share, Jimmy?”

Does York think Jimmy did it? It sure is looking that way. He will

talk to Mavis, of course, but it's best to let her calm down. The beat cops are over there right now anyway, getting a statement and searching the house. York will explain all this to Jimmy.

If Ralph wants to leave (i.e., maybe to go back to the garage and get the money), York will let him. He believes in Ralph as a good cop. If Ralph didn't take the money, and if he goes looking for it, he won't find it. It's gone. The other cops are finishing their search and questioning, and won't tell him what they found.

As things die down a bit, a lull in the chaos, an officer calls for York. He excuses himself, but returns with Roald McNabb. York and Ralph have to briefly leave Roald and Jimmy alone. York needs to get his notepad, to get a statement. He asks Ralph to get the file if Ralph is here and non-compliant.

With the two cops gone, Roald gets up and approaches the cell.

"You're going to pay for what you did." Roald will not reference the murder; he is talking about his son, Art McNabb, who served with Jimmy in the War, and who died. He blames Jimmy. He's blamed Jimmy a long time and he wants Jimmy to pay. He wants Jimmy to suffer. Choose your words carefully, do not reference the

murder, have Roald always bring the conversation to broader terms ("You got blood on your hands", "There's no way you're going to get out of this," etc.). Maybe Jimmy starts putting it all together. If he does, if he somehow mentions Maggie, Roald legitimately doesn't know anything.

Build the tension and let them interact, but not for long. When it's all said and done, the conversation should add more questions to be asked than answer any of the existing ones.

And then York comes in and breaks them up. Roald might smirk at Jimmy, even if Maggie is revealed. York will redirect things. He will ask Roald if this is the man he saw. Roald will take his time studying Jimmy, looking him up and down, before declaring that yes, this is the man. York will thank him.

No matter how much Jimmy might protest, York isn't going to detain Roald.

Hopefully there are a lot of seeds of doubt planted. Did Jimmy blackout? Who killed Sara? Who killed Maggie? Where is the money (assuming Ralph didn't take it or turn it in)? And what the hell is the deal with Roald?

And just like that, we are going to stir things up even more.

Mavis is yelling from the main part of the station. “I want to talk to Detective York! I’ve got a letter here. A letter from the judge.”

York hears this, and goes to get Mavis. As Mavis comes into view, she is holding an envelope. She also wipes the corner of her mouth, her lipstick isn’t on as perfect as she might like and is smudged. We are implying with this simple gesture some very dark things about Mavis. How did she get to see the judge and how did she get him to sign a letter so quickly? Such things could only be implied in the film noir of yesteryear and that should also be the case here. Astute players will put it together.

She pushes the envelope into York’s hands and slightly adjusts her blouse. Maybe she buttoned it incorrectly. It was buttoned correctly before, the last time we saw her.

“Open that up, Detective. Open that up! You’ll see. It’s all there. The judge signed off. You’re free to go, Jimmy. You’re coming home with me. Open the cell. OPEN THE CELL! My statement’s right there. Jimmy was with me the night of the murders. He was at his girlfriend’s two nights before that.”

Play up Mavis’ desperation and how unhinged she now seems. This is a huge departure from the poised lady we witnessed earlier in the film.

York will instruct Ralph to open the cell as he is reading the letter.

Mavis wants little to do with either York or Ralph at this point and probably even shoots Ralph a hateful look.

As they exit the police station, we are watching them get into Jimmy’s car. York and Ralph might be watching them leave. The camera is watching, as if we were a person, just like earlier. As Jimmy and Mavis drive off, the camera turns, as a person would, and “walks” down the snowy streets, looking down. All is white. Fade to black.

## Scene 7

Back at the police station, York and Ralph are going to have it out. York wants to know what Ralph knows and he’s not polite about it. This should be carried out as a drama scene. York knows something is up and he knows Ralph knows something! If Ralph loses the tension scene, it will end with York demanding that Ralph hand over his badge and gun.

If Ralph has willingly told York everything already, this scene can be skipped or altered so that it’s a normal conversation between them wherein they’re trying to piece everything together.

# Act Three

## Scene 1

Describe the following scene in a calm voice, but build the tension. Speak quietly. We are looking through the window of the Crane house into the kitchen. We are watching Mavis yell at Jimmy. She is taking large sips of rye. He is smoking. She storms out of the room and returns, handing him something. Something wrapped in an old towel. Jimmy opens it. He knows what is inside. He opens it anyway. It is his service revolver. US Marine Corp.

Pause for a moment, then raise your voice, channel your anger, yell at Jimmy: “YOU TAKE CARE OF THIS! I’m pregnant, Jimmy, and I will NOT raise a bastard, I’m not going to raise our kid alone while you’re in jail. You figure this out and you take care of it!”

She slams her glass down, shattering it. Her hand starts to bleed. She grabs the towel the gun was wrapped in to stop the bleeding. We hear the heavy gun drop onto the table. Jimmy catches it before it drops in the floor. It’s loaded.

Mavis knows that Jimmy was at Maggie’s. She overheard them.

But she doesn’t want to raise a child alone. Make this a drama scene if needed.

Mavis is hysterical, but she also is very calculating.

Does Ralph show up to help? Either way, Jimmy will likely want to head to Roald’s place. If this was a drama scene, Mavis will “make” him go there. Losing a drama scene stinks, doesn’t it?

As Jimmy leaves, no matter his mood or where he’s going, Mavis wants a kiss from him. She will not him leave without one. “Come home, Jimmy. I love you.” She will put her hand on her stomach. If he isn’t resistant, she will even take his hand and put it on her stomach. She will look at him lovingly. Remind the players of her blouse. Her misbuttoned blouse.

We move back to the camera outside the kitchen window. The snow is coming down heavier now than before. The camera looks down. We see a foot snub out a cigarette. The camera moves to a car and gets in. The car turns on and we are following Jimmy. We pull back to the outside of the car to reveal that the lights of the car are not on. The way is lit by the moon reflecting off the snow. We cannot see who is in the car. York? Roald? Someone else?

The camera stays still as we watch the mystery car follow Jimmy into the snowy darkness.

If Jimmy goes somewhere other than Roald's house, the follower will simply stay back and watch. You'll need to ad-lib a bit. If, on the other hand, he goes to Roald's house, move to Scene 2.

## Scene 2

We're at the hall of Roald's apartment building. Jimmy and Ralph are at the door. Jimmy has his revolver. Ralph has a backup piece.

It's late. It's quiet in the city this time of night. Any noises are muffled by snow. So much snow.

They knock softly, ready to kick the door open if anyone answers.

Silence. They knock again. Silence.

Now, you have a few options:

- Pick the lock (which requires an unopposed Finesse/Coordination vs. 4d6 check)
- Kick the door in (requires an unopposed Body/Strength vs. 4d6 check)
- Wait outside

- Try to find an alternate way in (e.g., a fire escape)

What happens here will determine to a small degree what occurs next. Read all of what happens next and improvise.

Entering the apartment will reveal that Roald McNabb is not there. Tell Jimmy's player that he notices the photo of Art McNabb and recognizes his face immediately.

Read or paraphrase the following paragraph aloud.

*The camera zooms in on the photo of Art. Slow fade out. Sounds of gunfire. Sounds of war. We are in a fox hole. Art is there. His leg is hurt. He is patching it up. Jimmy is there, too. We see the revolver at his waist. He is trying to help Art. A high-pitched scream is heard. A bomb. A mortar. A thud. Jimmy lunges to help Art. EXPLOSION! The screen flashes white. As camera comes back into focus, we see Jimmy again, bleeding from his right eye. We see Art... Jimmy wasn't in time. The man's eyes are lifeless.*

Jimmy should look to almost be in a trance, still spacing out after his flashback. He may or may not divulge his flashback to Ralph.

Either way, tell Ralph's player that Jimmy is staring off blankly at the photo and see how things develop from there. Give them a chance to snoop around (no clues are to be found).

Then, suddenly, the point of view changes. The camera is moving up the stairs. We are a person, looking around. As we approach the floor we are stopping at, we pause. The camera is cautious. Maybe we hear whispering. Maybe we look down at the gun in our hands. It's a street gun. It's not a service piece. The hands holding it are rough. We are wearing rough clothes, the sleeves of the jacket are frayed. Maybe we hear whispers if Jimmy and Ralph are waiting outside.

If they are in the apartment, we peer around the corner cautiously. We look around. The camera moves to Roald's apartment. We are moving quietly. We listen at the door if they are inside. We hear whispering.

Then, the point of view switches back to the interior of the apartment. Without any warning, the door opens. Patton Delaney enters.

Patton is Sara's brother. He is a good-for-nothing two-bit hood. But a hood with some connections on the street. He is the man from the morgue. Although he is a

rotten apple, he loved Sara dearly and knew that she never harmed anybody in her life. Jimmy's going to pay. Patton killed Jimmy's girlfriend and now he plans to kill Jimmy. Enough is enough.

Build the tension. Patton won't shoot right away. He'll explain himself. He wants Jimmy to see the face of the man who killed him. Patton wants Jimmy to know that Sara was a good girl and didn't deserve to die. Things are going to get tense.

And that's when Roald walks in. He is shocked. Remember, we said he was a night owl. Roald instantly grabs a knife from his boot. Blood is still caked on it.

So, what the heck is going on?

Okay, let's clear it all up, shall we? Roald was out for a walk after they locked up Jimmy. He went to a bar, had a drink and is now coming home, looking forward to the first good night's sleep he's had in a while. He killed Sara, pinning it on Jimmy. It's his revenge for the death of his son. He blames Jimmy for letting him die. He doesn't know anything about Patton or Maggie.

How is this scene going to end? It will probably be something of a Mexican stand-off, but someone will have to pull the trigger eventually, so to speak. Let

roleplaying drive the scene. Use that to create intensity. Roleplay the hell out of both Roald and Patton. They are your vessels for building the drama.

If action breaks out (which is likely), you can call for a fight scene. If not, it may become just a drama scene. Don't force the situation into one particular avenue. Go with what feels right as the scene develops. Whatever happens, the scene will end with at least one death or at least one arrest. As long as things are resolved, move to the next scene.

### **Scene 3**

Mavis picks up Jimmy. York is there. He finally put it all together. Only, it's too bad he was too late. It's too bad that someone else had to die. York praises Ralph for being a good friend. Mavis leaps into Jimmy's arms (assuming he's alive) and kisses him. "Come on, honey, let's go home," and they will drive off into the snowy night in the city.

And we will be left with questions, which is a good thing. Questions about Mavis. Unclean questions. Good.

What if Jimmy doesn't make it out of the finale alive? Mavis will turn to Ralph, whispering to him that she's pregnant. Tugging on her shirt, implying a lot. Saying that she wants her baby to have a good home; to be brought up right. Make it very clear she will do anything to make this happen. Have her sit next to Ralph on the ride home, head on his shoulder.

If Ralph dies during Scene 2, little will change, though you should play up how sad it is that a loyal fella like him had to kick the bucket. It should be emotional, especially for Jimmy (assuming he's not also dead).

Or if York is the one left standing... improvise. Mavis is the star here in that case. Hers is the performance the critics will praise. But no one will give away the twist.

The End!



## Director's Cut

So, you want to make this your own, your players want to bring in their own characters. Okay, how about some advice on how to make that happen? Read through the theatrical release first and use it as your blueprint.

The Jimmy character needs to have something in his past that would cause blackouts. Maybe the player doesn't even know they have blackouts. Additionally, he needs to be married or have a steady gal. It's just not going to work any other way, because Mavis is the real star of this film in terms of SCs. He also needs to have had some sort of dangerous occupation or event in his past; an event that would have ended up with Art dead. And he needs to be distinctive looking. It doesn't have to be an eyepatch, but he has to have some kind of look about him that points the eyewitness report very definitively at him.

What about Ralph? Ralph's the pal. Could be a private dick. He could be a copper. Fitting him in isn't as difficult, but you will have to position it in such a way that Ralph is a man torn – torn between his

loyalty to his pal and his loyalty to his job? The safety of the people of the city? Something.

The last ingredient – and this is more Directorial advice than anything else: Treat the players as if they were watching the film! Have stuff happen in scenes that they cannot directly affect. Give them hints of badness to come. End scenes before everything is resolved; make the players feel as



if they are watching the film as well as participating in it. Given the blackout nature of Jimmy's character, this is especially effective. Maybe he doesn't know what is going on. Maybe he *did* do it.

The same goes for Ralph and York: As Ralph's superior, York is able to put the brakes on Ralph at opportune times. The theatrical release was written and paced in such a way as to have the tension build through the scenes. Patton is forgotten about until he shows up at the end, escalating the whole situation to the point of no return. Refer back to Act 3, Scene 1. We put the brakes on as Act 2 concluded, especially Scene 7. Jimmy's character (and the player) are very likely going to want to know what the heck is going on: What did Mavis do? How did she get the judge to sign an order so quickly, in the middle of the night? What about Roald? These are good questions, but not questions you want to answer. Hopefully the players' heads will be spinning a bit. That's what film noir is all about.

Perfect.

Noir is not a genre that relies on hit points and such – it is tension and violence and sensuality and evils that are seen and unseen. You

can't explain that to your players. There isn't a game mechanic for that. It's all about how you present it.

Don't let your players act as if they are playing a different game. This isn't Goldeneye or some sort of Liam Neeson action-revenge scenario. It's *noir*. The best way to convey that is through the choices you take away from the players. Yes, they need plenty of choices, but the characters in film noir never had total control over what happened. The world moves to its own devious drumbeat, and the characters become victims of that.

Give them an ending; an ending they will remember. Hopefully, that will be enough and will leave them asking for more.

# Secondary Characters

## ROALD MCNABB

**Shade:** Dark Gray **Gender:** Male

- Murderous
- Old Man
- Bitter about his son's death

**Body:** Normal (Fighting)

**Finesse:** Poor

**Smarts:** Good (Perception)

**Spirit:** Normal (Manipulation, Resolve)

**Items:** knife in his boot, wallet, cigarettes, matches, \$3



## OFFICER DUFFY

**Shade:** Light Gray **Gender:** Male

- Inexperienced Cop
- Has a baby face
- Friendly

**Body:** Normal (Fighting)

**Finesse:** Normal (Shooting, Driving – Ground Vehicles)

**Smarts:** Good (Investigation, Knowledge – Police Procedures)

**Spirit:** Poor (Persuasion)

**Items:** Pistol, notebook, billy club, handcuffs, wallet, badge, \$5



**MAVIS CRANE**

*Shade:* Medium Gray *Gender:* Female

- Housewife
- Will do *anything* to protect Jimmy
- Has a dark side

*Body:* Poor

*Finesse:* Normal (Driving – Ground Vehicles)

*Smarts:* Normal (Perception)

*Spirit:* Good (Manipulation, Resolve)

*Items:* Purse, cigarettes, matches, makeup, \$10



**DETECTIVE YORK**

*Shade:* Light Gray *Gender:* Male

- Determined Police Investigator
- Can be pushy • Methodical

*Body:* Normal (Fighting, Toughness)

*Finesse:* Normal (Reflexes, Shooting, Driving – Ground Vehicles)

*Smarts:* Normal (Investigation, Knowledge – Police Procedures, Perception)

*Spirit:* Good (Persuasion, Resolve)

*Items:* Pistol, billy club, handcuffs, cigarettes, lighter, wallet, badge, \$5



**PATTON DELANEY**

**Shade:** Dark Gray    **Gender:** Male

- Two-Bit Hood
- Has some underworld connections
- Wants revenge for his sister's death

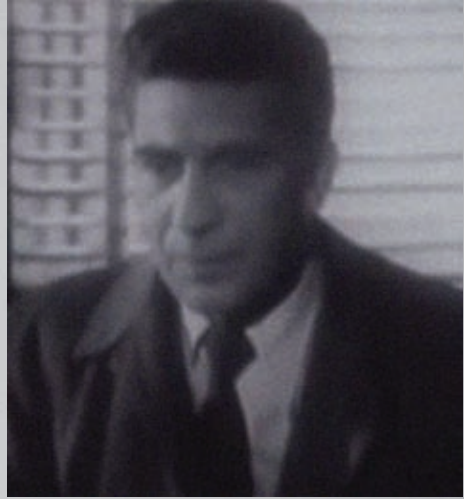
**Body:** Normal (Fighting, Toughness)

**Finesse:** Normal (Reflexes, Shooting, Skulking)

**Smarts:** Good (Knowledge – Crime)

**Spirit:** Poor (Intimidation, Resolve)

**Items:** Pistol, knife, cigarettes, lighter, wallet, \$15



## Player Handouts

Officer Becker-

I'll be back in at 3:00. I wanted to talk to you about the Bertelli Diner murder. It's a good chance for you to get some OT.

-Det. York