

QUILL NOIR

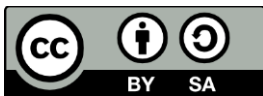


**A Setting Supplement for
*Quill: A Letter-Writing
Roleplaying Game
for a Single Player***

Quill Noir

**A Setting Supplement for
*Quill: A Letter-Writing Roleplaying Game
for a Single Player***

Written by Tim Snider



Quill Noir is a derivative of *Quill: A Letter-Writing Roleplaying Game for a Single Player* by Scott Malthouse (www.trollishdelver.com), used under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. *Quill Noir* is © 2018 by Tim Snider (www.savageafterworld.blogspot.com) and is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

Cover image is from the film *He Walked By Night* (Eagle-Lion Films, 1948), which is in the public domain. Interior artwork copyright ©2017 by Steve Miller. Used under license.

The case had me bewildered. I lit up a Lucky Strike and leaned back in my chair, propping my feet up on my desk. Lacing my fingers behind my head and closing my eyes, I mulled over what Sgt. Ward had said. Despite the fact mob boss Felix Bunte would be free to swoop in and take over the waterfront district, I didn't think he had anything to do with Martino's murder. It was too sloppy to be one of his goons. The blood at the crime scene had come from someone else; there were animal hairs clutched in Martino's hand; and there was a cigarette butt found near the body. My eyes popped open and I lept from my chair as if I had been seated on Ol' Sparky. I lunged for the phone and hurriedly dialed the station as I fumbled with my hat and overcoat.

"Sgt. Ward? Yeah, it's me. Grab a couple of your boys and meet me at Luanne McKenzie's place. Yeah, Martino's girlfriend. I want to ask her again how she hurt her hand. Stop by Judge Smalls' place on your way and get a search warrant too. I want to check out any fur stoles in her closet as well as what brand she smokes."



Quill Noir is a setting supplement for use with *Quill: A Letter-Writing Roleplaying Game for a Single Player*. To use this supplement, the *Quill* rulebook is necessary and is available at [Drive Through RPG](#).

Quill Noir takes place in the world of 1930s pulp crime fiction novels and 1940s hardboiled detective films. In *Quill Noir*, clever gumshoes try to solve baffling cases while gangsters and gun molls thwart their efforts to bring the guilty to justice. Unlike a typical *Quill* session, a *Quill Noir* letter takes a different kind of narrative format: "The First-Person Narrative." As seen in the example above (and elsewhere in this booklet), a narrative is written in a first-person perspective, as if you were mulling over the facts of the case to yourself while sitting in your seedy downtown office, interrogating a suspect in a back alley, or staring down a mob enforcer. It can be in the form of a monologue or an action sequence as you explain how you solved the case.

To begin, select one of the *Quill Noir* **Characters** on the following pages. The characters represent those archetypes you might find as the protagonist in a pulp detective tale. Be sure to review each character's description and introductory monologue to get a feel for how each one thinks and acts.

Next, select one of the following three **Skills** for your character. Each can be used only once per narrative:

Glib: You're a silver-tongued devil. Gain +1 dice to a Language test.

Moxie: You're brash, brave, and bold. Gain +1 dice to a Heart test.

WPM: Your fingers fly across the typewriter keys. Gain +1 dice to a Penmanship test.

A game of *Quill Noir* is very similar in format to a game of *Quill*, with some genre-specific changes. After you've created your character, you'll choose one of the cases in the back of this book. Each case opens with a **Case File** describing the specific crime

you're investigating and any major characters you may encounter. The next section outlines the **Clues & Evidence** found at the scene of the crime. You are encouraged to use this information to help flesh out your solution to the case. Any special rules that apply to a case will be found in the **Rules of Correspondence**, and when you write your narrative, you'll use the words found in each case's **Typewriter Ribbon** (*Quill Noir's* "Ink Pot"). In each pairing, the first word is the Inferior Word, and the second word is the Superior Word. (Refer to the *Quill* rulebook for more information on Inferior/Superior Words.) All other rules of play follow those found in the *Quill* rulebook, and each case is scored similarly to a standard *Quill* letter. After you've totaled up your final score, refer to the case's **Epilogue** to determine how well you did.

When forming your monologue, what you write and how you arrive at the solution of the case is completely up to you and your imagination. (And although each case points to an obvious answer, your investigation may take you in another direction!)

OPTIONAL: If you'd rather not write a first-person monologue and prefer the standard *Quill* letter-writing format, you may instead write a personal letter that discusses the details of the case to the specific addressee listed with each character.



CHARACTERS

Private Eye

You're a shamus, a gumshoe, a sleuth for hire. You take the hard-luck cases the cops won't (or can't) touch. You have shady connections throughout The City, and you have a knack for finding trouble when you're not looking for it. Your investigative talents are available for \$20 a day, plus expenses. You may believe in justice, but after all, a buck's a buck and rent's not cheap.

I swigged down another glass of rotgut hooch with the dame's last words of warning spinning in my mind: "See Thad." It made no sense; there was no one named "Thad" involved in this case. I fished the crumpled newspaper from my coat pocket – it had been found clutched in her hand – and tossed it angrily onto my desk. An advertisement for Drake's Auto Repair had been circled. "Wait a sec. Not 'Thad!' She said, 'See the ad!'" I snatched up the paper, holstered my pistol, and made plans to give Drake a visit.

Penmanship: Poor

Language: Average

Heart: Good

Optional Letter Addressee: The person who hired you, Socialite Toni Elkins.



Plainclothesman

You're a police officer, a flatfoot, a beat cop walking the streets of The City. You proudly wear your badge as a symbol of what you believe in: Law and order, right and wrong, good and bad, no grey areas. You're part of The Thin Blue Line upholding the laws in this seedy burg, protecting the citizenry from the crooks, criminals, and cutthroats who prey on them from the shadows.

I slammed open the door to the gin mill, and a hush fell over the patrons. I stomped over to the bartender; he took one look at the badge on my chest and swallowed hard. I was tired of playing games. "OK Roscoe, I just found out you were seen with the victim a half-hour before he turned up dead." I slapped my handcuffs onto the bar. "I'd love nothing more than to slip these bracelets on you and drag you downtown. Instead, I'll ask one last time: What's your connection with Josh Falvo?"

Penmanship: Average

Language: Poor

Heart: Good

Optional Letter Addressee: Your former partner (now retired), Officer Jason Thomas.

Dilettante

You're a gadabout, a playboy, an independently wealthy socialite. Because of your societal position in The City, you have access to people and resources others of the lower classes can only dream of. Investigating crimes is a hobby you dabble in. (Though you do have an overly developed sense of right and wrong.) It gives you a sense of personal satisfaction to use your influence to bring justice to the unfortunate.

I finished the last of my Manhattan and placed the empty glass on the tray of a passing butler. "Now where was I?" I mused as I turned back to my gathered guests. "Ah yes, as I was saying, there were no fingerprints on the knife because the murderer wore gloves, but I forgot to mention silk fibers were found clinging to the handle. Silk identical to that of the gloves you now wear, my dear," I said, turning to Mrs. Stevenson, whose eyes were now wide with surprise and whose jaw was clenched in fury.

Penmanship: Good
Language: Average
Heart: Poor

Optional Letter Addressee: Your favorite niece, Karen Haynes.



G-Man

You're a special agent, a government man, a fed. The only people you answer to are Uncle Sam and The President himself. You're often working undercover, investigating those crimes that affect the safety and stability of the U.S. government and its citizens. However, while stationed in The City, you feel obligated to assist the local Boys in Blue with any cases that have them stymied.

"FBI, Salcido! Drop the gat!" I bellowed as held my ID over my head. A bullet tore it from my hand, and I dropped back down behind the Wolseley's rear fender and returned fire. Salcido wasn't going down without a fight. In the darkened doorway, I saw the muzzle flash disappear as he stopped to reload. I lept out from behind my cover and pumped metal into the darkness. Hearing a scream and a thud, I ran to Salcino's hiding place and looked down at his motionless body. "Like I said, Salcido, you're under arrest."

Penmanship: Good
Language: Poor
Heart: Average

Optional Letter Addressee: Bureau Director James Hermann.

Newshound

You're a crime beat reporter, an investigative journalist, a legman. With your camera and notepad, you go where the story is, looking for a scoop and poking your nose into places better left unpoked. You're always looking for the Big Story here in The City, and you hope to one day see your name on the front page in big print under an even bigger headline. Stop the presses!

I scribbled down Edgar Warwick's answers as he motioned for the waiter to refill his water glass. He carved off another hunk of steak and stuffed it into his mouth, chewing loudly. "Just one last question for tonight's edition, Mr. Warwick. You said you were having dinner with Jeanette Stevenson the night of the robbery. But according to my sources, Miss Stevenson passed away 2 years ago." Warwick's mouth hung agape at the bombshell, and I leaned in for the kill. "Would you care to comment on that?"

Penmanship: Average

Language: Good

Heart: Poor



Optional Letter Addressee: The city editor, Christina Ault.

Enforcer

You're a scofflaw, a thug, muscle-for-hire. Your moral compass hasn't worked since you were a child. After arriving in The City, you now find yourself in over your head, embroiled in circumstances you have no control over. But before the coppers come looking for you for an explanation, you're going to make their job easier by finding out the truth for them. And Heaven help anyone who gets in your way.

There was a chill in the air at the Waterfront as I watched the dockmen unload The Queen's Bounty. When the last one had left, I thundered across the dock, up the gangplank, and onto the bridge, decking a surprised deckhand, who collapsed like a house of cards. Caught by surprise, Capt. Rogge turned to run, and I nabbed his coat collar with one hand. "Not so fast, cap'n," I said, squeezing my other fist so hard, several knuckles cracked. "You and me have some unfinished business to hammer out."

Penmanship: Poor

Language: Good

Heart: Average

Optional Letter Addressee: Mob boss, Salvatore "The Dentist" Grumble.

Case 1: The Mystery of the Errant Heiress

Case File

Justine Henderson, the 19-year-old daughter of steel magnate Oliver Henderson, is missing. Henderson is utterly convinced the local mob or a business rival has kidnapped his daughter. He hasn't yet received a ransom note and is sick with worry. You've been asked to locate her and, if possible, bring her back home safe.

Clues & Evidence

- 🔍 You've discovered that Casey West, Justine's boyfriend, is also missing. Henderson has never approved of "that hooligan," forbidding his daughter from seeing him again.
- 🔍 You trail West to a seedy motel and, peering through a window, you see both him and Justine, each now sporting shiny new wedding bands.

Rules of Correspondence

You may choose one of the following:

- Casey and Justine remind you of yourself when you were young and in love. Gain an extra Heart die for this narrative.
- Henderson's stubbornness annoys you, and you decide to give him an earful. Gain an extra Language die for this narrative.

Typewriter Ribbon

Courage/Moxie
Criminal/Hoodlum
Boyfriend/Paramour
Kidnapped/Grabbed
Married/Hitched
Whisky/Hooch
Easy/A breeze
Reject/Spurn
Ran away/Skipped town
Anger/Fury



Epilogue

5 or Less Points: Henderson rejects your explanation as "absurd," but he nevertheless sends a group of thugs to "handle the situation." Justine is returned home, shocked and silent, and she lives as a spinster for the rest of her days. Casey is never heard from again.

6 to 8 Points: Henderson angrily sends a group of thugs to confirm your findings. You, however, are able to slip out and warn Justine and Casey of approaching danger. They manage to escape Henderson's wrath and live the rest of their lives poorer, but happy.

9+ Points: Henderson comes to realize his disapproval drove Casey and Justine to one another. He humbly asks forgiveness from Justine and Casey, who agree to return home. Casey now works as Henderson's accounts manager, and he and Justine are very happy.

Case 2: The Account of the Bankrupt Banker

Case File

More than \$50,000 in cash is missing from Springwell Trust. Bank manager Lawrence Calvin claims someone must have broken into the vault during the night and made off with the dough. Night guard Lenny Fortner says he was knocked unconscious during his rounds and, when he came to, the vault was open and the money was gone.

Clues & Evidence

- 🔍 Asking around, you discover Calvin is unlucky at cards, and he owes nearly \$50,000 to bookies throughout The City—a debt he's spent years accumulating.
- 🔍 Fortner is an ex-con who did time in the State Pen for burglary, bank robbery, and safecracking. Calvin also personally hired Fortner just a few weeks ago.

Rules of Correspondence

You may choose one of the following:

- It's an open-and-shut case, and you have no doubt about what happened here. Automatically succeed any one Penmanship roll.
- The words come easily to you this time, and you know exactly what to say. Automatically succeed any one Language roll.

Typewriter Ribbon

Prison/Big House
Money/Cabbage
Theft/Heist
Safecracker/Can-opener
Suspicious/Hinky
Loss/Shortfall
Arrested/Pinched
Playing cards/Gambling
Cigarette/Smoke
Partner/Accomplice



Epilogue

5 or Less Points: Calvin

sneers at you. "That's a fascinating story; it's a pity you have no proof." Later, in your office, a shot rings out and a slug tears through you. As your eyes slowly close for the last time, you see Fortner standing over you with a smoking pistol.

6 to 8 Points: The police take Calvin and Fortner in for questioning. Fortner's previous prison record stands against him and he's immediately jailed, whereas Calvin is released on bail. Calvin gathers up his belongings and what cash remains, and he flees the country.

9+ Points: The police take Calvin and Fortner in for questioning. With the overwhelming amount of evidence uncovered, Calvin and Fortner are immediately charged with the theft of \$50,000 and are eventually convicted and imprisoned for the break-in.

Case 3: The Affair of the Preceptor's Payoff

Case File

This month, Professor Luther Poole has received several anonymous letters saying he'd be harmed if he does not pay \$10,000 in extortion money. The letters have been slipped under his office door at the university, so he thinks it may be a co-worker. He suspects either Professor Edith Hoskins, Student Assistant Henry Wright, or Dean Richard Miles.

Clues & Evidence

- Wright has been on vacation for the past few weeks, and Miles' office is on the other end of the campus. Hoskins, however, works in the same building as Prof. Poole.
- While staking out Prof. Poole's house later that evening, you see a blue sedan drive slowly by, spying on the home. The driver—a woman—sees you and speeds off.

Rules of Correspondence

You may choose one of the following:

- You've been spotted, so the suspect is onto you. Lose the use of one Heart die for this narrative.
- You were sloppy, and it's shaken your confidence. Lose the use of one Penmanship die for this narrative.

Typewriter Ribbon

Extortion/Shakedown
School/University
Falsehood/Bunk
Lawyer/Mouthpiece
Follow/Tail
Acceptable/Jake
Big car/Sedan
Informant/Stoolie
Scare/Intimidate
Sucker/Pigeon



Epilogue

5 or Less Points: Hoskins laughs off your preposterous accusation, suggesting that the letters are likely from a vengeful student who received a poor grade. Later that week, Prof. Poole is nearly killed when he is struck by a blue sedan while crossing the street.

6 to 8 Points: Although the evidence you have against Hoskins is circumstantial, it's enough for the university board of regents to decide to terminate her employment. As she leaves the boardroom, she stares at you and Prof. Poole while smiling maliciously.

9+ Points: Based on your accusation, the police confiscate and test Hoskins' office typewriter. They conclude it's the exact make and model that typed the threatening letters. Hoskins is arrested on charges of intimidation and extortion.

Case 4: The Secret of the Greased Goombah

Case File

Made man Shawn “The Shark” Turco has been found stabbed to death, and gang families throughout The City are planning for all-out war. Turco’s capo, Aristotle Galdi, demands to know who killed his favorite lieutenant. He assigns his next-in-line, Kristopher “Kris” Parminder, to assist you with your investigation.

Clues & Evidence

- With Turco gone, you surmise that Parminder would move up in the Galdi family hierarchy. But killing a made man in your own mob family is a death sentence.
- While talking to members of the Galdi family, you find out that “Kris” is not short for “Kristopher,” but rather a “kris” is a type of dagger—Parminder’s favorite weapon.

Rules of Correspondence

Choose the one that applies to your chosen character:

- Galdi hates law enforcement types. If you are a Private Eye, Plainclothesman, or G-Man, your Good Attribute drops to Average level for this narrative.
- Galdi also hates anyone who blathers on needlessly. If you are a Dilettante or Newshound, you may not use your chosen Skill for this narrative.
- However, if you’re an Enforcer, Galdi will listen to what you have to say. Gain an extra Penmanship die for this narrative.

Typewriter Ribbon

Disloyal/Treacherous
Gangster/Wise guy
Questioned/Grilled
Recognized/Made
Knife/Shiv
Betray/Double-cross
Kill/Whack
Street fight/Turf war
Crazy/Certifiable
Informant/Rat



Epilogue

5 or Less Points: As Galdi listens to your summary, his expression slowly turns to one of fury. “Do you mean to stand before me and accuse a man I would trust with my life?” You are dragged from the room by two of his men, and you are never seen alive again.

6 to 8 Points: Galdi hears you out, but he seems unconvinced by your explanation. He asks for Parminder, but Kris is nowhere to be found, having cut and run now that the heat is on. Without further evidence, a mob war breaks out that envelops The City.

9+ Points: Galdi confronts Parminder with your evidence. He denies everything, until Galdi demands to see his knife. The blade is obviously blood-stained. Galdi thanks you, while Parminder is dragged to an adjacent room. You hear a single gunshot ring out.