The Halloran Ledger

A dead bookkeeper, a missing ledger, and a city hall that would pay well to keep it missing.

Setting: Other Tone: Gritty ~3hrs
Party: 4 players Level 1

dungeonmaster.website

Introduction

The Hook

Emmett Lasky kept the mayors private accounts for twenty years. Three weeks before the election he went out after supper to post a letter and was pulled from the harbour two mornings later with stones in his pockets. The police said suicide before the body was dry. His widow is sitting in your office with ninety dollars and a question: who searched her house before she got home from the morgue?

How to use this adventure

This one-shot is designed for a single session with the AI Dungeon Master at dungeonmaster.website. Read the plot summary and NPC secrets before play. Players should not read beyond the hook.

Estimated duration: ~3hrs
Recommended party: 4 at level 1

The Adventure

Lasky was not a suicide. The county pathologist found water in the stomach and none in the lungs: he was dead before he went in. He died under questioning in the back room of a Waterfront bar, where a vice detective working for Captain Ray Dolan was asking where the ledger was. Laskys heart gave out. The stones were an afterthought.

Lasky had found an entry from March 1931 that he could not live with, and had decided to give the ledger to people who had a right to it. He checked it at the streetcar terminals parcel room and posted the claim ticket to Hazel Winters at the Clarion. The letter is sitting in the Clarions own mailroom, pulled by a copy boy the Evening Star pays to hold back her post.

Everyone is looking. Dolan wants the ledger as leverage over the whole city. The mayor did not order the killing and is frightened precisely because he does not know who did. The Castellanes were the last to speak to Lasky and turned him away. The investigators must establish murder, follow the letter, and reach the parcel room before the people following them.

Mrs. Vera Lasky

Role
The widow, the client

Personality
Small, composed, furious under it. Answers what she is asked and nothing more.

DM Only - Secret
Emmett bought her a rail ticket out of town the week before. She did not use it, and she kept the envelope it came in - which has a parcel-room number pencilled on the flap.

Suggested mannerism: lean into personality cues when this NPC speaks - give them a distinct voice.

Doc Abernathy

Role
County pathologist

Personality
Rumpled, sour, constitutionally unable to sign a lie.

DM Only - Secret
He has not signed the certificate. There are bruises on the wrists, and the stomach held bar whisky from one particular Waterfront saloon.

Suggested mannerism: lean into personality cues when this NPC speaks - give them a distinct voice.

Captain Raymond Dolan

Role

Commander of the Fourteenth Precinct

Personality

Soft-spoken, well tailored. Mentions pleasantly something you believed nobody knew.

DM Only - Secret

His man killed Lasky by accident. Dolan does not want the investigators dead; he wants them to find the ledger for him.

Suggested mannerism: lean into personality cues when this NPC speaks - give them a distinct voice.

Mr. Gault

Role

The fixer, working for the mayor

Personality

Small, grey, never raises his voice. Has never betrayed a client.

DM Only - Secret

He was sent to bring Lasky in safely and arrived an hour late. He will trade what he saw for a promise that the mayor reads the ledger before anyone prints it.

Suggested mannerism: lean into personality cues when this NPC speaks - give them a distinct voice.

Walk-Up Office

Description

A desk, two chairs, a filing cabinet and a bottle in the drawer, above something louder.

What happens here

The client, the ninety dollars and the first lie: the police report says she identified the body at nine. She was at the morgue until eleven.

Mercy General Morgue

Description

A tiled corridor two floors down, at the end of which Doc Abernathy keeps his own slides.

What happens here

It was murder. The pathologist will say so to the right visitor, and has been waiting to see who asks.

The Clarion Building

Description

Six shabby floors on Press Row, presses in the basement, mailroom behind the loading dock.

What happens here

The letter. A copy boy with a new wristwatch, and a basket of post that never reached the city desk.

The Streetcar Terminal

Description

A parcel room with a wire cage, a bored clerk and four hundred numbered pigeonholes.

What happens here

The ledger, in green cloth. And everyone who followed the investigators here.

Encounter 1: exploration

Difficulty: easy
Type: exploration

Canvass the Lasky house: a search so expert it left almost nothing out of place, a missing savings book, and an envelope with a number on the flap.

Monsters / threats

None listed - improvise from description.

Encounter 2: social

Difficulty: medium
Type: social

The morgue, then the Fourteenth Precinct. Abernathy will talk. Dolan will listen, smile, and assign a detective to follow whoever leaves.

Monsters / threats

Vice Detective

Encounter 3: exploration

Difficulty: medium
Type: exploration

Trace the letter through the Clarions mailroom while losing a tail: a copy boy, a second set of books, and Hazel Winters, who has been warned off twice.

Monsters / threats

Dirty PI

Encounter 4: combat

Difficulty: hard
Type: combat

The parcel room. Dolans men at one door, a pair of Castellane soldiers at the other, and a clerk who would like everyone to take a number.

Monsters / threats

Vice Detective, Triggerman

Resolution Paths

Path 1

Give the ledger to the Clarion. It runs in the Sunday edition; the Machine falls, Dolan with it, and the investigators cannot get a licence renewed for a year.

Path 2

Give it to Mr. Gault. The mayor reads the 1931 entry, withdraws from the race for his health, and the city never learns why. The fee is extremely generous.

Path 3

Keep it. The investigators now hold the most dangerous document in Dorrance, and every faction in the city has just been told so.

Play at dungeonmaster.website

Enjoyed this adventure? Play it directly at dungeonmaster.website - the AI Dungeon Master runs it for your group, no prep required.

https://chalkline.rest/one-shots/122fb6ed-fb2d-4998-8099-11c73f279c50

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