

The Past is a Crooked Game

A Case for New York Noir

by Jesse Reichler

v1.8 - 11/15/24

SUMMARY

This is a tutorial case for New York Noir, told as a flashback from the 1930s to the early 1900s. It is meant to introduce new players to the world of New York Noir.

- **Author:** Jesse Reichler <jessereichler@gmail.com>
- **Status:** First playable draft.
- **Additional credits:** Editing by Debbie Levy
- **Difficulty:** 1 out of 5
- **Playtime:** 2 hours
- **Cautions:** Suitable for all audiences
- **Build tool:** Casebook v2.9 (11/15/24)
- **Compiled:** Friday, November 15 at 10:04 PM
- **Stats:** 61 Leads / 10.5k Words / 60.2 KB

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Instructions

To play this case you will need the v2 base set from New York Noir (<https://www.nynoir.org>):

- **Quick Start Rules (start with this!)**
- White, Yellow, and Reverse Directories
- Map Atlas w/ interleaved Neighborhood Guide
- Rulebook, Research Guide, and Navigation Guide
- A blank case log sheet to track your progress (one may be included in this book)

Tracking Time

As each day begins, you will be told what time the day starts and what time the day ends. Record both of these on your Case Log sheet (bottom right). Start a new Lead Notes sheet for each day, and record every lead that you visit, along with the (starting) time of each visit.

When you read a lead in the story book, you will be told the duration of that lead. Add this duration to the current time and write this new time on the next blank line; this will be the starting time for the next lead you visit.

- Looking up a lead that has no entry does not cause time to pass.
- Re-reading a previously visited lead does not cause time to pass.
- If you visit a lead that requires a marker you don't have, you can come back when you do.

Ending your Day

When each day begins, you will be told which items (typically Markers represented by letters) that **must** be found before you can move on to the next day. If you find all of these items *before* the designated day end time, you may keep playing until you reach the end time for the current day, or choose to end your day early.

Overtime

If the current time passes beyond the designated end time for the day, but you have **not** found all of the day's items, then the next lead you visit will trigger *Overtime* for the current day. When this happens, mark the checkbox on your Case Log that

indicates that you have entered overtime (noted as OT in the lower right) for the current day. This will typically incur a small penalty in your final score.

Now, for the remainder of the day, you no longer need to record the time of lead visits, and the clock no longer advances (ignore any instructions telling you to do so). However:

- If you encounter lead text that asks what the current time is while you are in overtime, you should consider the current time to be the day's **end** time.
- If you are in overtime and find all of the day's required items, your day ends.

Flextime Mode

Flextime mode is an optional way to play for those who dislike having to micro-manage the passage of time.

- Ignore all time tracking instructions during the game. Do not record lead times or track the current time. Take as long as you want on each day. You are never in overtime.
- Should you encounter text asking you what time of day it is, simply pick a time of your choice which is: 1) Within the start and end time for day, and 2) Later than any previously chosen time on the same day.
- You still may not move on from the current day until you find all of the day's required items, but after you find them you may continue the day for as long as you like.

Playing in Flextime mode may reduce the tension you experience but will not otherwise reduce the richness of your experience, and may be more enjoyable for people who would rather focus on the narrative experience without being distracted by record keeping.

Wrapping-up

Note that after the last day of your case ends, you will proceed to a conclusion section, but you will often have a final opportunity to resume searching for leads without any time limit.

Using Hints or the Walkthrough

This is a tutorial case, do not hesitate to read a hint if you get stuck! There is also a complete solution walkthrough for the case, if you just want to read a summary of how an experienced player could have solved it.

HIGH & LOW CASE LOG:

DATE:

MARKERS		DOCUMENTS			
A	A2	1			
B	B2	2			
C	C2	3			
D	D2	4			
E	E2	5			
F	F2	6			
G	G2	7			
H	H2	8			
I	I2	9			
J	J2	10			
K	K2	11			
L	L2	12			
M	M2	13			
N	N2	14			
O	O2	15			
P	P2	16			
Q	Q2	17			
R	R2	18			
S	S2	19			
T	T2	20			
U	U2				
V	V2				
W	W2				
X	X2				
Y	Y2				
Z	Z2				

CAMPAIGN LOG		CULTURE		?	
		1-10	□□□□ □□□□	1-10	□□□□ □□□□
		11-20	□□□□ □□□□	11-20	□□□□ □□□□
		21-30	□□□□ □□□□	21-30	□□□□ □□□□
		31-40	□□□□ □□□□	31-40	□□□□ □□□□

DEMERITS		DAY TIME SUMMARY			
1-10	□□□□ □□□□	DAY	START	END	OT
11-20	□□□□ □□□□	1			□
21-30	□□□□ □□□□	2			□
31-40	□□□□ □□□□	3			□
41-50	□□□□ □□□□	4			□
51-60	□□□□ □□□□	5			□
61-70	□□□□ □□□□	6			□
71-80	□□□□ □□□□	7			□
81-90	□□□□ □□□□				
91-100	□□□□ □□□□	FINAL SCORE: 			

Prelude

"The past and the present are within my field of inquiry, but what a man may do in the future is a hard question to answer."

- Sherlock Holmes

Introduction

9 AM - Saturday, June 15th, 1935

I'm standing in my boxer shorts in the kitchen of my little studio apartment in Brooklyn Heights, staring at the coffee pot on the stove. It feels like it's 100 degrees in this place. I could still try to go back to bed but it's hard to sleep in this heat. Or I could go grab that old dusty bottle of Macallan down from the top shelf. My brain's not working yet and I can feel it drifting off.

My dad would have been 78 today. I can feel my stomach tighten up when I think about it. I pull the step stool over and get the bottle down, along with the old glass that sits up there next to it. I blow out the dust and wipe it out with my shirt.

He was a serious man, my dad. I can't remember him ever telling a joke. Hell, I can't remember him ever laughing at a joke. I guess he had a tough life, or maybe that was just who he was. Maybe he laughed when he was at work.

He was just a kid when my grandparents loaded him aboard a boat on the southern shore of England and took their chances in the New World. I guess he didn't do too bad in the end... At one time he was the top homicide detective in New York City. But then, it came at a cost, didn't it?

I pour myself a slug of whiskey and look up at the ceiling fan. I think back to how sharp he looked in his dress uniform and how proud he was, back before things all went wrong.

With the whiskey comes a memory I haven't thought of for a long time. A hot summer day a lot like this one, but 15 years ago. That morning I took the train into Manhattan with my father, to his office in the Centre Street police headquarters. It seems to me I had gone in with him a few times before that, but that's the only day I have a real memory of. It was my 13th birthday that day and I remember thinking there was something different about the way my father had been talking to me lately. His words had a little more weight behind them. I remember he had me pull up a chair in front of his desk, and I remember thinking "this is serious..."

[Continue to next entry...]

Day One

"Childhood is the first great adventure of the human mind."

- Sherlock Holmes

Manhattan Police Headquarters, 240 Centre St, 2nd floor

10 AM - Thursday, June 10th, 1915

It's my 13th birthday and I'm on summer vacation from school. I'm sitting in a wooden chair on the 2nd floor of Police Headquarters on Centre Street, facing my father, who's peering over his desk at me like the world is resting on his shoulders. Other kids might be hoping for a party or a new toy on their birthday, but me, there's no place I'd rather be.

"Jack," he says, "how do you feel about giving your old man a hand today, and helping me with something?"

There's a pause then, where I should be answering him, but there's no words coming out of my mouth and I'm in some kind of slow motion trance. There's electricity in the air.

"There was an armed robbery yesterday at the bakery across the street. **Armed** robbery, Jack." He emphasizes the word and waits to make sure I've heard him. "That means a weapon was involved."

From the center drawer he pulls out a sheet of paper and slides it over to me.



You have gained access to **Document 1 (Memo sheet on Jacob Thomson)**, which can be found at the back of this case book on [page 56](#). Please note this in your case log.

“This guy here is our main suspect: Jacob Thomson. He was supposed to come in this morning for an interview, but he never showed. So we need to find him.”

There’s a long pause, but I still haven’t found my voice and I can’t take my eyes off the sheet in front of me.

“I’d do it myself, Jack, but I need to be here to answer the phones, and everyone else is busy.” I turn to look around at the bullpen but he stops me.

“Jack, look at me,” he says, and I turn back to him. “You don’t have to bring him in, you just have to find him. Do you understand?” I still can’t speak, but I nod my head – yes, I understand.

“Okay,” he says, “good.”

He opens a desk drawer near his left foot and pulls out a stack of books, which he drops on the desk with a loud “thump.”

“If you’re going to be useful, you’re going to need to familiarize yourself with these directories. Have a look through them, and when you’re ready for some tips on how to use them, let me know.”

[Continue to next entry...]



Sam’s tips for using the directories

“OK, let me show you how to use these directories,” he says. “This first one is the **Manhattan White Pages**.” He slides one of the books over to me. “Here you’ll find a complete list of residents, businesses, and government offices, listed *alphabetically*. If you know someone’s last name or the name of a business, you can look it up here. You’ll find the person’s street address, their neighborhood block number, and their phone number, which you can use to contact them.”

“Next, we have the **Manhattan Yellow Pages**, which lists businesses and offices organized by business type. If you know the kind of business you’re looking for, let’s say a bank or a subway station, you can look them up here. There’s even an index in the front if you aren’t sure what kind of business you’re looking for.”

“Lastly, we have this little beauty here.” He pushes the largest of the books over to me. “This is what we call a **Reverse Directory**. Now these other two books are nothing special. But this one here, this is something only the police have.” My greedy hands slowly reach out and touch the edge of the book.

“Look here,” he says, as he opens it up and turns it to face me. “See how it’s organized by neighborhood and block number. If you know where a person lives or where a particular business is located, you can use this book to identify what other people and places are nearby. Pretty neat, huh?” My brain is going 100 miles per hour trying to process what he’s saying as fast as I can.

“In fact,” he says, “it even lists the occupants of each apartment building. So if you can figure out what apartment someone lives in, you can use this to find their nextdoor neighbors, or to contact the doorman or maintenance guy.”

“Jack,” he says, waiting a long moment for me to look up from the book, “don’t underestimate how useful it can be to talk to the workers – doormen, subway station attendants, shoe shiners, waitresses, you name it. They’re your eyes and ears.”

“OK, now those three books are your bread and butter, but sometimes you’re going to need a map to help you figure out what’s where. That’s where this comes in – it’s a **Manhattan Map Atlas**, organized by neighborhood.” He pushes the colorful book over to me. “There’s a map for each neighborhood, arranged alphabetically, plus some extra maps at the end that you probably won’t need. You can see each block is numbered, just like in the directories. You’ll also notice some symbols indicating the locations of subway and bus stations, and police precincts. If you’re tailing someone who spots you, there’s a good bet they’ll try to lose you in the subway.”

“But remember, people are creatures of habit – most people never venture too far beyond the neighborhoods they live and work in. So if you’re trying to locate someone, focus your efforts on the neighborhoods they’re known to frequent. Or at least start there, and then when you run out of loose threads close to home, well, you can start pulling on the more stubborn ones. You understand?” I’m not sure I do, but I nod anyway.

“OK. Now lastly, you might find these two **Detective Guides** useful one day. This one here deals with all the different ways to travel in the city and the time it takes. It’s not easy retracing someone’s steps, but sometimes if you’re clever you can reconstruct how they got from point A to point B, and then find someone who saw them. And this guide here is a list of places useful for doing research. If you need to look up some official records, this list can be your best friend. But listen, you won’t need these two for this case – they’re for when you get to the big leagues.”

“Take a look through the books and let me know when you think you’re ready to get started.”

[Continue to next entry...]



Getting ready to head out

I spend a few minutes at the desk, looking through the books and directories, until my father finally gets up and says, “OK then – I’ll leave you to it, Jack. There’s three things I need you to do for me. First, get confirmation that this guy is our robber. Second, figure out whether he was working alone or with an accomplice. And third, figure out where we can find him to pick him up. Oh, and if someone gives you a hard time, you show them this.”



You have gained access to **Document 2 (Deputy Detective Note)**, which can be found at the back of this case book on [page 57](#). Please note this in your case log.

“And Jack, if you do figure out where this guy’s at, you keep your distance. Just pick up a payphone and tell them to connect you to me at the number on that sheet, and we’ll go pick him up. Or call me if you get stuck.”

“Maybe he’s at home?” I say, sheepishly.

My father chuckles and ruffles my hair, then sits back down and leans over the desk to look me in the eye.

“It doesn’t work like that, Jack. You’re going to have to get out there and get your hands dirty. Knock on a few doors, ask some questions. You understand? Check out the scene of the crime with your own eyes. Talk to witnesses. Figure out who you can trust and who’s lying to you. What do you think? You think you’re up for it?”

I look from my father back down to the books on his desk.

“Think of it like chasing down loose ends, Jack. It doesn’t really matter where you start, as long as you don’t forget to chase down all the loose ends.”

He reaches down and slides open the center drawer of his desk. “Now some guys trust their gut, but me, I trust in my notebook.” And with that he pulls out a brown leather padded notebook and puts it in front of me. “This is for you,” he says, and he taps the notebook slowly with his index finger. “Keep good notes, Jack, that’s how you solve a case. Good notes. You understand?”

“Yes sir,” I say, still not looking up from the desk.

“Good man,” he says. Then I feel his reassuring hand on my back and he’s gone, and I’m all alone with my books, trying to decide where to start.

📌 The following **2** items **must** be found before you may end **day 1**. You should note this in your case log in some way to avoid having to consult this list while playing:

- **Marker A**
- **Marker C**

🕒 **THE CLOCK IS TICKING!** Record in your case log that **day 1** starts at **10am** and ends at **3pm**. If you have *not* found all of the required items listed above by **3pm**, you enter **overtime**. In overtime there is no limit to how many leads you may visit, time does not advance, and your day ends once you find all of the required items.

📖 **Note:** There are specific hints available for each of the the day's required items (see index).



STOP!



Stop reading this case book now, and begin searching for leads in the directories.

Continue to the next page only when you are ready to end **day 1**.




Day Two

Morning Crosswords

8 AM - Friday, June 11th, 1915

I barely slept last night thinking about Jacob Thomson and bakery robbery, and how to find him. I'm out of bed at the first hint of sunlight through the window, and then into the kitchen for a bowl of cereal. Pop is still asleep, but my mother is in the kitchen, sitting at the table doing her crosswords and humming some classical music tune to herself.

I bounce down at the table, and she pushes the box of Corn Flakes from the center of the table over to my empty bowl without looking up. I pull over the front page of the New York Times and glance through the headlines and adverts...

 ...President Wilson today delivered a stern message to the government in Imperial Germany: America will not stand idly by while her ships are attacked...

In local news, the Interborough Rapid Transit Company looks likely to beat the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company in their race to open new subway lines to the outer boroughs. They've announced that the first test train to Queens is set to run on June 19th, and open for public use a week later...

Horton's Ice Cream, the premier ice cream of America, is offering a free scoop of ice cream for the first 50 customers to show up at their main shop in the Gas House district who can correctly identify the year the company was founded...

Does your apartment have thin walls? Are your neighbors keeping you up all night with their arguing or raucous parties? Let Dr. Earl's medicated earplugs transport you to the clouds and give you the most peaceful sleep you've ever had. And they're guaranteed not to irritate your ears.. Order yours today...

"You're headed out to find your bad guy today, I suppose?" she asks, head down and black pen scribbling in her crosswords.

"Yes, 'mam," I say.


"I suppose your father has told you to be careful out there on your own?"

"I'm always careful, Mom," I say. Her head stays down, focused at the crosswords, but her pen isn't moving and I see her eyebrows raise up. "I have my doubts," she seems to say.


Then she pushes her crosswords aside and looks at me seriously, catching my attention and causing me to freeze with the spoon at my mouth.


“Just remember, Jack,” she says, “what your father does. . . It’s not a game, you know? People get hurt doing what he does. You have to take it seriously.” Then she reconsiders slightly. “I mean, yes it is a game in a way, but it’s not a game. Do you understand?”

I nod, though I’m not sure I do. Then we sit together in silence for a bit, before I put my bowl in the sink and head out the door with just enough change to ride the subway to Manhattan and back.

 The following **2** items **must** be found before you may end **day 2**. You should note this in your case log in some way to avoid having to consult this list while playing:

- **Marker D**
- **Marker M**

 **THE CLOCK IS TICKING!** Record in your case log that **day 2** starts at **8am** and ends at **5pm**. If you have *not* found all of the required items listed above by **5pm**, you enter **overtime**. In overtime there is no limit to how many leads you may visit, time does not advance, and your day ends once you find all of the required items.

 **Note:** There are specific hints available for each of the the day’s required items (see index).



STOP!



Stop reading this case book now, and begin searching for leads in the directories.

Continue to the next page only when you are ready to end **day 2**.



LEADS

STOP!



WARNING! Do **not** read through the rest of this document like a book from beginning to end. Lead entries are meant to be read individually only when you look up a lead by its number.

Close this book now and follow rulebook instructions for looking up leads.

1

1-1978

Tallerico and Brother Bakery

396 Broome St, LI

When I show my deputy detective note to the guy behind the counter at Tallerico and Brother Bakery, I'm treated like a celebrity. He sits me down at a small stool and cuts me a big slice of sourdough bread and smears some butter on it. "Try this, kid – it's just out of the oven."

"I'm here about the robbery," I say.

"I bet you are," he says, then stands up and puts his hands behind his back and starts pacing in front of me as he tells me what happened.

"It's like this. Yesterday afternoon I was working at the counter, just like today, and this guy comes in demanding all the money in the register."

"And he had a knife?" I ask.

"No, no knife. He was just a young fella. I suppose I could have argued with him, but it was a slow day and we only had a couple of dollars in the till. I figured it was easier to just give it to him."

"Then what happened?" I ask, my mouth full of bread.

"I gave him the money, of course, and off he ran."

We both look out the front door in silence, then I ask, "Which way did he run?"

"Which way did he run?" he repeats back to me. Then to himself as he continues pacing. "Which way did he run... That's a good question. South, I think."

I pull out the suspect sheet and show it to him. "And this is the guy who robbed you?"

"I didn't recognize the guy," he says. "He had a mask on." Then he remembers something. "I think the lady who runs the bar down on Mulberry saw him – he dropped his mask right in front of her."

I finish off the last bite of bread and thank him for his cooperation.




Time advances 60 minutes.



1-7062
Monterey Apartments Maintenance Man
351 W. 114th St, CH

On the ground floor I knock on the door belonging to Marvin, the maintenance guy at the Monterey Apartments, but he can't tell me anything other than to confirm that Richard Thomsen has got long black greasy hair, and has had a guest with short brown hair staying with him recently.

 You have gained **Marker D** . Please note this in your case log.

 **Time advances 30 minutes.**



1-9030
The Hat Market
258 Manhattan Ave, CH

The Hat Market in Central Harlem is a small store, not more than 15 foot square, but every inch of it is packed with hats of all types, from floor to ceiling.

“You’re asking me if I remember a guy who bought a bowler hat from us?” says the salesman. “Half the hats we sell are bowler hats. You gotta be kidding me.”

 **Time advances 60 minutes.**



2

2-2130

Deadline on Day 1 (**Hint for Marker C on p.71**) contd.

Mark 2 demerit checkboxes in your case log.

Hint: Visit the scene of the crime and try to follow up on any other witnesses that the victim thinks may have additional information. Use the reverse directory and the map to locate a nearby business of interest.



2-5808

Little Italy News & Mags

185 Hester St, LI

The squat middle aged guy at the newsstand tells me, never removing the cigar from his mouth, that he did see someone run by him yesterday in an unnatural hurry and jump in the passenger seat of a waiting yellow taxi cab. He says the guy had short black hair and was about 6ft, and the driver was wearing a bowler hat but had long black straggly hair underneath it.



You have gained **Marker A**. Please note this in your case log.



Time advances 60 minutes.



2-8920

Thomson, Jacob

303 E. 8th St, LE

The idea of knocking on Jacob Thomson's door fills me with dread. The whole block seems run-down and dangerous. I spend 15 minutes across the street, hoping I'll spot him leaving, and trying to work up the courage to cross the street. Finally I come up with a story in my head about looking for a lost dog, but I feel a wave of relief when no one answers the door.

As I'm about to leave, an old woman with curlers in her hair and a small poodle in her arms sticks her head out of the next door window.

"You looking for Jacob?" she asks.

“I lost my dog,” I say, without thinking. She looks down at her poodle as if to check that it’s hers.

“Do you know Mr. Thomson?” I ask, regaining my wits.

“Mister *Thomson*...” she says, with not a small amount of disdain, “was evicted last month. I think he went uptown to live with his cousin. Trying to avoid the law, no doubt.”

“Do you know his cousin’s name?” I ask.

“Don’t remember his first name but I remember he said his last name was almost the same as his, only slightly different...”



Time advances 60 minutes.



3

3-1851

Inside Horton's Ice Cream (contd. from 6-6463 on p.44)

"Clever boy," she says, and steps aside so that I can enter. "I'll bet you saw that in our yellow pages ad, didn't you?"

I sit down on a stool facing the counter, my mouth watering. In my opinion, there's never a bad time for ice cream. The young lady who quizzed me on my way in has moved behind the counter, and puts both her elbows down on the counter so she can get a good look at me, her smile widening.

"How about I make you a Horton's special sundae?" she asks.

"It's free?" I ask. I figure you can never be too careful with these things.

She laughs. "Yes, it's free." Then she turns around and gets to work pulling items from jars and adding them to a silver float dish, then leans into a deep wooden barrel with a metal scoop. When she's finally done, she returns and slides in front of me what can only be described as a piece of art. Two perfectly round scoops of vanilla ice cream, covered in chocolate sauce and whip cream, and topped with nuts, cherries, and colorful items I don't recognize. She puts her elbows back down on the counter and looks at me with her wide smile and winks.

Mark 3 culture checkboxes in your case log.

 Time advances 60 minutes.



3-4564

Little Italy Cabs

476 1/2 Broadway, LI

"Never heard of him, kid." says the overweight dispatcher from his perch at the Little Italy Cab depot when I ask about Jacob Thomson. "Is your guy Italian? Most of our drivers are locals to Little Italy."

 Time advances 60 minutes.



3-5406

NYPD - Police Headquarters (8-7893 on p.53) contd.

I tell him what the bartender said about the police having the mask and he confirms that the police booked it into evidence but says that it had no evidentiary value.



4

4-2821
Central Cab Coordinator
625 8th Ave, HK

The central taxi cab office tells me to go visit individual neighborhood taxi cab companies if I'm trying to locate a specific driver.

 Time advances 60 minutes.



4-3500
Yellow Taxicab Company
25 E. Broadway, CT

“He doesn’t drive for us.”

 Time advances 60 minutes.



4-5360
Yellow Cab Company
30 Hudson St, CC

“He doesn’t drive for us.”

 Time advances 60 minutes.



5

5-0727

Deadline on Day 2 (Hint for Marker D on p.72) contd.

Mark 2 demerit checkboxes in your case log.

Hint: If we have a physical description of an accomplice, our next step would be to get confirmation of someone who matches that description.



5-1068

Billups, J. - Apt. 2c

351 W. 114th St, CH (apt. 2c)

I knock on the door but there's no answer.



5-1290

Ivanov, E. Apt 2e

351 W. 114th St, CH (apt. 2e)

I knock on the door of 2e, and I see a flash of light from the peephole, then a pause. The door opens and I see the shape of a bearded old man in the shadows.

"In, in," he says.

I step into the dark hallway, and my nose twists at the smell of sweat and stale air. "Is about the robbers?" he asks me without prompting.

"What do you know about the robbery?" I ask.

"Walls very thin. Like paper. I hearded them – next door – apartment 2d. They robberies someone, yes?"

"What did you hear?" I ask.

"I hearded the man next door and his friend, talking about robbing store."

"Both of them?"

"Yes, both," he says. "Bad men, both."


"Can you tell me about the men in 2d, what do they look like?"

"Ask Marvin. I stay inside. Not see, only hear. Bad voices. Bad men."

"What about now?" I ask. "Are they still there next door?"

"Only one man there now. Other man left and not come back."

And with that he ushers me out the door.

 You have gained **Marker D** . Please note this in your case log.

 **Time advances 30 minutes.**



5-1779

Phone call to Police HQ

I find a pay phone and call the operator, and ask her to put me through to detective Sam Deverell at police headquarters. Much to my surprise, after a brief delay, she puts me through.

If you have **all** of the the following 4 items (**Marker A**, **Marker C**, **Marker D**, and **Marker M**), you are ready to solve the case; go to [Conclusion \(p.59\)](#).

Otherwise: Pop tells me to keep searching (or I could read a hint for one of the day's required tags).

 **Time advances 60 minutes.**



5-8755

Mulberry Street Bar

176 Mulberry St, LI

All eyes turn to me as I push through the swinging door at the Mulberry Street Bar. Well, there's only one guy in the place, a tiny old man hunched over a small dirty-looking glass of brown liquid. There's a rather plump woman in long pants and an oversized long-sleeve white shirt wiping down a table near the entrance.

"What can I get you?" she asks, without skipping a beat. I look up at the chalkboard above the bar for a moment as if I'm thinking about what I want to drink. Then I remember why I'm here.

"I'm investigating the robbery that happened at the Bakery yesterday."

“Are you now?” she says, looking me over.

“Yes ‘mam. I understand you may have gotten a look at the bad guy.”

“Sure did,” she says. “It was Jacob.”

“Are you quite sure?”

“Oh yes, he was a regular. I was outside the bar when he came running by and practically ran me over.”

“Jacob Thomson?”

“Yep, that’s the one.”

“And then what happened?” I ask.

“He was running pretty fast. Dropped his mask then turned left at the corner of Hester at the news stand, and he was gone.”

“Did you happen to see what happened to the mask?” I ask.

“Police got it.” she says.



You have gained **Marker C** . Please note this in your case log.



Time advances 60 minutes.



6

6-2925

Deadline on Day 2 ([Hint for Marker D on p.72](#)) contd.

Mark 3 demerit checkboxes in your case log.

Hint: Neighbors are always good sources of information, but don't overlook apartment building doormen or maintenance workers as well – they often know all the scuttlebutt.



6-3192

NYPD - Police Headquarters ([7-8245 on p.48](#)) contd.

Pop listens to me as I explain what I've done so far and where I'm stuck, and tells me I don't have much time left before he'll have to send out one of the other detectives. I plead with him to let me finish the job, and hurry back downstairs. If I'm stuck I can always read a hint for one of the day's required tags.



6-5810

NYC Department of Finance

52 Centre St, CC

 Time advances 60 minutes.

- If it is day 2: Go to [8-4501 \(p.52\)](#)
- Otherwise: I waste an hour looking for information relevant to my case and then leave.



6-6463

Horton's Ice Cream

205 E. 24th St, GD



I manage to find my way through the hazy air in the Gas House district to Horton's Ice Cream shop on 24th Street. There's a small hand-painted sign hanging above the entrance, and through the large glass window I can see rows on rows of ice cream toppings in tall glass jars – nuts of every variety, and candy sprinkles in a dozen different colors. A young woman in the doorway in an old fashioned dress smiles widely as she sees me approach.

“Are you here for the free ice cream? Can you tell me when Horton's was founded?”

[If you know the year it was founded, go to lead “3-XXXX” where XXXX is the year of the founding, or come back when you do.]



Time advances 60 minutes.



6-6755

Deadline on Day 1 (Hint for Marker A on p.70) contd.

Mark 2 demerit checkboxes in your case log.

Hint: Have we fully retraced the escape route of the robber? Use the map and the Reverse Directory to identify the last moments of his getaway.



6-7295

Deadline on Day 2 ([Hint for Marker D on p.72](#)) contd.

Mark 2 demerit checkboxes in your case log.

Maybe we could try talking to someone who could confirm their appearance?



7

7-0031

Porta, M - Apt. 2b

351 W. 114th St, CH (apt. 2b)

I knock on the door but there's no answer.



7-3019

Scheier, N. - Apt. 2a

351 W. 114th St, CH (apt. 2a)

I knock on the door but there's no answer.



7-5502

Central Harlem Yellow Cab

81 W. 115th St, CH

“Yeah, Jacob drives for us,” says the middle aged balding man with massive coke bottle glasses who is standing outside of the 115th Street depot with a cane in hand. “Him and his cousin Richard. They’re off today, but they’ll both be in on Monday morning at 9am to pick up their paychecks.”



You have gained **Marker M** . Please note this in your case log.



Time advances 60 minutes.



7-8245

NYPD - Police Headquarters

240 Centre St, LI

No one seems to pay me much mind as I walk through the big wooden doors at 240 Centre Street and head up to the 2nd floor. I find my father sitting at his desk, reading the paper and smoking his pipe. He looks up as I approach him.

“How are you doing, Jack? Solved the case yet?”

If you have **all** of the the following 4 items (**Marker A, Marker C, Marker D, and Marker M**), you are ready to solve the case, go to [Conclusion \(p.59\)](#).

Otherwise, If it is **day 1**, go to [8-7893 on p.53](#).

Otherwise, If it is **day 2**, go to [6-3192 on p.44](#).



7-8844

Deadline on Day 2 (Hint for Marker D on p.72) contd.

Mark I demerit checkbox in your case log.

Hint: The doorman/maintenance worker of an apartment building can be visited by going to the main entry under the name of the Apartment building in any of the directories. And remember, if you know someone who lives in an apartment building you can also find a list of their neighbors in the Reverse directory.



7-8927

Thomsen, R.

351 W. 114th St, CH (apt. 2d)

The Monterey Apartments building is a short little structure, just two stories tall, with no doorman in sight, and open to the street. The sidewalk is bustling with activity, and I hear strange discordant notes of music from some place nearby that I can't quite wrap my head around. I walk past the maintenance guy's apartment and knock on apartment 2d, and after a long while the door creaks open, but only a few inches wide.

"Yeah?" says the thin voice from behind the door.

"I'm looking for my dog," I say, a bit unsure of myself.

"Haven't got a dog," says the man.

"Is Jacob Thomson there?" I ask, without skipping a beat. There's a long pause.

"Is that your dog's name?" he asks.

"No... But Mr. Thomson might have seen my dog, he went missing down on 8th Street."

“You’re a long way from 8th Street, kid,” says the voice without a face. “I ain’t seen Jacob in weeks. Go back to your own neighborhood, kid, you don’t belong uptown.” And with that he closes the door, and I hear it lock.



Time advances 60 minutes.



8

8-4501
Records on Horton's Ice Cream

After some effort I manage to find someone who can look up the founding date of Horton's Ice Cream: **1851**.

 **Time advances 60 minutes.**



8-5257
Building Permits & Construction Records
11 Park Pl, CC

 **Time advances 60 minutes.**

- If it is **day 2**: Go to [8-4501 \(p.52\)](#)
- Otherwise: I waste an hour looking for information relevant to my case and then leave.



8-6011
Harris, A. - Apt. 2f
351 W. 114th St, CH (apt. 2f)

I knock on the door but there's no answer.



8-7517
Deadline on Day 2 (Hint for Marker M on p.73) contd.

Mark 2 demerit checkboxes in your case log.

Hint: If we can't get access to where our suspect might be staying, we should try to figure out where he might work. We know his profession and we know he's recently moved neighborhoods. Maybe we can figure out where he's been working most recently...



8-7893

NYPD - Police Headquarters (7-8245 on p.48) contd.

Pop listens to me as I explain what I've done so far and where I'm stuck. If I've found all of day 1's required items, I could just call it a night and start fresh tomorrow, or I could read a hint for one of my required tags.

If you have previously acquired **Marker A**, go to [3-5406 on p.35](#).



8-8699

City Wheels Taxi

403 E. 8th St, LE

“Jacob in trouble again, is he?” says the skinny mustachioed guy working the desk in the City Wheels front office.

“Yes sir,” I say. “He’s wanted for robbery. Or he’s a witness to a robbery.”

“Well, I can’t help you, kid. He used to work for us, but last I heard he moved in with his cousin Richard up in Harlem. He’s a cabbie too. But let the police handle it, kid – Harlem’s no place for you.”



Time advances 60 minutes.



DOCUMENTS

STOP!



Do **not** access the documents section unless directed to retrieve a specific document.

Document 1

Memo sheet on Jacob Thomson

Name: Jacob Thomson

Age: 18-20(?)

Race: Caucasian

Occupation: Taxi Cab Driver(?)

On the afternoon of Wednesday, June 9th, suspect was seen by witnesses running from the Tallerico bakery in Little Italy, which had just been robbed. Suspect description by bakery owners was unclear.

No answer to knocking on door of suspect's last known home address, but caller identifying himself as Thomson called in to Police Headquarters Wednesday evening at 8pm, and agreed to come in for a sitdown interview on Thursday, June 10th, at 8am.

Document 2

Deputy Detective Note

The bearer of this note, Jack Deverell, has been deputized as a Junior Detective of the New York City Police Department.

Your cooperation is appreciated.

NYPD Homicide Department

Detective Sam Deverell, [5-1779](tel:5-1779)

240 Centre Street

END

Conclusion

You are about to read the final questions for this case. Once you read them, there is no going back into the field.

Even if you have already found all of the required markers for the final day, you may now continue to play the final day of the case and resume searching for leads for as long as you like with no penalty.

Proceed to the final questions only when you are ready to end your investigation.

STOP!



Proceed only when you are ready to answer questions.



Questions

Q1. Who is the robber and what is your evidence against them?

Q2. Was anyone else an accessory to the crime? If so, who and how do you know?

Q3. Where and when can the suspect(s) be apprehended?

Q4. What specific crime should be charged (list any aggravating qualifications such as physical harm, threats of violence, use of weapons, etc.)?



Solving the case back at Police HQ

Late on Friday afternoon I make my way up the stone steps of 240 Centre Street and walk through the large archway into police headquarters. My thoughts are calm and the building feels more orderly today, less chaotic. The clamor of activity feels somehow more natural today than it did only a couple of days ago. I head up the stairs to the Homicide department and then start over to my father's office. He's sitting at his desk watching me as I approach.

"Got it all figured out, huh?" he says.

"Yes sir, I think so, sir," I say.

"OK, let's hear it," he says, and gestures to the chair in front of his desk. I sit down in the chair but before I can start talking, he puts his hand up to stop me.

"Hold on a second..." he says, then turns around behind him and calls out to the rest of the floor.

"Alphonse, come in and listen to this. Jimmy! Mary! Bring a chair over!" And before I know it his office is crowded with detectives, beat cops, and secretaries.

Suddenly my inner calm has vanished, and I feel my stomach starting to twist in knots. But I don't have time to worry about it for too long before my father is telling me to "start from the beginning."

And so I do. I tell them how I spent the last two days searching for Jacob Thomson, who I talked to, and what I learned. I tell them about the eyewitnesses, the weird old neighbor, and the strange sounds of Harlem. The room is quiet while I'm talking, which I don't realize until I finish my story, then the silence feels deafening. Up till now my father's face has been expressionless, but it suddenly breaks into a wide grin.

"Hot damn!" he says. And all of a sudden the entire room breaks out into raucous exclamations and clapping. In a split second there's hands slapping me on the back and tousling my hair. Alphonse, my father's partner, standing easily over 6 foot, clasps his hand down on the back of my neck and nearly knocks me out of my chair. "You did good, kid," he says. Then the questions start coming from all angles. "Were you scared? Did you catch anyone lying to you? What did the bartender look like? How'd you figure out who was the getaway driver?"

When the attention finally wanes, everyone slowly files out of my father's office, and I can see he's leaning back in his chair with a look I've not seen before, and won't see much in the years that follow. A look that I guess is pride.

“You feel like an egg cream?” he asks, and I nod. “OK, get your jacket. We’ll pick up some seltzer and syrup on the way home, and you can tell your mom and sister all about it...”



Epilogue - Brooklyn Heights 1935

I’m back in 1935, standing over my kitchen table with the empty glass of whiskey in my hand. Back up on the step stool, and back goes the bottle and the unwashed glass alongside it.

That night in 1915, the two of us arrived home like returning heroes. We all gathered around the kitchen table, and my mother Margaret beamed as she brought over four tall glasses. Then Pop made us all his patented egg cream sodas, and my mother and sister listened with rapt attention, for long trance-like minutes, to my story of how I solved the case of Jacob Thomson and the Bakery Robbery.

That evening my father came to say good night, and I asked him what would happen to Jacob Thomson now.

“What do you think should happen to him, Jack?” he asked.

I thought for a long while, and then I guess he decided maybe it was better if I didn’t answer that.

“Oh, he’ll be OK, Jack,” he said, and he put his hand on my cheek. “He’s not a bad guy. He just made a mistake. I knew his mother... Promised her I’d keep an eye out on him when she passed. He’s harmless.” My father must have seen my eyes get wide. “I’m sorry I told you he had a knife,” he says, “I just wanted you to keep your distance. But he’s a good kid, he’ll be alright.”

There’s a long pause then, before he gets up and goes to turn off the light in my room and looks back over to me. “Maybe tomorrow you and I will go have a talk with him, and he can tell you his side of the story.” Then he turns off the light, and I’m left alone with my thoughts.



Final Scoring

Calculate your final score by assessing how well you answered each question, assigning partial credit as you see fit.

- Q1. Max score of 25: _____

Jacob Thomson was the robber. He was confidently identified by the bartender woman at the Mulberry Street Bar, who witnessed him fleeing the scene.

- Q2. Max score of 25: _____

His cousin Richard Thomsen was an accessory getaway driver. Circumstantial evidence for this relies on matching the description of the getaway driver provided by the newspaper stand guy with the description of Richard from the maintenance man at his building. Give yourself full credit if you visited both Richard's neighbor and the Monterey Apartments maintenance man, and connected the visual description given by the news stand guy of the getaway driver's long black straggly hair with the similar description of Richard given by the maintenance man.

- Q3. Max score of 25: _____

Jacob had been staying with his cousin Richard at the Monterey Apartments, but his current whereabouts are unknown. The neighbor tells us that Jacob is **not** currently in the apartment. However, both Jacob and Richard are expected to be at Central Harlem Yellow Cab offices on Monday morning at 9am to pick up their paychecks. They're unlikely to skip that, so this would be the best opportunity to apprehend them. If you said to arrest them at the apartment, give yourself a few points of partial credit.

- Q4. Max score of 25: _____

According to the Tallerico bakery owner who was robbed, there was no weapon used in the crime, so "Armed Robbery" would not be appropriate. A charge of simple/unarmed robbery is more appropriate.

- Penalties: _____

Minus 2 points for each demerit; minus 5 points for each day you were forced into overtime.

- Bonus: _____

Plus 5 points for each culture checkbox.



Behind the Scenes: Postscript from the Author

The first case I wrote for New York Noir, *The Wrong Book*, is a long hard case that throws players into the deep end over the course of a full 3 day case. It takes 4+ hours to play.

The idea behind “The Past is a Crooked Game” was to create a short tutorial game that would introduce new players to the world of New York Noir and teach them the basic mechanics of the game. A secondary goal was to have a demonstration case that could be used to teach new authors how to write their own case using the Casebook language.

It’s not meant to be a particularly deep case. But I did want to take the opportunity to introduce players to the protagonist from the main campaign, Jack Deverell. So in this story, you get a flashback to one of Jack’s earliest memories – his 13th birthday – when his father Sam, a well respected homicide cop, asks Jack to try to solve a crime on his own. Jack’s relationship with his father, and the police department, is a complicated one, but players should get a sense for how influential this episode must have been in Jack’s childhood. In the rest of the campaign you will follow Jack’s career over many decades, from his start in the police department to his last days as a freelance P.I.

I realize it’s a bit hard to swallow the idea of a 13-year-old boy being sent out to traipse around the city trying to track down a dangerous armed robber. Initially my idea was that the father had created a “pretend” case for the son’s birthday, like a scavenger hunt, with planted clues. But that seemed even more unlikely. In the end, what I came up with is that the father sends him after a suspect who he knows is quite harmless, and only “pretends” that he’s an armed robber. Readers might still have a hard time believing a 13-year-old would be set off on his own to question witnesses and investigate a crime, but things were different back then and kids grew up fast in New York City.



Full Walkthrough

Here's one way an experienced detective might have solved the case:

Turn 1: Visit the scene of the crime (1-1978: Tallerico and Brother Bakery)

From the suspect sheet we are told the name of the store that was robbed, the Tallerico and Brother Baker in Little Italy. We could look that up in the White pages by name, under Tallerico, or by using the Yellow pages to find Bakeries.

The worker there tells us a few things of note. He tells us the direction the robber fled, he tells us the guy was NOT armed (contrary to what our father told us at the start), and he tells us that the bartender down the street got a look at him.

Turn 2: Visit the Mulberry Street Bar (5-8755)

We can look up bars in the Yellow pages, and look for any in Little Italy that are nearby the bakery, or we can use the Reverse directory and a map of Little Italy to look for buildings along the suspects escape route to find any bars or taverns. Either way we are led to the Mulberry Street Bar. There we get a strong eyewitness confirmation that our robber is indeed Jacob Thomson. (She tells us the police got his mask but that's not important to us). This gets us our first marker, **Marker C** (confirmation of the identity of the robber). The bartender also tells us where he continued running, that he turned left at the corner of Hester at a news stand.

Turn 3: Visit the news stand where he was seen running (2-5808 Little Italy News & Mags)

We recreate Jacob's escape route using the Map of Little Italy in conjunction with the Reverse directory to quickly locate the news stand on the corner of Hester and Mulberry, on block #36, or use the Yellow pages to look up news stands and then filter by those in Little Italy. At the Little Italy News & Mags we get eyewitness testimony that he hopped in the passenger seat of a waiting cab, and a visual description of the cab driver (long black stringy hair). This gives us our second marker, **Marker A**, representing confirmation that Jacob had an accomplice, and his visual description.

Turn 4: Visit the home of Jacob Thomson (2-8920: Thomson, Jacob)

Having finished with the scene of the crime we use the White pages to visit to Jacob's last known address. Unsurprisingly, he's not home, but we learn from a neighbor he has been evicted and is probably living "uptown" with his cousin who has a similar last name. If we look in the White pages for a similar last name, there are some viable candidates for his cousin's address, but for now we'll put that off and visit some more obvious leads and try to narrow things down before we waste time knocking on doors.

Turn 5: Visit the cab company in the Lower East Side (8-8699: City Wheels Taxi)

From his suspect sheet we believe Jacob may be employed as a cab driver. We could stop by the taxicab company in Little Italy, but he lives in the Lower East side neighborhood, so that's a more likely place for him to work. We look up Taxicabs in the yellow pages and find that City Wheels Taxi operates out of the Lower East Side. A visit there fills in some of the gaps in our knowledge: Jacob's cousin is in Harlem, his first name is Richard, and he's also a cabbie. Could he be the accomplice? We don't have enough proof yet to say that but we have our suspicions.

Turn 6: Visit cousin Richard in Harlem (7-8927 Thomsen, R)

Knowing that his cousin lives in Harlem (which is indeed uptown) and that he has a name similar to Thomson, but slightly different, we find one good candidate in the White pages, "Thomsen, R." who lives in the Monterey Apartments in apartment 2d. When we knock on his door we meet a suspicious fellow but unfortunately we don't get a good look at him and he's not very talkative.

Turn 7: Visit Richard Tomsen's neighbors

Richard's not very cooperative, but he lives in an apartment building, like many of the residents of Manhattan, so we can talk to his neighbors. Using the Reverse directory we knock on the doors on either side of 2d. We get lucky with Ivanov, E. in Apt 2e (5-1290), a recluse who has a habit of listening to the walls. He gives us a bunch of useful information, including confirmation that both Jacob and Richard were in on the robbery, and that Jacob has left and not come back. That Jacob has not been back to the apartment is a detail we will want to remember when it comes time to answering final questions. This lead gets us marker **Marker D**, confirmation that cousin Richard is almost certainly an accessory to the crime.

Turn 8: Visit the maintenance man at Monterey Apartments (1-7062)

For good measure we stop by the maintenance man's apartment, which can be found in the Reverse directory under Monterey Apartments (it's the root number under the Apartment building listing, which is used to contact the doorman or maintenance man). We get confirmation that cousin Richard's appearance matches that of the getaway driver, another way for us to get marker **Marker D** and further evidence against Richard.

Turn 9: Visit Central Harlem Yellow Cab (7-5502)

We still don't know where to tell the cops to find Jacob to arrest him. We might suspect he is in the apartment with Richard, but the neighbor told us he left a while ago and hasn't been back since. However, we do remember the City Wheels taxicab company told us that Jacob may have taken a job driving taxis up in Harlem when

he went to stay with his cousin. So we look up taxi cab companies in Harlem, and stop by Central Harlem Yellow Cab. Sure enough, we're told not only do Richard and Jacob work there, but the two of them will be in on Monday morning at 9am to pick up their paychecks. You can bet Jacob is not going to miss that. This gets us our final required marker, **Marker M**, which represents the information we need to tell the police where to nab him. And with that we're ready to answer questions.

Turn 10: Horton's Ice Cream (6-6463)

Before we wrap up the case, we noticed in the paper that Horton's Ice Cream is giving away free scoops to the first kids who can guess the year they were founded. We can look up the address of Horton's Ice Cream using the White pages or Yellow pages, but how do we figure out what year the company was founded? There are two ways. First, we might spot that they put an advert in the Yellow pages stating their year of founding. Alternatively, we could use our Detective's Research guide to identify places to conduct useful research. Both (8-5257

Building Permits & Construction Records) and (6-5810 - NYC Department of Finance) could look up the information we need.



HINTS

STOP!



Do **not** access the hints section except when looking up a specific hint from the table of contents at the start of this case book.

Hint for Marker A

Deadline on Day 1

Mark 2 demerit checkboxes in your case log.

Whenever we have a criminal escaping from a crime scene, we should try to retrace his steps as far as possible. We might be able to figure out how he made his getaway and whether he had assistance...

For another hint, go to [6-6755 on p.45](#).

If you still need help, as a last resort Mark 3 demerit checkboxes in your case log, then visit the following lead where this item is obtained:

- [2-5808 on p.30](#)



Hint for Marker C

Deadline on Day 1

Mark 2 demerit checkboxes in your case log.

See if you can figure out how to confirm the identity of the robber.

For another hint, go to [2-2130](#) on p.30.

If you still need help, as a last resort Mark 3 demerit checkboxes in your case log, then visit the following lead where this item is obtained:

- [5-8755](#) on p.41



Hint for Marker D

Deadline on Day 2

Mark 2 demerit checkboxes in your case log.

We may have our suspicions about an accomplice, but we need more proof of his identity.

For another hint, go to [5-0727 on p.40](#).

For another hint, go to [6-7295 on p.46](#).

For another hint, go to [6-2925 on p.44](#).

For another hint, go to [7-8844 on p.49](#).

If you still need help, as a last resort Mark 3 demerit checkboxes in your case log, then visit one or more of the following leads where this item is obtained:

- [1-7062 on p.27](#)
- [5-1290 on p.40](#)



Hint for Marker M

Deadline on Day 2

Mark 2 demerit checkboxes in your case log.

We still need to figure out where and when the police can catch the suspect. We don't want to just bust down a door on a hunch.

For another hint, go to [8-7517 on p.52](#).

If you still need help, as a last resort Mark 3 demerit checkboxes in your case log, then visit the following lead where this item is obtained:

- [7-5502 on p.48](#)



Horton's Ice Cream

Mark 2 demerit checkboxes in your case log.

It's not uncommon for businesses to mention the date of their founding in yellow page advertisements. Alternatively you might be able to look up the date directly from city building permits or property tax records.

