



INCOMING FEED.....

ment already present in their campaigns to get a new player onto an existing shadowrunning team.

KEEPING SECRETS

Plenty of situations in *Shadowrun* benefit from a little secrecy. Sometimes, simply announcing a threshold number gives the players an important piece of information that they shouldn't know. One alternative is to have a player roll the dice and count the hits. Then the gamemaster figures out the level of success and relates what happens.

Occasionally, just asking for a die roll can give away information. For example, if the gamemaster only asks for a Perception Test when the characters are about to enter a trap or ambush, the players won't stay guessing for long. The gamemaster should keep the character's Perception Test dice pools noted down so that he can make rolls for the characters in secret. To keep things entertainingly mysterious, occasionally ask all the characters to roll dice for no reason at all: provide an imaginary threshold number or just ask for their die roll results. (Remember paranoia keeps those shadowrunners on their toes.)

Be careful not to give away the importance of a person or thing by describing it in overly detailed terms. A wealth of detail implies that the gamemaster spent a lot of time designing him, her or it. For example, when the team is meeting three NPCs—one of whom is the villain, while the other two are just his goons—the gamemaster should not say something like, "You meet three suits from the corporation. The guy on the left is wearing a fancy outfit and smells of a distinctive cologne, with an opal ring on his left pinkie and obvious cyberware mods that make him a deadly fighter. The other two? Oh, uh, they're just grunts." Instead, describe all three in detail (keeping the players guessing as to which one they should watch) or introduce all three as "typical suits." Either way, your description gives away nothing.

TIPS FOR LESS STRESSFUL SHADOWRUNS

The gamemaster can use the following tips to keep track of the zillion and one things that go into an adventure, from story lines to NPCs to running gunfights.

Maps and Displays

Maps and other visual aids are extremely useful, sometimes essential. A map of the city where the campaign is set, even if it's just a sketch with shapes showing neighborhoods, is one of the most helpful tools a gamemaster can have. Try using two: one to show the city that everyone knows (share this with the players) and another that shows the locations of all those secret places (keep this one). As the team discovers these locations, they can add them to the "public" map. The gamemaster can also take an ordinary street map and use it for adventures. Use colored pens to indicate the neighborhoods and other areas. A card file, notebook, or database program can be used to keep a list of useful or interesting addresses.

Maps of smaller places (buildings, sewers, neighborhoods, and so on) are also important. Draw them, use maps of real places, or borrow them from game adventures. Don't be afraid to re-use them, either—many real buildings have very similar floorplans.

The gamemaster can also draw displays on a big pad of paper, or use the various plastic mats made for gamers, with hexagonal or square grids. For figures, 25mm-scale metal miniatures pack a lot of atmospheric detail and are small enough not to need an auditorium for a firefight.

NPC Files

A file of major NPCs is a great help. Use a card file, a notebook, or a computer database to store profiles on contacts, family members, lovers, important specialists (magicians, doctors, lawyers), the local police commander, or any other NPC likely to be used in adventures again and again. Easy access to the file can help keep the game moving.

Also prepare some stock NPC profiles (wagemages, corporate thugs, gang members, and so on) for quick reference. If the profiles published by FanPro keep showing up again and again, players are eventually going to be familiar with the bad guys' stats. Creating your own profiles can help you keep your players guessing about the opposition they face.