

CREATING AN ADVENTURE

Shadowrun offers lots of adventures to play and lots of ways to play them. This section provides suggestions for creating satisfying adventures, though gamemasters will find that experience is ultimately the best teacher.

The main elements of a well-written adventure include the premise, an objective, motivations, opposition and complications.

Premise

The premise is the basic plot that gets things going before the player characters get involved. It describes the scale of the adventure, creates the setting and hints at the adventure's theme. The player characters enter the adventure once the premise has been set.

The *scale* of the adventure is the size of the story. In a large-scale adventure, the runners might take on a worldwide conspiracy, while a small-scale adventure might involve taking on a single individual in one city. The *setting* is where the main action will take place—one or more locations, such as the city of Seattle or a small town in the northern California Free State—and a milieu. A setting's milieu is its immediate surroundings and environment. For example, the milieu of a run that revolves around efforts to steal a prototype commlink might be filled with lots of Matrix hardware, plenty of hacking, and so on.

For examples of premises and how they work, look at any published *Shadowrun* adventure. Sourcebooks, supplements, and the Shadowrun website (www.shadowrunrpg.com) also provide plenty of information for creating adventure and campaign premises.

Objectives

In addition to the player characters' survival (a goal in any adventure), each adventure has an objective that the player characters are trying to achieve: finding the lost gizmo, rescuing the kidnap victim, stealing some important data, killing or capturing a target, and so on. At first, the real objective may not be obvious. A shadowrunning team may believe they were pulling a datasteal on a corporate system to get the nuyen to pay off their bookie, until they find the file that outlines the plan to clear out a tribal holding so that the corp can build a plant on the land. If one of the player characters happens to belong to that tribe, the team gets a new objective: foil the corp's plan.

Achieving an adventure's objectives earns Karma for the player characters, and so they must have a real chance to fulfill them. When writing an adventure, keep track of the objectives; let your player characters find clues or be given assignments that will reveal them.

Motivations

Player characters in *Shadowrun* behave like real people, and are unlikely to get involved in anything potentially dangerous unless they have a clear motivation for doing so. The motive can be as simple as needing the money, or as complex as taking on a structure hit against Aztechnology because an

Aztech goon squad geeked a runner's best buddy five years ago and the runner swore to pay the corp back someday. The more information the gamemaster gets from players about their characters' lives, beliefs and psychology, the more material he has to build motivation into the adventures. As the players get deeper into the game, their characters will acquire friends, enemies, obligations and quirks that can also provide motivation ... especially for adventures that involve extreme personal risk.

If the gamemaster has an adventure all worked out and the player characters decide to take a pass on it after listening to their Johnson's pitch, the gamemaster should talk to the players about why they don't want to tackle the adventure. If the problem is too little reward, push the fees up. Some characters might want payment in kind rather than credit: magicians want teachers or supplies, hackers want high-end commlinks and programs, samurai like access to new hardware, and so on. Everybody likes information, so maybe Mr. Johnson can come up with the passcodes to a certain network ... ?

If the premise of the adventure bores the players silly, it may be better to simply scrap it in favor of a bull session on the kinds of things the players want their characters to do.

Opposition

Every adventure needs one or more "bad guys" that the team must defeat in order to achieve their objectives, and *Shadowrun* contains a broad range of choices. The opposition can be anyone from individuals the runners know to vast, largely anonymous organizations like the megacorps.

When possible, shadowrunners tackle big targets obliquely, rather than risk getting smeared by openly challenging the opposition to come out and fight. Big organizations tend to be bureaucratic nightmares, riddled with insider politics and slow to react. Shadowrunners can dance around this type of giant, stinging it instead of going head-to-head. Often, large-scale opposition comes down to an individual who runs a piece of the organization rather than the whole show. If the team defeats that individual, the larger organization generally throws the poor sap to the wolves. If the organization later takes revenge on the runners, it does so either because they did it disproportionate harm (they stole the new prototype gizmo and trashed all the research data, thereby costing the corp a fortune) or because higher-ups feel it necessary to make an example of the runners (nobody messes with the Yakuza and lives to talk about it).

Opposition can also come from individuals or from small groups more on a level with the shadowrunning team. This type of opposition can get personal very quickly. A good enemy is a valuable resource in writing future adventures. Depending on how seriously the shadowrunners work him over, such a foe may want to waste the team for no other reason than payback. Adventures can then become a series of duels between the player characters and their enemy, building up to a final showdown.

Don't settle for one-dimensional villains. The antagonist is the main source of conflict and drama in the adven-