

# ... CREATING A SHADOWRUNNER ...

*In retrospect, I think I ventured into the shadows because that bastard Shahid showed up for my wife's funeral.*

*I never liked Shahid after he became the head of Carrie's department. But we were all family, or so the Shiaiwase corporate mission statement went, so I was supposed to treat him like my own brother. Never mind the fact that I haven't spoken to my brother in over ten years.*

*In any case, I was standing over Carrie's casket when Shahid walked up. He offered some clumsy condolences, but I remember one thing out of his otherwise meaningless blather: he was enrolling me in Shiaiwase's Survivors' Recovery Program because of the circumstances of Carrie's death.*

*Shahid offered some lame justifications, but as a corporate hacker, I knew better. The Survivors' Recovery Program, or SRP, was just a payoff to relatives of Shiaiwase employees whom the corp had ordered for permanent termination: hush money, in other words, for their killing. In hindsight, I now realize why Shahid never ascended further than middle management; it was obvious to the Powers-That-Be in Shiaiwase that they couldn't really trust him with secrets.*

*Carrie was just a cost estimator for a relatively unimportant program, so I was puzzled why Shahid was enrolling me in the SRP. My curiosity got the better of me, and I started digging into Shiaiwase's personnel database. There I uncovered two shocking secrets.*

*The first was a report from Shiaiwase's Market Information and Forecasting Department, the MIFD: the corp's intelligence agency. Apparently the MIFD believed Carrie to be a latent technomancer, seeing as she was a Matrix broker in the Boston stock exchange when Crash 2.0 hit.*

*It was like a ton of bricks had pounded into my chest—I must have been blind not to have seen the signs. After the crash, she had enough tech savvy to rival me, and that was my job. I thought she'd just taken an interest after hearing me go on about it for so many years. I was a goddamned fool. I'm so sorry, baby.*

*The second and more damning revelation was the actual cause of her death. I had thought Carrie died because of complications from her exploratory surgery. In an effort to awaken her technomantic abilities, though, Shiaiwase had introduced additional procedures to the operation. Things didn't work out the way they expected, and Carrie died in agony on the table.*

*You can imagine how I felt. Shiaiwase, the corp that was like my surrogate family, took away my only desire in the world while blindly pursuing their own avarice. What did that bode for me? I destroyed all of our personnel records and walked away from the comfort of corporate life for the truth that is the shadows.*

*But then again, you already knew that, didn't you, Mr. Johnson? So I'm sure you're wondering why I'm retelling all this. Simple, really: I want you to deliver a message to Shiaiwase—and particularly to Shahid—about my so-called "betrayal." It's unfortunate that you managed to find me, but I know your headware memory is recording all this for posterity. While I can't permit you to leave this hovel, transmitting your final recollections should do the job all the same.*

*See you in hell, Shahid.*

