

# "Lookin' fo chum

Missions in FASA's SHADOWRUN\* game

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Artwork by Tom Dow



# network, mer?

**FASA's SHADOWRUN** game takes place in the next century, in a high-tech cyberpunk world that has been transformed by the reappearance of magic and magical creatures. Governments, megacorporations dragons, crime families, and small political outfits – poli-clubs – all fight for influence, if not outright control. Large-scale warfare is out, at least for the moment; now the combat is small-scale, and often takes place in the shadows. This is the realm of the shadowrunners.

In this world, there is an almost infinite variety of adventures that the PCs can take part in. Inevitably, some PC classes (or “archetypes,” as they are known in the game) are better suited for certain adventures than others. This article points out the types of adventures possible in the SHADOWRUN world, and the archetypes best suited to them, along with examples of how to get the various archetypes into particular adventures. Everyone has a role to play, whether he be a former wage mage, a street shaman, rigger, decker, or street samurai (including the dwarf, elf, ork, and troll street samurai in the back of the *Street Samurai Catalog*).

## Mission types Corporate extraction

The megacorporations vie with one another for new products and technological breakthroughs with which to grab a larger share of the market. If one corporation (or “corp”) gets ahold of something the others don't have, it naturally occurs to those other corps to grab it, whether it be computer records and blueprints, a prototype device, or even a research scientist. Besides, hiring a “snatch-and-run” team to grab the goodies is certain to be cheaper than Research & Development costs on a modern high-tech project. At worst, they even the odds with their competitor; at best, they gain a huge advantage.

Who will Mr. Johnson be looking for in the way of kidnappers or thieves? Armed muscle is vital in this sort of mission, so street samurai, human and ork merce-

naries, former company men, and possibly a rigger (to drive the getaway car) all can sign up, and probably the burned-out mage archetype as well. If this extraction screws up the rival's exploitation of the environment, then tribesmen and shamans (the latter if magic is needed) also may be attracted. Continuing with the possible need for magic, the former wage mage, street mage, and street shaman also could find employment. For that matter, the former wage mage (and the former company man) might have inside information, if it's their old corp that's the target.

If the corp wants a more subtle operation, particularly if the target is a person, then other archetypes may be useful. Gang members may be used as cannon fodder, and if the extraction team is composed almost solely of them, the extraction may simply look like an ordinary robbery or kidnapping rather than something that seems to have corp fingerprints on it. If the target is a person, the detective archetype could check up on his likes, dislikes, and general routine, to make things easy for the extraction team. For example, if the targeted individual is a music lover, the team could set up a trap by starting a little nightclub of their own (paid for with corp funds), with a rocker on hand to draw the target into a trap on the ground of the shadowrunner's choosing.

For extraction of computer files, of course, the decker and elven decker archetypes are necessary. Most of the time, they work alone, but if the computer is a stand-alone system (i.e., not linked up with the Matrix) in order to avoid such attention, as well as computer viruses and worms, then most of the muscle mentioned above may be necessary just for the decker to get at the computer. The corp might be security-conscious enough not to have the location of the computer mentioned in its records, necessitating the use of a detective or a spell-caster with detection spells to find it.

A variant on the corporate extraction is the rescue mission, in which a kidnapping victim or stolen piece of equipment is to be retrieved. This mission plays the same as a standard extraction mission, except that in this case, there is no chance of drawing the target into a trap; she can't go anywhere! In addition, since the kidnapping corp knows somebody's likely to come looking for their prize, secrecy and security will be even heavier than usual, so detective work or detection spells will be more important in finding the target, and even more muscle may be required for the actual extraction. In an extreme case, panzers and attack helicopters may be required to crash through the corp's defenses, or at least to get the defenders' attention, requiring the services of more riggers. A rocker also might show up to hold a concert for company employees or an open-air festival for the general public next door, again to provide a diversion for the true extraction team.

### Security guards

With all this stealing and kidnapping going on, it is obvious that security guards are in demand. Again, street samurai, mercenaries, former company men, and burned-out mages are ideal for this sort of work. With a large enough complex, riggers may be hired to operate patrol vehicles, while former wage mages, street mages, street shamans, and (in the countryside) shamans may be used to provide magical defense. A low-profile safehouse or the like could be protected by locals: gang members in the city or tribesmen in the countryside. Not only can they put up a fight, but since they are where they belong, their presence alone will not tip off anyone to the fact there is something there to protect. To defend computer records, of course, deckers and elven deckers are necessary. Poachers really *do* make the best gamekeepers.

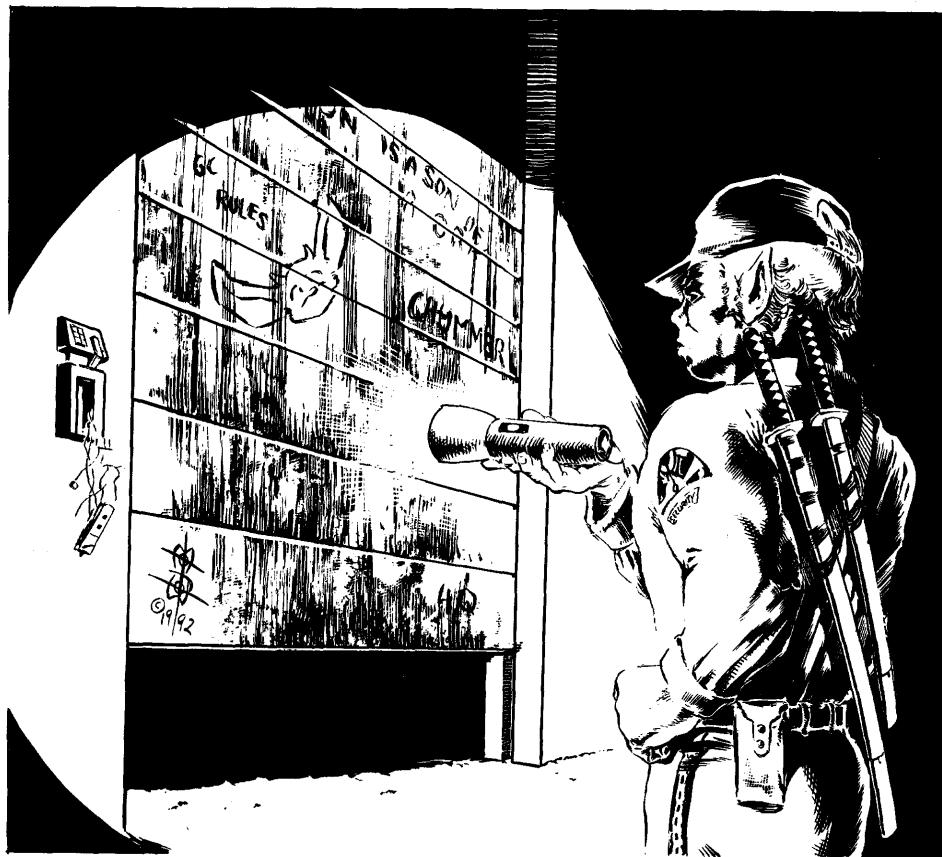
### Collections

Basically, this is an extraction mission to get something nobody is trying to protect, but one that might run into trouble with the locals, both humanoid and animal. Typically, this involves going into the great outdoors either to prospect for metals or other minerals (possibly on tribal lands), or to gather materials for use in magic and the creation of magical items. Hunting animals and monsters also counts, whether for food, magical raw materials, valuable body parts such as fur or ivory, or because they're such a nuisance or menace that there's a bounty on them.

Talismongers make a big business by

gathering and selling raw magical ingredients, and any sort of character can take up this occupation, but to be sure of his sources, a spell-caster probably will want to gather his own. This means that there will always be at least one spell-casting type along on the expedition, probably several: the more, the merrier, and several poor mages may have to pool their funds to finance a single expedition. If they are going into tribal lands, a tribesman or shaman is necessary for negotiations. Perhaps a rocker could give a free concert in exchange for limited mining rights. If such is not available, or if there are plenty of big, dangerous animals in the neighborhood, then all the muscle types that are useful as security guards and combat troops will find employment here. There will be plenty of opportunities for hostile encounters. Just finding the right stuff can take weeks, and all mining and digging must be with old-fashioned tools such as picks and shovels: high-tech power tools spoil the dweomer. Make sure the soldier-types bring along lots of ammo.

In some cases, of course, the animals themselves are the prize. As with the AD&D® game and other fantasy role-playing games (RPGs), the body parts of fantastic creatures can be used as spell components and ingredients for magical items. The unicorn and greater unicorn (from the *Paranormal Animals of North America* book) both have high-value horns, as does the unicorn fish (giant narwhal). Some Awakened creatures are even good eating, such as the devil jack diamond and the gila demon. How about starting a



burger chain serving white buffalo burgers? Does Kentucky-fried roc tickle anyone's fancy? Perhaps the creatures have a bounty on them because *they find people tasty*. In *Paranormal Animals*, both the juggernaut and the megalodon are mentioned as having bounties on them. Break out the high-powered rifles and assault cannons (and the trauma patches), chummers, we're going big-game hunting!

There is, of course, the "bring 'em back alive" option: taking Awakened creatures alive. Clients could be zoos, eccentric collectors, museums, circuses, mages who either want to experiment on them or to breed them to insure a steady future supply of magical raw materials, or corps looking for experimental subjects or guard animals. Unfortunately, narcojet guns and even the largest net guns are only made to handle human-sized targets and those only slightly larger, such as trolls. The shadowrunners will be on their own when it comes to finding the means to capture the big beasts, to say nothing of finding large enough cages for them and the means to transport them. Even with ultramodern conveniences, monster hunting can be rougher in the SHADOWRUN game than in the standard fantasy game. Did you enjoy selling baby dragons and dragon parts in a fantasy game before taking up the SHADOWRUN game? Bad news: in *this* world, dragons can become the heads of multinational corporations and the operators of amusement parks, they can ally with the biggest environmentalists' groups and natives to help protect a wilderness area, and in one recorded case (Dunkel-

zahn), even jacking into the Matrix. Let's see a fantasy dragon top that!

### Smuggling

This involves sneaking goods into or out of an area. Gang members and the standard combat types are the main archetypes who engage in this sort of business practice, and shamans and tribesmen might get involved in wilderness areas. Any type of mage or shaman can be brought along if magical backup is required. Aside from combat, they can detect patrols with divination magic, or use illusions to cover the smugglers' retreat. If a rocker gets her own band together, perhaps they could smuggle some items in their instruments, assuming that no one would even consider the possibility that they might have smuggled goods in their luggage. Most smuggling involves goods stashed in a vehicle of some sort, making this the mission of choice for riggers. The two decker archetypes, of course, do it all in the Matrix, stealing funds and information without help from anyone, as long as they have access to the target's computer system.

### Espionage

This is one of the few missions that de-emphasizes combat, but can be one of the most fun. If the PCs do their jobs right, they won't need to fight, but if they screw up, the odds against them will be so great that they haven't a prayer anyway. Theoretically, anyone could be used in a spying mission, but the detective archetype is the best man for any spying job that doesn't involve computer-stored information. In

that case, of course, the decker archetypes are the ones for the job. On a lower level, the gang member could pick up the word on the street, and the tribesmen could learn what's going on in the great outdoors. If someone in the know loves music, he might get so excited upon meeting a real live rocker that he lets slip a few bits of information that he shouldn't have. Perhaps the former wage mage and company man still have friends at the old office, or they could sign up to work at a new corp as cover for their undercover activities. The same goes for the burned-out mage, if she used to be a wage mage. For simple reconnaissance instead of cloak-and-dagger missions, a rigger could drive a recon vehicle of some sort, while a tribesman or a mercenary type trained in recon work could check up on what's going on around a secret installation. Even spell-casters can find things out using detection spells, or sneak around under cover of illusions.

### Network

This is what happens when a corporate leader, research scientist, law-enforcement type, or rival gang leader is good at what he does, but can't be bought (or extracted, in the case of the research scientist). Since he isn't going to work for you, and he's hurting you with his operations, then the only thing left is to take him out. Most terminations involve only a single assassin, who is almost always a company man or a street samurai. If he has magical defenses, a spell-caster of some sort could be used, and a gang member could mug him on the street and then geek him, to lull suspicions of corporate involvement by making it seem to be an ordinary violent robbery. Likewise, a rigger could turn him into just another hit-and-run statistic, or run him off the road (and over a cliff). This category also includes sabotage, to destroy a formula or prototype that cannot be stolen.

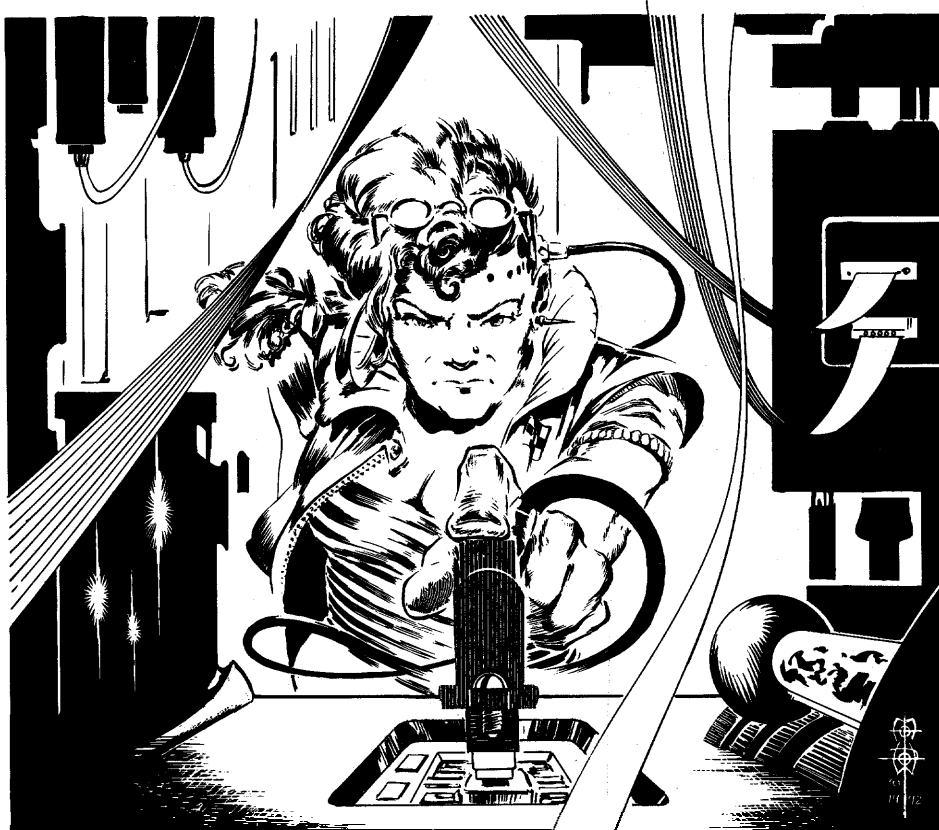
### Combat

This can be a termination on an heroic scale; to wipe out a rival gang, destroy a rival corp's installation, or rub out a local tribe. Raids on heavily-guarded places, for whatever reason, also count, causing this category to overlap with some of the other missions. All fighter-types are used in this, as are all spell-casters who have spells that work in battle. Riggers can handle panzers and gunships, and possibly other combat vehicles as well. Gang members in the city, or tribesmen in the country, also can be used as local combat experts or cannon fodder. Large-scale warfare, however, doesn't occur too often in this game.

### Putting it all together

This section consists of a series of adventure examples, with suggestions on how to get various archetypes involved in them.

*Adventure #1: Aztechnology and MTC are competing for government contracts*



from the UCAS and CAS for a new super-powered jet engine. If one side's air force gets it, the other has to have it as well. Aztechnology is slightly ahead of its rival, so Mr. Johnson of MTC is in the market for shadowrunners. Their mission, should they chose to accept it (turning down missions doesn't earn you much yen, chummer), consists of what military men call a reconnaissance in force. Plainly put, they must find the lab where the research is taking place, raid it, and snatch the plans or the top scientists working on it. Failing the last part, they are to wreak whatever havoc is necessary to at least be sure that Aztechnology doesn't complete their project, either.

The party in this case starts with a decker, who hits the Matrix to find out where the project is and who is working on it, as well as little details like how good the security is. One decker is enough to start with, but hiring another may be necessary if the first gets iced for his trouble. For the actual hit, a collection of street samurai and mercenaries, human and otherwise, is assembled, with riggers driving trucks and Banshee panzers for transportation and support. If possible, a street mage or shaman with combat spells will be brought along for additional support, with one skilled in healing magic (a Snake-totem street shaman) for taking care of any injuries incurred.

*Adventure #2:* This is a more delicate operation: corporate extraction. A rival company's scientist has just made some stunning breakthroughs, and Mr. Johnson (him again?) wants him, so a kidnapping is in order. Needless to say, Mr. Johnson wants him alive, so this little operation has to be planned very carefully.

Now it's time for some good old-fashioned detective work. A detective is hired, she sneaks around the scientist and his ring of security guards, and lists where he likes to hang out in his off hours. In this instance, let's assume he likes modern rock, and chooses his hangouts accordingly. The party uses corp money to rent a fly-trap place and turn it into a hot new nightclub. A rocker archetype is hired to play the siren, and the word gets around about that hot new singer, Lori Lei.

When the prospective target shows up to listen, the rest of the team is waiting in ambush. The actual snatch is made by a number of gang members (who blend right in with the other patrons), ex-company men, and street samurai. Because the prize is a human being who must be kept alive at all costs, there will be a street mage or shaman with healing powers along, just in case the scientist gets caught in the crossfire. Needless to say, the scientist gets precedence over any wounded shadowrunners, and rightly so. If Mr. Johnson discovers that the prize is dead because you hogged all the medical treatment, not even the strongest healing magic will be able to save your PCs.

*Adventure #3:* This is a nice, simple

mission: security-guard work at a corporate facility. All the shadowrunners have to do is defend their employer's property against all comers, no matter how numerous or heavily armed.

This is the type of scenario where human and ork mercenaries really shine, with street samurai a close second. While these types are being rounded up, a human or elven decker may be going through the corporate records of their employer's chief rivals, to find any indication of preparations for an attack. As always, mages or shamans will be hired if they can be had, with those using combat spells taking precedence over healers.

*Adventure #4:* In this one, a mage needs a fire Drake bone to turn into a wand that focuses fireballs. It's safari time, boys and girls! Needless to say, at least one mage is going to be along on this one. Shamans also might be useful, and even a burned-out mage can give useful magical advice. Of course, street samurai and mercenaries are still going to be needed as muscle, and a rigger or two may be necessary to transport the party.

*Adventure #5:* The party must collect a large quantity of crystals for their corp's wage mages to make charms out of. This scenario is similar to *Adventure #4*, but differs in several ways. First, while a hunting party could disguise its motives until they actually see the beast they want (after which it's a matter of "shoot, loot, and scoot"), one that sets up mining operations will not be able to hide its activities from the locals, including many Indian tribes who don't want to see Mother Earth ravaged any further. Thus, besides taking on the local wildlife, the party has to deal with the Indians or whoever owns the land in question.

Party composition will vary. The bloodier-minded guys will simply hire more mercenaries and street samurai, along with any mages and shamans with combat spells that they can find. Similarly, more riggers may be needed, to drive combat machines such as the Banshee panzer as well as trucks. For role-players, more diplomatic types may be found. Shamans of nature or regular tribesmen may serve as ambassadors to smooth any ruffled feathers. Rockers might give free concerts in exchange for a limited use of tribal lands, and shamans and mages who have healing spells can make themselves quite useful, indeed. Even the combat types could be useful in diplomacy, if they agree to make the area safer by killing off the nastier Awakened creatures infesting it.

## Player flexibility

In many role-playing campaigns, no matter what genre is used, more experienced players often play more than one character at a time. Given the varied nature of SHADOWRUN adventures, this sort of thing is almost mandatory if the players want to avoid getting stuck in the rut of

running the same sort of adventure over and over again. PCs who are not deckers obviously will not be able to share the adventures those characters have in the Matrix, and decker PCs generally do poorly in wilderness adventures far from computer terminals. In a world filled with action and adventure, the PCs never should be able to predict just what sort of adventure they will be going on next.

Given the sort of flexibility the players need to have to be able to play characters well-suited for going on any type of adventure at a moment's notice, it would seem to be a good idea for each player to design several characters of different abilities, such as a decker, a shaman, and a street samurai. When an adventure comes up in which one character is better suited for than another (no shaman is going to go bumming around in the Matrix), the players can switch characters, cooperating with the GM to come up with a reasonable explanation for the replacement in game terms. If several characters are equally suitable, then the player could use one to replace the current character if she is wounded and recuperating.

This sort of solution works best if the players involved are of sufficient flexibility to handle a wide variety of character types. Being a decker does not prepare one for a life of dealing with magic, and neither is adequate training on its own for the life of a shoot-'em-up street samurai or mercenary. If a player who has only played one sort of character tries this, the result will be a succession of improperly played characters. Fortunately, the SHADOWRUN game, with its mixture of fantasy and cyberpunk elements, appeals to older and more experienced gamers who possess this flexibility.

It is obvious that, in the SHADOWRUN game, the types of characters required for each adventure vary widely, due to the changing natures of the jobs at hand. The party that kidnaps a scientist in an extraction adventure may spend the next adventure as security guards who must make sure the extracted person's former employers don't launch a re-extraction raid to take him back (or to kill him). To a lesser degree, this variation is true of all RPGs, but the speed of travel in modern and futuristic games makes this tendency more pronounced. If you are comfortable with playing two or more archetypes, particularly if you are skilled enough to handle more than one character at a time, you should have a fine time playing the SHADOWRUN game, which is, after all, the whole point.

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