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MOVING BEYOND ARCHETYPES

“Orks is peoples too.”

Chuck-Chuck Razool,
orkish decker

By Tom Dowd

Shadowrun and
Matrix are Trade-
marks of FASA
Corporation

The 16 Player and 22 Non-Player Archetypes provided in the *Shadowrun* gamebook are provided for two reasons. The first is as a ‘quick start’ so that new Players and Gamemasters can grab their favorites and start playing with a minimum of character generation hassle. The second is to provide a typical character of that type for reference when players and Gamemasters later begin designing their own characters. Every character in the *Shadowrun* universe is unique, and his abilities, attributes and skills should reflect that. Real people are not Archetypes, real people are, well... real people.

Real people have full and complex lives. They have reasons for doing things, passions that drive them, and fears that hold them back. They are products not only of their genes, but of their society as well. Your goal should be to make your *Shadowrun* character, or your character in any other game, as real as you are.

Society in *Shadowrun* is about as complex as it gets. Take a step into the streets of Seattle, circa 2050, and take a deep breath. Now that you’ve finished coughing, take a look around. Look at the people. Look at how they dress, how they move. Listen to how they speak. They belong there as much as the Space Needle, Matchstick’s Bar and Grill, or your own character.

The Archetype is the jumping off point. With each we included a short first-person statement that Archetype might make about his life. Again, they’ve been included as a reference and should not be taken as gospel. It is certainly possible to have a character who isn’t as arrogant as the Elven Decker, or as language-slurring as the Ork Mercenary. In fact, we think it’s necessary. (Can you imagine how dull a world it would be if every Street Samurai or Burned-Out Mage spoke exactly like the Archetype given?)

The key to moving beyond the Archetype is history. Everyone has a past, and it

is that past that shaped that person and made him unique. Obviously, it may be impossible to create a background for your character that is as rich and diverse as your own, but that sort of depth isn’t really necessary. What is required is that some basic, pertinent, questions be answered.

Below you’ll find some questions, and some thoughts about answers that should put you on the right track. Use them as guidelines, and then come up with your own. If you’re not careful, Archetype can come to mean Stereotype, and that would be a pity.

> Why has your character chosen to do what he’s doing?

Why is he a Street Samurai, a Decker, a Rockergirl, or a Former Wage Mage? What led him to become what he is today? People rarely become what they are out of apathy; something usually drives them in a specific direction. It may be circumstance, or a life-long dream, but there is usually something. Revenge? Hero-Worship? Greed? The Thrill Of It All?

Why he’s who he is is very important because it affects who he will become.

> Why does he keep doing what he’s doing?

Let’s face it, shadowrunning is dangerous. Sure it can be fun, but those who do it solely for the thrill are probably psychotic, and certainly not long for this world. Greed is probably the most prevalent, but not the only reason. The reason that your character started shadowrunning could be the reason he keeps doing it, but it need not be. Why it changed could be as significant as the reason itself

> What is his goal in life?

As important as his past and present, is your character’s future. What does he want out of life? Is it to simply live until the next sunrise, or become the best he can at what he does? There are many possibilities, and one of them is that he does not have a goal. Many shadowrunners are caught up in the violent here and now and

don’t look beyond the next sunrise. Hopefully they’ll someday find a way out of their vicious circle and find something worth living for. Every person needs to strive for something. They need something to look forward to, a reason to grow. Without that goal our lives become stagnant and barely worth living.

> What’s his family like?

Like it or not, we are all ultimately a product of our family. Even if the influence is purely genetic, there’s a lot of our parents in us. What did your character’s parents do for a living? What are they doing now? Does he have sisters or brothers? What are their lives like? Do they like what he’s doing, hate it, or even know about it?

Does he have a family of his own? Why not? How about a ‘significant other’? Why not? Remember, ‘I wouldn’t want to hurt someone else’ and ‘I can’t afford to in my line of work’ are pretty worn out excuses in the role-playing world.

> Who are his friends?

Even in the paranoia-ridden, runner-eat-runner world of shadowrunning a person needs friends, people to turn to in time of need. Your character’s Contacts are assumed to be his friends, or at the very least neutral acquaintances. Why are these people his friends? What have they done to deserve his trust, and vice-versa?

Contacts have backgrounds and histories too, and all the questions listed here pertain equally to them as well as your character.

Remember too, that the other characters in his shadowrunning ring are probably his friends as well. If they weren’t, could he trust them enough to watch his back, or protect his body while he travels astrally?

> Who are his enemies?

Who he hates and is hated by says as much about him as who he loves. Why they hate him is even more important.

> What has influenced his life?

There are many influences in the

world that touch the lives of *Shadowrun* characters. The reach of powerful entities, living or corporate, extends down into the street and often touches, and alters, many a life. Some of these influences, and associated possibilities are listed below:

—A *Mega-Corporation*.

They can help as easily as hinder him. Directly or indirectly an action of theirs may have influenced him temporarily, or permanently.

—A *Racial Group*.

Being part of the *Awakened* community could very well be a greater influence on his life than anything else. Remember, though Orks, Trolls, Elves, and Dwarves have no real culture of their own (having been around for only forty years or so) each are unique in their physical appearance and natural ability. Bigotry and racism is unfortunately as common in 2050

as it is today, though the focus of it has been redirected to the *Awakened*. How has being one of the *Awakened*, or interacting with them, influenced your character?

—A *Non-Player Character*

A single person could have had a great influence on your character's life. He could be a current Contact, or someone who is long dead. He might not even be powerful; but just somebody who, for good or bad, made a lasting impression. Who is this person and what did he do?

Remember also that a Non-Player Character doesn't have to be human, or even alive.

—A *Government*

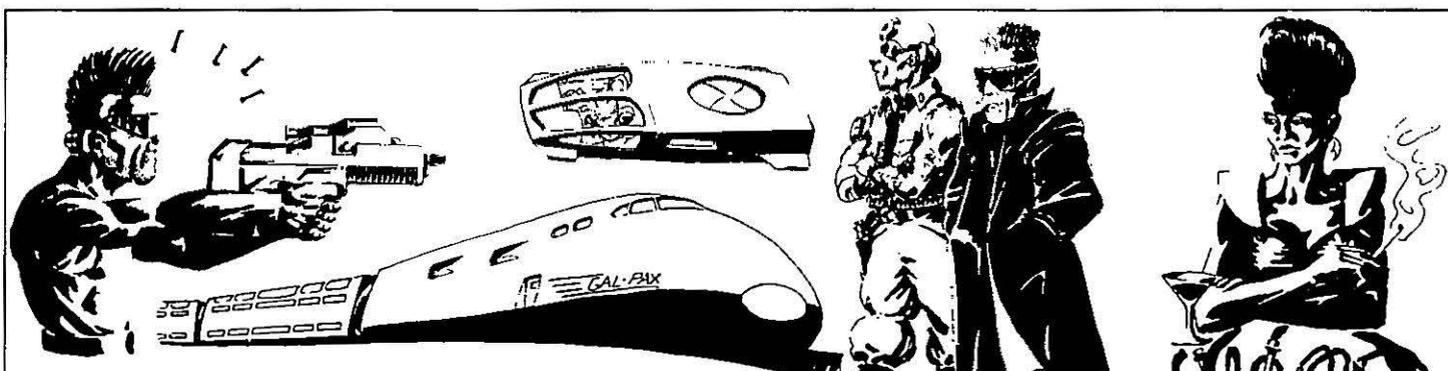
One of the various national or local governments could have done something to influence your character. Remember, even though *Shadowrun* takes place in an age of corporate domination, they do not hold complete control over the world

governments. They are able to exert a tremendous amount of influence, but cannot dictate.

> **What is he like psychologically?**

What are his passions, his loves? Does he have any obsessions, inhibitions, superstitions, or phobias? What's his temperament? Is his public manner different from his private manner? Most people act differently depending on whom they are with and what they are doing. The Former Company Man who is all business on a run could be relaxed and jovial where he feels safe. Is your character any different? Why?

Hopefully, these ideas and suggestions will get you thinking about ways to flesh out your character. Read a good genre novel and see how that author uses some of the general concepts I've outlined above to flesh out his characters. If it's good enough for him, it's good enough for the rest of us. ■



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But, the money was good, and you didn't risk it by asking questions *until* after they paid you. Now, it's three months later, and you were wishing you had asked a little more. You're wanted men. Some want you alive (for now), some want you dead, and some just want you to disappear.

Unfortunately, the only way to avoid the recyclers appears to be joining up with one of them, and hoping the others don't mind too awfully much.

Fat chance...

Renegade Dreams is a mind-twisting adventure set in the gritty cyberpunk world of **SpaceTime**, where you live by your wits and your reflexes, and nothing is exactly as it seems. Take a job at the unprotected underbelly of corporate rule, and pray you live to brag about it...

Renegade Dreams also includes the full cyberspace rules for **SpaceTime**, allowing you to integrate characters into the unseen but all-pervasive Net that blankets the civilized world. Get it now at your local store, or order direct for \$8.95 from the:

Blacksburg Tactical Research Center, 1925 Airy Circle, Richmond, VA 23233

Doctor X:

The Man With the Cure

By Anthony Herring

Introduction

Let's face it, at some point in his dangerous career, a shadowrunner's lucky star is going to be eclipsed by the flash of a gun. If he's not geeked, he can look forward to a long stay in a medical facility. With competent treatment, he may once again slip into the shadows. But where, exactly, does a runner go to find aid? Somewhere that doesn't ask a lot of questions about suspicious wounds or file public reports concerning cyberware augmentations — he goes to the Aurora Clinic.

The following information concerns the Aurora Clinic. The possibilities for scenarios involving Doctor X and his clinic are numerous. Suggested adventures are described at the end. Doctor X and his staff can be introduced as Contacts for the player characters.

Maps of the Aurora Clinic

Doctor X has leased an old, brick building, located on the corner of Aurora Ave (HWY 99) and Denny Way in downtown Seattle. The structure contains a basement, ground floor and first floor. All windows have been bricked up.

All Maglock Keypads in the building are Target Number 6, unless otherwise noted.

First Floor:

- 1) *Elevator.* Buttons in the elevator allow access to the ground and first floors. A Maglock Keypad (Target Number 8) restricts entry into the basement.
- 2) *Nurses' Station.* A low wall surrounds this area, allowing the two nurses stationed here an unobstructed view of the recovery ward. In the event of a disturbance, a PANICBUTTON beneath each desk may be used to summon the orderlies.
- 3) *Recovery Ward.* Rows of cots fill this area. Patients who cannot afford private rooms are allowed to rest here under the close scrutiny of the nurses.

Cost: 250 nuyen a day for Basic

Care, 500 nuyen a day for Intensive Care.

- 4-13) *Private Rooms.* Each room has a bed, chair and small lavatory.

Cost: 500 nuyen a day for Basic Care, 1000 nuyen a day for Intensive Care.

- 14) *Stairs.* The stairs grant access to the roof, first floor and ground floor. Entry to the basement is blocked by a brick wall (Barrier Rating 15).
- 15) *Storeroom.* Shelves are jammed with janitorial supplies (i.e. cleaning agents, mops, buckets, etc). The custodian, Ebanezar, has cleared a space for a small cot where he lounges while off duty. A pin-up of Fiona Lust, a gamous simsense star, hangs on the back wall.

Ground Floor:

- 16) *Main Entrance.* Metal doors block the entrance (Barrier Rating 10), locked with Maglock Keypads. A security camera monitors the doorway. The traditional symbol of physicians, two entwined serpents, is painted on the sturdy portals along with

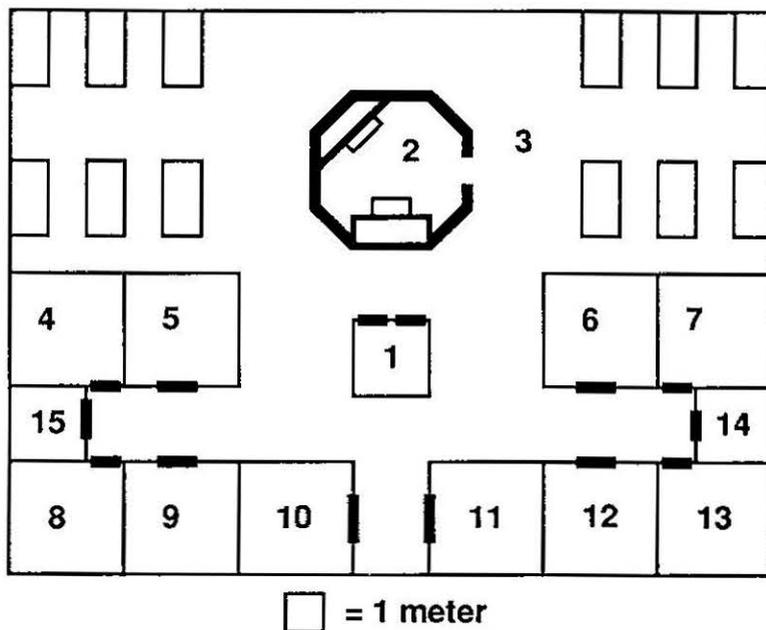
"Aurora Clinic" in bright red capitals. Various graffiti also adorn the walls and doors.

- 17) *Alley Entrance.* The back entrance appears exactly like the front. It opens onto the alley where the clinic's single emergency vehicle is parked. Much of the alley is filled with refuse, the home of various types of street scum.
- 18) *Corpse Chute.* A small (w1 meter x 1 meter) portal covers a steep shaft descending into the basement. The metal door (Barrier Rating 8) is secured with a Maglock Keypad. The gruesome experiments of Doctor X often require humanoid body parts. He hires street scum to acquire what he needs which is passed through the corpse chute in neat little bundles. Air rising from the shaft reeks of rotting flesh and formaldehyde.

It is possible for an intruder to slide down the chute. However, climbing back out requires a successful Strength roll (Target Number 6).

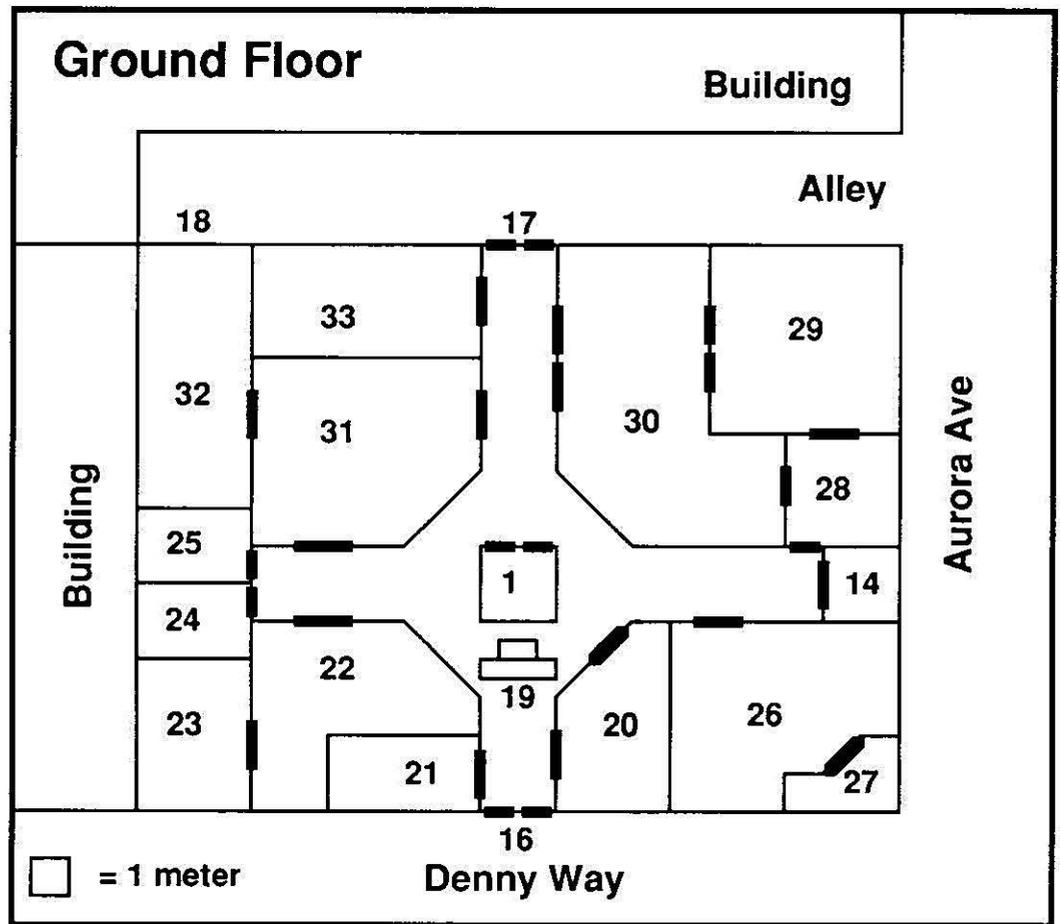
- 19) *Front Desk.* The clinic's secretary, Louise, sits behind a massive desk. The desk supports a telecom unit al-

First Floor



lowing her to see and speak with individuals at the front and back doors. She can open the doors remotely. A PANICBUTTON under the desk summons the orderlies.

- 20) *Orderlies' Lounge.* While not on duty, the orderlies are found playing cards, eating or sleeping. A round table with four chairs sits in the middle of the room and four cots line the walls. Two battered vending machines stand against one wall advertising an assortment of stuffers in flashing neon.
- 21) *Waiting Room.* This sparse room is furnished with six uncomfortable chairs and two gurgling vending machines.
- 22) *Nurses' Lounge.* Here the nurses come to relax and eat while on break. The sweet smell of cherry flavored cigarettes lingers in the air.
- 23) *Head Nurse's Office.* Hilda's office contains a desk, two chairs and a sofa. The room is cluttered with Juicy-meat-Treat wrappers, the stuffer she compulsively stuffs. There is a PANICBUTTON under her desk.
- 24) *Ladies Lavatory.*
- 25) *Men's Lavatory.*
- 26) *Doctor X's Office.* Like all doors in the clinic, the office door is made of metal (Barrier Rating 10). However, it is also protected by a Maglock Keypad. Inside there is a huge desk, three chairs and a sofa. A personal computer sits on the desk and allows limited access to the clinic's mainframe. In the shadows is a human skeleton hanging from a wooden stand. Being something of an eccentric, the doctor collects old medical texts which are jammed into a bookshelf against the wall. In the desk are found data cartridges containing information on the clinic's former patients, a fully loaded Colt America L36, and various mundane office supplies. No information concerning the doctor's secret experiments are kept in this office. There is a PANICBUTTON under his desk.
- 27) *Private Lavatory.* The doctor likes his privacy.
- 28) *Scrub Room.* Sinks and antiseptic dispensers line the walls along with sur-



- gical masks, gowns and gloves.
- 29) *Operating Room.* This sterile room contains two tables and four movable carts holding an assortment of surgical implements. Lights, drills, grinders and suction hoses dangle from the ceiling.
- 30) *Emergency Room.* Patients in dire need of medical attention are brought here first. Much of the same type of equipment as in the operating room is found here.
- 31) *Meeting Room.* A huge, round table dominates the chamber. Twelve comfortable chairs are positioned around it. The table supports a data display system. This room is also used as a counseling chamber for customers considering elective surgery. Display cases containing cybernetic limbs and organs stand about the room.
- 32) *Computer Center.* The door to this room is secured with a Maglock Keypad. Several large computer banks line the walls. Mavis, a decker, is always in the computer center.
- 33) *Residents' Quarters.* Doctor X has two student physicians on twenty-four hour call. Their room is protected by a Maglock Keypad (Target Number 4),

and contains two beds, two desks, four chairs and two personal computers. One of the doctors is obviously a slob, for his desk and bed are a shambles.

Basement:

- 34) *False Basement.* The elevator doors open upon a small basement. The place is packed with an assortment of junk collected over dozens (perhaps hundreds) of years. A path through the garbage leads to the door of area 35.
- 35) *Storage Room.* The heavy door into this room is secured by a Maglock Keypad. Inside are shelves holding a variety of medical supplies, including medikits, slap patches, drugs and a spare stabilization unit (Rating 6). There is enough medication (both legal and illegal) in here to stock a small pharmacy, bringing the total value of the storage room contents to 500,000 nuyen.

Intruders are lead to believe the storage room is the only place of interest in the basement. However, there is much more. Behind a huge, defunct boiler is a hidden door (Intelligence roll, Target Number 4, to spot it) with a Barrier Rating of 10. The Maglock

Gear: Colt America L36 (shoulder holster, no reloads), Lined Lab Coat, Medkit, Wristphone

Dr. Harry Gestalt

Dr. Gestalt is a resident physician at the clinic. He is privy to Doctor X's experiments, much to his dislike. A growing sense of guilt has lead him to the brink of reporting the doctor's hideous activities to the authorities. His mental state has begun to crumble, revealed by sudden bursts of anger. He seldom bathes anymore, and his clothes are wrinkled and filthy. His relationship with Louise has become strained.

Appearance: Harry is tall and thin. His thick mane of black hair is always a tangled mess. He has stopped shaving, and is beginning to sprout a coarse beard.

Manner/Attitude: Because of extreme guilt, Dr. Gestalt is prone to fits of rage, followed by periods of deep depression.

Loyalties: When he was accepted onto the staff, Harry was unquestionably loyal to Dr. X. However, his faithfulness has been shaken with the knowledge of the doctor's secret experiments.

Attributes:

Body: 2
Quickness: 4
Strength: 3
Charisma: 4
Intelligence: 5
Willpower: 2
Essence: 5.8
Reaction: 4

Dice Pools:

Dodge: 4
Defense (A): 2
Defense (U): 2

Skills: Armed Combat: 2, Biological Sciences: 6, Biotech: 8, Computer: 4, Etiquette (Street): 3, Firearms: 3, Negotiations: 3, Unarmed Combat: 2

Cyberware: Datajack

Gear: Beretta Model 101T (ankle holster, no reloads), Medikit, Wristphone

Dr. Cleveland Yates

Dr. Yates is the other resident on staff. He is fully aware of Bartholomew's experiments and enjoys helping him perform them. He has notice changes in his roommate, Dr. Gestalt, and has become worried about his state of mind.

Appearance: Cleveland is short and plump. His clothing is always oversized, but well kept. His blond hair is buzzed short.

Manner/Attitude: Dr. Yates is all

business, taking his work very seriously.

Loyalties: The young physician is totally loyal to Doctor X.

Attributes:

Body: 2
Quickness: 2
Strength: 3
Charisma: 2
Intelligence: 5
Willpower: 2
Essence: 5.8
Reaction: 5

Dice Pools:

Dodge: 2
Defense (A): 1
Defense (U): 1

Skills: Biological Sciences: 6, Biotech: 7, Computer: 4, Cybertechnology: 6, Electronics: 3, Etiquette (Street): 2, Negotiation: 4

Cyberware: Datajack

Gear: Medkit, Wristphone

Hilda Gruff, Head Nurse

Hilda goblinized into an ork when she was ten years old. She joined the staff when she was only twenty, and has become a valuable member.

Appearance: Nurse Gruff is tall and obese. She possesses considerable body hair, covering portions of her face, chest and shoulders. She wears her hair in a tall beehive, with a small nurses' cap wobbling at the top.

Manner/Attitude: She hates who she is, and enjoys taking her vengence out on Breeders (normal humans). The Head Nurse is something of a sadist.

Loyalties: Hilda is totally loyal to Doctor X, whom she admires for his apparent cruelty.

Attributes:

Body: 6
Quickness: 2
Strength: 6
Charisma: 1
Intelligence: 4
Willpower: 3
Essence: 6
Reaction: 3

Dice Pools:

Dodge: 2
Defense (A): 5
Defense (U): 2

Skills: Armed Combat: 5, Biotech: 3, Etiquette (Street): 3, Firearms: 3, Interrogation: 2, Unarmed Combat: 2

Cyberware: None

Gear: Medkit, Stun Baton, Walther Palm Pistol (lab coat pocket, no reloads)

Louise, Secretary

Louise is twenty-five years old. She has been employed at the clinic for three years. She knows nothing about Doctor X's experiments. The secretary is romantically involved with Dr. Gestalt, who has been abusive and paranoid of late.

Appearance: Louise is a real knockout. Her ruby hair swirls to a spike, and her black makeup is applied with perfection.

Manner/Attitude: She is always cheerful, if somewhat vapor-headed.

Loyalties: Her first loyalty is to herself, then Dr. Gestalt, and finally Doctor X.

Attributes:

Body: 2
Quickness: 2
Strength: 1
Charisma: 5
Intelligence: 3
Willpower: 2
Essence: 4.8
Reaction: 2

Dice Pools:

Dodge: 2
Defense (A): 1
Defense (U): 1

Skills: Computer: 3, Etiquette (Corporate): 4

Cyberware: Datajack, 100 Mp of Memory

Gear: Leather Dress (synthetic), Simsense Player Unit, 3 Simsense Entertainment Chips

Mavis, Decker

Mavis is thirty-three years old, and has been with the Aurora Clinic for five years. She is a trusted employee.

Appearance: Although her face and body appear haggard, her brilliant green eyes reveal the beauty within.

Manner/Attitude: She has the curiosity of a small child, and cannot resist peeping into Doctor X's secret files. The knowledge she has uncovered has not surprised her.

Loyalties: Mavis is most concerned with herself and her job. She finds the doctor's experiments objectionable, but does not want to risk losing a steady paycheck.

Attributes:

Body: 2
Quickness: 3
Strength: 1
Charisma: 1
Intelligence: 4
Willpower: 3
Essence: 5.5

Reaction: 3

Dice Pools:

Dodge: 3

Defense (A): 1

Defense (U): 1

Skills: Computer: 6, Computer Theory: 6, Computer (B/R): 6, Electronics: 6, Etiquette (Street): 4, Firearms: 3, Physical Sciences: 4

Cyberware: Datajack, Headware Memory (30 Mp)

Gear: Ares Predator (shoulder holster, no reloads), Fuchi Cyber-4 with Response Increase: 2

Programs: Bod: 6, Evasion: 6, Masking: 6, Sensors: 6, Attack: 6, Browse: 4, Deception: 4

Ebaneezar, Janitor

Ebaneezar is a gnarly Ork. However, he is a trusted employee. In addition to his janitorial duties, Ebaneezar is often employed by Doctor X as a message bearer, street scrounger and grave robber.

Appearance: His large, muscular frame is hunched over. Long, oily strands of black hair are twined about bits of bone and glass. He is forty-five years old.

Manner/Attitude: Ebaneezar doesn't bother anyone who doesn't bother him. Blending into the shadows, he tries to stay out of the way. If provoked, he becomes insanely violent, fighting until dead or incapacitated.

Loyalties: He worships Doctor X, and would willingly die for him.

Attributes:

Body: 7

Quickness: 3

Strength: 8

Charisma: 1

Intelligence: 2

Willpower: 2

Essence: 6

Reaction: 2

Dice Pools:

Dodge: 3

Defense (A): 5

Defense (U): 4

Skills: Armed Combat: 5, Etiquette (Street): 4, Stealth: 4, Unarmed Combat: 4

Cyberware: None.

Gear: Knife (ankle sheath), Sap (in pocket).

Average Nurses (94 per eight-hour shift)

Appearance: All are normal human females, averaging from age twenty to fifty. They wear blood-red gowns, hose, shoes, and caps.

Manner/Attitude: Although they seem callous, most of the nurses really care for their patients' well-being.

Loyalties: They place themselves before their jobs and their boss.

Attributes:

Body: 2

Quickness: 2

Strength: 2

Charisma: 3

Intelligence: 4

Willpower: 2

Essence: 6

Reaction: 3

Dice Pools:

Dodge: 2

Defense (A): 1

Defense (U): 1

Skills: Biotech: 3

Cyberware: None.

Gear: Medikit, Stun Baton.

Average Orderlies (6 per eight-hour shift)

Appearance: All of the orderlies are Trolls. They wear bright red jumpsuits.

Manner/Attitude: Generally bad.

Loyalties: They place themselves before their jobs and their employers.

Attributes:

Body: 9

Quickness: 3

Strength: 8

Charisma: 1

Intelligence: 1

Willpower: 2

Essence: 6

Reaction: 2

Dice Pools:

Dodge: 3

Defense (A): 5

Defense (U): 3

Skills: Armed Combat: 5, Etiquette (Street): 3, Firearms: 5, Unarmed Combat: 3

Cyberware: None.

Gear: Ares Predator (shoulder holster, 2 extra clips), Stun Baton.

Other Information

1. *DocWagon Service.*

The Aurora Clinic contracts its own DocWagon Service. The terms of the agreement are similar to those described on page 129 of *Shadowrun*. However, the clinic has only one ground vehicle and no aircraft. A typical response team consists of either Dr. Gestalt or Dr. Yale, two nurses and two orderlies.

2. *Cyberware.*

Doctor X has the facilities to install all types of cyberware. Biz with the doc is strictly confidential. Prices are as per those in *Shadowrun*. However, he is often willing to trade cyberware for services rendered.

3. *Biotech.*

The Aurora Clinic sells a wide variety of biotech equipment, from slap patches to stabilization units. Vat-grown replacement tissues and organs are also available. Prices are standard.

4. *Elective Surgery.*

Doctor X and his staff can perform all types of elective surgery. Prices are standard.

Scenarios Involving The Aurora Clinic

1. "Madness Rules the Kingdom!"

During a laser show at the Kingdom, a green gas was introduced into the ventilation system. The hallucinogenic substance caused the crowd the stampede from the arena, resulting in numerous death. Unknown to the authorities, this dastardly deed was the work of Doctor X, who was performing a "live" experiment. The shadowrunners have been secretly hired by agents of the government to identify, locate and exterminate the culprit. Can they successfully infiltrate the Aurora Clinic? Or will they end up as patients? Were they at the laser show?

2. "The Madman Must be Stopped!"

Rumors of sadistic experiments have spread to the ears of concerned city officials. A crack team of shadowrunners must be hired to find the truth. Can they navigate the Aurora Clinic's Computer System? Will they become lab rats themselves? What exactly are these grotesque experiments?

3. "Where's Our Chummer?"

During the last run, one of the team was injured. He was admitted to the Aurora Clinic with serious wounds. His chummers are told he died during the night. How can this be? He wasn't hurt that bad. Can they resolve the mystery before their chummer is driven mad by the insane experiments of Doctor X? Will Dr. Gestalt help them? ■

A Review of *SHADOWRUN*

By Lester W. Smith

I have to admit that when I first heard that FASA was coming out with *Shadowrun*, a new role-playing game that combined cyberpunk and fantasy, I groaned out loud. The thought of elves, orks (FASA's spelling most of the time), trolls, and sorcerers rubbing elbows with cyber hackers, corporate samurai and biker gangs seemed just too silly to believe. But when FASA's sixteen-page promotional booklet became available, I gave it a read and I was immediately glad that I had. In the booklet, FASA managed to make the promise more than just plausible; they made it exciting. So I eagerly anticipated the release of the game itself. I picked a copy up at GENCON and I was not disappointed. The promo book had led me to expect a lot from the game, and I soon learned that *Shadowrun* went far beyond those expectations.

Overview

First, the game's physical appearance is impressive. It is a hardbound book, two hundred and sixteen pages long, with a colorful Elmore painting on the front cover and plenty of interior art including thirty-two pages of color. The cover has a glossy coating that looks as if it will wear well and the binding is high quality, ensuring that it won't split and spill pages with repeated use. The inside front cover and flyleaf carry a map of Seattle (the city that player characters will most likely start their adventures in), with a key that identifies nearly sixty different locations of note on Seattle's streets. This map is also reproduced on the inside back cover and flyleaf.

The table of contents runs three pages, double column, with listings by chapter and major/minor subheadings. Since the book does not have an index, the thoroughness of the table of contents becomes very important for finding specific material during play.

Introductory Material

Introductory material begins with a

short overview, approximately one page long, to let the reader know just what the game is all about. A four-page piece of mood-setting fiction comes next (the Elmore cover is based upon this story), followed by eight pages of history.

Games often have a difficult time of giving players enough history to establish their characters, without giving them so much that they lose interest in reading further. *Shadowrun* deals with the problem respectably; the history seems just a bit rushed and fragmented, but it provides the most important information without bogging down.

To put that history in a nutshell, in the world of *Shadowrun*, megacorporations have filled the power vacuum left by the decline of national governments, and a five-thousand-year natural cycle has completed itself, bringing magic back to the planet. Under the influence of that magic, wondrous beasts have reappeared and much of humanity has transmogrified into the legendary races of elf, dwarf, ork, and troll. As well, technological advancement has kept its current frantic pace, leading to the interfacing of human nervous systems and mechanical constructs (a near-essential concept in cyberpunk).

The Basics

Following the introductory material, there are four pages of basic game mechanics, the core rules upon which all others hang. *Shadowrun* uses only six-sided dice. Typically, a player will roll a number of dice equal to the pertinent attribute or skill level of his character. Dice are not added together; instead, the roll of each die is compared to a particular target number, and the player counts how many of his dice equals or exceed the target number. For example, if the player were rolling five dice for a target of 3, the dice might come up as 1, 2, 4, 4, and 5. In this case, the player has rolled three successes. Rolls of 1 always fail. Rolls of 6 are rerolled, with the 6 being added to the new number (and if that number is another 6, the die is rolled



again and added on, and so on). This allows players to reach target numbers of 7 or higher.

Other concepts described in this section include definitions of *Archetypes* (pregenerated characters that serve as the bases for most player characters), and the *condition monitor* on the character sheet (which keeps track of physical and mental damage to the character, as well as damage to the character's cyberdeck, if there is one).

The concept of *damage code* is also explained here. A damage code consists of a number, a letter, and another number, such as 3M2. The last number represents how many successes must be rolled to raise (attacker) or lower (defender) the severity of a wound. The letter represents the basic wound severity, whether Light, Moderate, Serious, or Deadly. The first number is the target number for the defender's roll to reduce wound severity. All damage in *Shadowrun* is handled by use of such codes, including mental drain from casting spells.

The concept of skills, including concentration and specialization, is explained in this section. Also described is the difference between shamanic magicians (who draw their powers from spirits of nature) and hermetic magicians (who approach magic as a science). Finally, a basic description of the matrix, the realm of the computer cybernet, is given.

Characters

Shadowrun devotes six pages to descriptions and illustrations of *metahumanity*: dwarves, elves, humans, orks, and trolls. These descriptions are given in pseudo-scientific terms, lending them an air of veracity, which builds upon the believability of the history given earlier.

Next come three pages of rules for

character generation, followed by sixteen, full-color pages of character archetypes, one archetype per page. The artwork devoted to the archetypes is more cartoonish than other artwork in the book, but it grows on you after awhile. Archetypes include the Burned-out Mage, the Decker, the Former Wage Mage, the Former Company Man, the Rigger, the Ork Mercenary, and others.

The next four pages of the book are devoted to working out the details of your character. Things such as beginning credit balance, skill specializations, languages, contacts (more about them later) and, if your character is other than human, checking for allergies (silver, plastic, sunlight, and iron), are included. These four pages also give rules for modifying archetypes or creating new ones from scratch.

The next chapter is entitled "Using Skills." Here you find not only skill descriptions, but also rules for setting the target number necessary for success in performing tasks. A "Level of Success" table tells how well your character succeeds at a task based upon the number of dice that reach the target number. Level of success can help a referee to decide such things as how much information to give a character, based upon his questioning of an NPC, for example. The chapter also includes a "skill web", a wire diagram that indicates how many dice you should reduce a skill or attribute by if you are using it in place of the most appropriate skill. A character with a Quickness of 6, for example, could fire a pistol as if he had Firearms: 3.

Combat, Magic, and the Matrix

Shadowrun's combat chapter runs twelve pages in length. Initiative is explained first: roll 1D6 (rerolling sixes, remember) and add it to your Reaction attribute. Highest totals go first, and really high initiatives get more than one action per turn.

Fire combat is explained next: you make a success test to shoot someone, adjusting damage upward for extra successes, then he gets to use his Dodge, Body, and Armor to reduce the damage. If he drops it below Light, he takes no damage. There are no rules for hit location, but wound severity fills in nicely, keeping combat pretty fast and furious, with lots of dice being rolled. As well, there are plenty of modifiers that can be applied to the target number to hit allowing for situations such as characters shooting blindly through walls to hit opponents on the other side.

Damage is explained in detail in this chapter, followed by rules for autofire (a smartgun can walk autofire past friends without hitting them), grenades, melee combat, critter combat (FASA's term), subduing, and vehicle combat.

A chapter on magic follows the combat chapter. It includes rules for shamanic and hermetic magic. Each magical character must choose one or the other during character creation. The chapter runs twenty-four pages and contains more information than can be adequately described here. There are totems to be chosen, nature spirits and elementals to be conjured, and astral plane to travel and do combat on, rules for ritual magic, and six pages packed

with specific spells to cast. Once again, everything hangs on the basic concept of success tests.

Almost another magic system in itself, the matrix section follows. It runs twenty pages in length. This is the single best set of net-running rules I have seen to date. Characters can buy and modify seven different types of cyberdecks, or they can build their own. They can even use a standard keyboard terminal and viewscreen, if they don't mind being a "tortoise," or they can jack in without any deck at all, if they don't value their lives very highly. Rules

for movement and combat within the matrix make this electronic world seem very real. As a referee, I was happy to discover that while travel between "nodes" in the net is nearly instantaneous, actions within a node take up a three-second turn, just as in combat outside the net. This, and the possibility of a viewscreen to let party members watch their netrunner's progress, helps to avoid the problems involved in refereeing an adventure session that contains both netrunners and non-netrunners.

The next twenty-four pages are devoted to equipment for shadowrunners. Besides the text descriptions, seven pages are given over to equipment charts, and the whole chapter is broken somewhat with equipment illustrations. In first running the system, I was gratified to hear oohs and ahhs as my players viewed illustrations of their rigger's vehicles and drones.

Background Material

After the equipment chapter, *Shadowrun* devotes ten pages to subjects that concern events between adventures. Here are the rules for healing from wounds, fencing the goods your character has snagged, keeping up your character's social lifestyle, and the use of karma (the *Shadowrun* equivalent of experience points). The healing, fencing, and lifestyle rules help flesh out characters' lives between major shadowruns, and in doing this, they provide many opportunities for minor adventures. The karma rules explain how character benefit from experience. Basically, karma can either be used like a reservoir of luck, changing die rolls during an adventure, or it can be spent between adventures to increase attribute and skill levels (attributes cannot be increased beyond racial maximums, however...except by invasive surgery, of course).

The remainder of the book is pretty much dedicated to material for the referee, although it wouldn't hurt for players to read much of this as well. There is a ten-page chapter that contains instructions and advice to the referee, with explanations of how skills are to be used during play, a system for generating netrunning matrixes, and guidelines for awarding karma to player characters. This chapter also has a delightful glossary of 2050's slang to spice up your play sessions.

The next chapter has stats and illustrations for NPC contacts your player





character will have in the city. These contacts can serve as potential sources of aid, information, or trouble during the course of the adventure. They include such character types as bartender, dwarven technician, gang boss, troll bouncer, and many others. There are twenty-two contacts, two-to-a-page, with a one-page introduction, for a total of twelve pages.

The single longest chapter in *Shadowrun* is the "Critters" chapter, at thirty-four pages. This chapter is primarily concerned with magical creatures ("Awakened" creatures, to use the *Shadowrun* term), but the two pages of charts that finish the chapter contain stats for more mundane animals as well. Sixteen pages of this chapter are full-color plates depicting some of the nastier critters. But even the creatures that didn't rate a color plate are impressive.

The book finishes up with a four-page chapter concerning the Pacific Northwest, followed by six pages devoted specifically to Seattle. Finally, there is a six-page introductory adventure and a set of pull-out pages containing character sheets, NPC and vehicle sheets, and two pages of reference tables collected from various chapters of the book. The sample adventure is a very entertaining opportunity for trying out the combat and magic rules. I won't spoil it by revealing any details, but suffice it to say that it worked well for introducing my players to the *Shadowrun* milieu.

Shortcomings

There are a few problems with the game, primarily editorial in nature. The impression I gained was that the system had been carefully thought out and tested, but that it had then been written and edited in a rush.

There are some obvious typographical errors, for example. The Seattle Map on the inside covers and flyleaves, for instance, have a key that identifies fifty-eight different locations, yet the map has locations numbered up to sixty-seven. The map itself skips numbers 19, 62, 63, and 66. As a result, there is one location on the key that does not show up on the map, and there are six locations on the map that do not show up on the key. The problem is not critical — the map is still extremely useful — but it is a problem nonetheless.

Another slight problem is that the term "UGE syndrome" occurs occasionally in the book, but to the best of my knowledge, the initials UGE are never deciphered. A few important terms in the game are also left vague. In particular, the character archetypes have notes concerning who their contacts might be, and those notes are often in the form of "Any Street Type," or "Any Corporate Type," yet the contacts section of the book does not identify who is a street type and who is a corporate type. With street types, especially, each referee will have to make his or her own decision as to who should be included.

There are a few other typos, but they do not cause a lot of trouble. The writing itself, however, can often be confusing. I have mentioned that the background history is written very sketchily, but that it may simply be a function of keeping that section short. There are other sections in the book, however, where that sort of sketchiness makes the rules very difficult to understand. Examples of rule use are often provided, and they are always very clear, but where there are no examples, the reader is left to guess as to the designer's meaning.

On page 53, for instance, rules are given for creating your own archetypes. The intent (according to the example, and according to the designer's comments on GENIE) is that you have one 0, one 1, one 2, one 3, and one 4 to spend on the archetype creation chart. But the rules simply say that you spend from 0 to 4 on each column and that the final total add up to 10.

By those rules, you could spend two 0's, one 2, and two 4's, for example, which is obviously not what was intended.

The combat chapter also has a few such problems. In particular, the rules never identify how many rounds of ammunition are used in a burst. Nor do they specifically say that if you fire extra bursts at a single target, you should roll your total skill dice for each dice instead of splitting them among the bursts. Since there is no example to draw from, each reader is left to puzzle out the exact procedure from comparing explanations of fire at a single target to explanations of fire at multiple targets. In doing so, readers are forced to hang their understandings upon one or two important words, words whose exact meanings can easily be debated.

Even more problematic is the matrix chapter of the rules. In this case, the problem seems to be almost completely a cause of faulty editing. The system seems to work very well, but the rules are not organized in an easy-to-use format. While reading through one section, all sorts of questions arise that are not addressed until the topic is taken back up under later sections. I suggest that as readers go through this chapter, they keep a log of questions that occur to them, then mark those questions off as later sections answer them.

I could also wish that more of the charts and tables from the rules were repeated in the pull-out section at the end of the book, but this is a relatively minor complaint.

Summation

Despite the problems mentioned, I found *Shadowrun* to be an extremely satisfying product. I was able to introduce new players to the game fairly easily, and the excitement level was high throughout play. The game surprised me in the amount of material it included; you could say that it covers three worlds (physical, astral, and matrix), with numerous inhabitants of each, and three magic systems (shamanic, hermetic, and computer). Everything I could think of a referee needing to run a campaign is included in the book. Combat is designed to be fast, furious, and fun. In all, *Shadowrun* is a very visual game system. That is, it encourages imagery and role-playing, without bogging down in overly dry rules.

At \$28, I believe *Shadowrun* to be a very good buy. ■