

SHADOW CAST

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CATALYST game labs



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INTRODUCTION

The world of shadows is vast and diverse. Every run is a puzzle with more than one solution—if you stay in the shadows, you'll find the really is more than one way to skin a cat (you'll also find some runners who take that saying far too literally). Going to steal a prototype? You could blast your way in, sneak in, charm your way past the guards, or hack the local host to give you permission to walk in as an authorized employee. Trying to remove a high-ranking corp employee from one company at the request of another? You could pummel them into submission, persuade them to want to leave, sneak them out, or convince them that what they thought was their life was a dream, and their new job is reality.

Creativity and imagination are invaluable in carrying out these various plans, but you also need the skills to help you travel in whatever direction you choose.

Shadow Cast provides information on twenty archetypes who have skills that push some of the normal boundaries of shadowrunning. There are some that follow darker paths than many other shadowrunners, like the Dissonant technomancer or the Bloodpanther, who works the shadows while also serving the nation of Aztlan. There are characters to wield traditional skills with different twists, like the face fatale, who specializes in seduction or the street samurai blade fighter, who shuns firearms and prefers to operate with sharp steel in close quarters. There are a few people you might not expect to see in the shadows, like the street doc, who most runners see at the end of a job when they need some stitches, or the academic mage, who seems more comfortable in a scroll-filled library than a trash-filled alley. These and more are all discussed in this book.

Shadow Cast is not only about providing a broader range of character options, but also about providing tools for these options. Each archetype has a variety of backgrounds to help players and gamemasters think about where the character might come from and how that shapes their behavior. This includes suggestions on game stats that could be used for different backgrounds.

Each archetype also includes plot hooks and qualities to help flesh out and use the character, along with advice on playing the character. This latter section provides both strategy and tactics, helping players use the range of characters in this book in a variety of situations.

The end of the book has some cards showing sample character stat blocks for some of the archetypes in this book. This previews a full deck called the *Mug Book*.

The goal of this book is simple: to help players and gamemasters experience the full range of characters in the Sixth World and to find fun ways to put those characters to use. Enjoy *Shadowrun*'s infinite variety!

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Special thanks To everyone who made me think about all the different ways to be a shadowrunner.

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RUNTHROUGH

BY JASON M. HARDY

Pistol in hand, Quincy waved at the eerily calm man lying on the cot in the sparse cellar room.

"You have to move. But if you listen to me, you might survive this."

The man nodded. "I know. Every time I listen to you, it works well."

"That's … what?"

The man sat up, but not quickly. "I like to come back here. Run through this scenario again and again. It's helped me get used to it. And honestly, at this point I find you calming."

Quincy looked at Rasa. "What the hell is going on?"

"What's going on is, I hear sirens," Rasa said. "We don't have time to stand around."

Quincy gestured on the man. "On your feet—now! We have to move."

The man stood and brushed the front of the hospital gown he was wearing. "Of course. We can walk and talk."

Quincy opened his mouth to ask Rasa a question, but the man they were supposed to be rescuing spoke first.

"You don't want to go back the way you came. They're following your trail. Use the alternate route."

"How do you … why do you think I'd listen to you?"

The man nodded his head slightly. "Sorry, I don't mean to get in your way. Do your thing."

"I think I'd feel better taking the alternate route," Rasa said. "Too many chances that something spotted us on the way in."

It was a fair point. It's rare for two trolls to go anywhere without someone or something seeing them.

"Back way it is," Quincy said. "I'll clear the way."

They had to backtrack some, returning to the room that had served as an improvised guard station. Two people still lay on the floor. One was starting to stir, but the restraints on his arms and legs were keeping him from doing anything.

"Check the restraints," the man said.

"Would you stop saying things?" Quincy said. "No one is looking for your advice."

"I'm just trying to help. Most of the time, you leave his wrists loose, and he gets to his commlink and sends out an alarm. That means trouble."

"What they hell are you …" Quincy started, but he broke off as Rasa knelt down and yanked on one end of the restraints around the guard's wrists. "What are you *doing*?"

"He was right. They were a little loose. Come on."

There were three doors out of the room—the one they had just come through, the one they had first used to enter this room, and a closet. Quincy opened the

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closet door. He pushed a mop and broom aside and punched through the wall. Moving his arm back, he grabbed the sheet rock and pulled, making the hole he had just punched considerably larger. A few more punches, along with a big kick, and the hole was big enough. He went through, and the man he was trying to rescue followed. Rasa came last, closing the closet door behind her.

Then they were off and running. This part of the basement had narrow hallways—not quite troll-sized, but also not used much, so they moved at a good pace. They were plain and un-ornamented, white paint on the walls and grey vinyl floors. Nothing valuable down here, so no one paid much attention to them. They could probably stay in these hallways for fifteen minutes and not get caught. But they would also be trapped, with no way out. Quincy knew he couldn't let the calm here make him complacent.

They hustled toward the back of the building. They were heading toward a door that would open on an alley. There was no chance the alley would be empty. The trick would be picking the path of least resistance and quickly hammering through it. It was the sort of thing that would be much easier with overwatch or outside help, but those things would have to wait until Quincy and Rasa made it to a higher class of jobs.

For now, he was all the overwatch they had, so Quincy did a quick scan. There were half a dozen devices in the vicinity of the door they were heading to. One was a lock on the back door (Quincy gave thanks for people who use wirelessly controlled door locks), and another was a camera near the door. A third was probably control on a shutter door for the small loading dock. The other three seemed very much like commlinks.

"There are three people in the alley. Two will be to our left, one right. We should probably go right."

"The two people on the left are smoking. They won't cause you any trouble."

"What?"

"They're just on a smoking break. Not security."

Quincy would have turned fully on the man if the hallway allowed him to make a graceful turn. Instead, he just turned his head.

"I need you to shut up and not interfere."

"I'm just trying to help."

"You have been sitting in the room we took you out of for a week. You don't know what's going on outside of the room, so I don't need you pretending like you do."

"I keep telling you, I've done this lots of times."

"Please just shut up and keep moving."

The man, thankfully, obliged. As he moved, Quincy blew through the firewalls of the camera and door lock. He'd leave the camera on until he just before he was in range of it, but he unlocked the door immediately. He wanted to be able to move through it without stopping.

He picked up the pace, and Rasa kept up with him. Two running trolls meant there was a good chance anyone ahead of them would hear them coming.

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Quincy later told himself that the only reason he first looked left when coming out of the door was because he needed to know what the threat from that side would be, even if he wasn't going in that direction. That didn't fully explain why his body was so ready to move left, but he just attributed that to fast reflexes.

He went left, because when he looked in that direction, he saw two people leaning against the building wall, smoking and looking completely surprised when he burst out of the door.

A glance right showed more trouble at that end of the alley—an ork security guard who was already leveling a pistol in his direction. It hadn't shown up as a device on Quincy's scan, which meant he wouldn't be able to improve the situation by hacking it. So he just pointed and left it to Rasa.

Rasa came out of the cellar firing. The guard was being careful—one arm extended, the other arm bracing it—while Rasa was just fast, squeezing the trigger on the run, almost shooting blind. Three bullets flew. One didn't hit anything besides the building across the way. The second hit the guard's gun. The third hit his hand.

The ork yelped and dropped his weapon. The smokers, startled, hid behind a dumpster for cover. Quincy just ran.

He had given up commenting on the wisdom of Rasa's aiming technique several jobs ago. Now, he just admired the results.

Transportation was the next hurdle. Quincy had a hacking process he had run so many times it was basically a reflex—step one, step two, step three, taken at almost the same pace as his footfalls. If there were any Ford Americars nearby with only modest alterations to their factory settings, he would have access to them in moments.

There were three.

That was perfect. He started each car and made two of them signal that they were occupied and ready to travel home. GridGuide started moving two of the cars, including a blue one that pulled away from the curb as Quincy ran by it. The third one wasn't much farther away.

Quincy opened the rear door as he ran by it, then opened and entered the driver's seat. Rasa scooped up the man, shoved him into the back seat, then crammed herself in after.

The worst part of the Americar hack was, of course, two trolls in an Americar. Rasa was sitting diagonally across the back seat, and Quincy had one leg on the passenger side of the car. He still felt extremely cramped, and he had to accelerate with his left foot.

He had already overridden GridGuide, so he was in control of the vehicle. That didn't mean he peeled out. He moved briskly but without obvious panic. Her merged into traffic and became the most easy-to-overlook thing in the world—an Americar going nowhere special.

The man in the back decided things were now calm enough that he could speak.

"I'm glad you skipped the blue one," he said. "It always smells like deepweed."

"Look, omae, what in the holy hell are you talking about? You keep saying drek like this, like this is some show you watch over and over."

"Oh, no, not a show. It's real." He smiled in a way that, combined with his hospital gown, did not make him seem completely rational. "That's why I keep coming back to it."

"What does *that* mean?"

The man smiled broader and tapped his fingers audibly on his lap. He said nothing.

"What the hell is your *problem*?" Quincy yelled.

"Sorry. I'm sorry. It's a bad habit, at this point. I know how you get. I know how to irritate you and … sometimes I do it on purpose, just because I think it's funny when you yell. But I shouldn't provoke you when we're doing something this serous. And I forget that you don't know me, since to me, we've met many times. You see, I'm a time traveler. I've lived through this whole escape … well, at least a dozen times. It's like re-watching my favorite trid. I love it."

"This is … you're a *what*?"

"A time traveler."

Quincy tried to focus on the road, but his mind was spinning. "You're a time traveler, but … you keep coming back here to be rescued?"

"Yeah. Look, I know the questions you'll have. If I'm a time traveler, why don't I do something significant? Why don't I assassinate the justices who made the Shiawase decision? Or the founders of ORO?" He shook his head. "It says something about humanity that whenever we think of how we could really change the world, we start by coming up with a list of who to kill. Anyway, it's complicated, but there are a lot of time travel shows that could explain it to you. The gist of it is that we needed to past to basically be what it was in order to create the present. We need the same people to exist, the same tech to exist, and so on. So we can't change anything significant. If I try to fire a gun at someone, it jams, or the bullet veers wildly off the path. If I try to stab anyone, I drop the knife before piercing anything. It's weirdly disorienting, but that's how it works."

"But you said sometimes things change. Like getting in the blue car."

"Sure. You can change immaterial things. We take the blue car, or we take this car. I explain all this to you the minute you meet me, or I explain it to you now. Those are minor differences, but they don't affect the overall mission. The outcome is the same."

"Which is?"

The man leaned forward, despite the obstacle of Rasa's legs in front of him, and patted Quincy on the shoulder. "You succeed. It goes well."

"Good to know." He looked in the rearview mirror. There were a few cars back there, but nothing he marked as a problem. "Is anyone chasing us?"

"I hate to give anything away."

"Oh, so *now* you don't want to talk about what you know?"

"It's more that I don't feel like telling you what you already should know."

Tires squealed a few blocks away. Horns honked. Someone was coming through.

Quincy accelerated. He knew how to end this—he just needed to know how to get there.

"You've done this so many times, so tell me this—what route should I take?"

The man didn't respond. Quincy glanced in the rearview mirror and saw him grinning sheepishly. "I hate to say it, but I'm not great with directions. I've done this a lot, but you've taken a lot of different routes, and I don't

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