

# WELCOME HOME

Sample file

It's a screwed up city. Isolated from the rest of the UCAS, it's haven for criminals—smugglers, syndicates, gangers. Legal criminals, too—megacorporations, governments, politicians.

As beautiful as she is dysfunctional, Seattle is urban sprawl amid rolling hills and forests nestled up to man-made wonders next door to natural and man-made disasters. Whether you're a native or not, Seattle will draw you in like no other.

You can run for a lifetime and never leave Seattle, but some say you can't run for a lifetime without entering.

*Seattle 2072* is compatible with all *Shadowrun* books.

  
**SHADOWRUN**

**CATALYST**  
game labs

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# SEATTLE 2072

Sample file

CATALYST GAME LABS



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### WRITING

Steve Kenson

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### EDITING

174	Jennifer Harding, John Helfers
-----	--------------------------------

### CATALYST GAME LABS MANAGING EDITOR

174	Randall Bills
-----	---------------

### SEATTLE 2072 DEVELOPMENT

176	Adam Jury, Peter Taylor
-----	-------------------------

### ART

178	<i>Art Direction</i>
178	Brent Evans

### Cover Art

178	Tyler West
-----	------------

### Cover Design

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-----	-----------

### Interior Art

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-----	-----------

### Maps

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-----	--------------------------------------

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-----	---------------------------

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191	Doug Anderson, Rick Berry, Kristina Carroll,
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	John Zeleznik, Mark Zug

### PROOFREADERS

Adam Bruno, Mark Dynna, Lauri Gardner, Lars Wagner Hansen, Jennifer Harding, Mason Hart, Carl Schelin, David Silberstein, Jeremy Weyand

### SOME MATERIAL BASED ON PREVIOUS WORK BY

Rob Boyle, Bobby Derie, Tom Dowd, Jong-Won Kim, Robyn King-Nitschke, Boy F. Petersen Jr., Jon Szeto

### SPECIAL THANKS

John Dunn, Jennifer Harding, Chris Hussey, Jaqui Wujec and Grim Arts.

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info@shadowrun4.com  
(Shadowrun questions;  
please check the website FAQ first!)  
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# KABOOM, KA-BYE

Seattle. Marie loved it already.

Would Seattle love her back? That was the question. All she had to do was kill someone—well, kill someone *and* not get caught—and it would be a very good stay indeed.

She didn't mind that it aspired to be the Emerald City. She was in a good section of town in the midst of the lunchtime bustle. Almost everyone else was more intent than she on a destination. She was taking in the sights. Or so it should seem. The crush of people swirling around her were mostly human, but now and then, she detected an elf. And she did see one troll who stood out like a beacon—or a blight, depending on whom one asked.

Marie loved the December gloom and rain. The more blustery the weather, the higher her spirits rose. Cold rain, thick gray-black clouds, a stiff wind coming in off the water. It surprised her that she liked it that much. She was in her glory.

Until, just at the edge of her field of vision, she caught sight of the cops. And even worse, they appeared to catch sight of her. They were still about two blocks away, but uphill from her, so she could see them plainly as their formerly-relaxed gait turned purposeful and accelerated.

They shouldn't have had any interest in her. Her last run hadn't been anywhere near Seattle. Knight Errant shouldn't be paying any attention to her at all. Why would they? She'd never been to Seattle before. She wasn't on any watchlists. Her sources would tell her if that changed. The cops should have looked right past her.

Except they hadn't.

Fuck.

Closer. The cops weren't just getting closer, they were walking directly toward her. Walking fast. Marie held her breath and counted on her tech to do its job. Hands in her light jacket pockets, she automatically—but especially now—kept one hand on her credsticks and the other on her temporary commlink as she pretended to be fascinated by the latest styles in the store window before her. She might look like a customer of NetMart, but nothing to stop her from coveting Lordstrungs, right?

She forced herself to breathe. Her commlink should be broadcasting perfectly nondescript identification, nothing that would flag the cops' attention—borrowed, of course, from someone who looked an awful lot like her: average. Average height, average build, average appearance—easy on the eyes, but not eye-catching, with thick wavy brown hair that just brushed her shoulders.

As long as the cops weren't augmented enough to hear her heart pounding in her chest, or smell her sweat, she should be good.

If she'd had any sense, she would have passed on this particular run. She almost had. Until her partner Ralph convinced her that the generous paycheck was worth the “minimal” risk. So far she was glad he had. Or had been, until the KE zeroed in on her.

She chuckled and forced a smile, as if reacting to the AR of some sale offer the clothing shop had beamed to her comm. Marie made herself stay still, stay relaxed. She was good at bluffing—*really* good. If they stopped her, her best bet was acting innocent and talking.

After all, she hadn't done anything illegal.

Yet.

Well, not in Seattle anyway.

She and Ralph the Elf were getting a decent reputation ... other places. That's how he'd scooped the inside information on this particular run.

Shiawase was on the verge of a breakthrough—allegedly. They had two separate R&D labs working on ... something big. Marie didn't know what. According to rumor, whatever it was was *major*. But now in order to complete the project they needed to share data between the labs—between two hard-wired, off-the-grid labs, both totally isolated from the Matrix.

Couldn't afford to let any hacker discover the secret, after all. No matter how good their encryption and other security measures and countermeasures, Shiawase didn't want the data transmitted.

It should have been a simple enough courier job, except that the news leaked and Shiawase had found out about the leak. The corporate honchos weren't about to back down, not even if they could afford to. So they were making a huge show of the transfer, pulling out all the stops for protection, every contingency covered: magical, hardware, software, and plain old mundane street muscle in the form of the best private security money could buy. They'd hired an army to escort their “packages”—five of them—across town.

Four were decoys. One was the real thing. No one, not even the couriers, knew which was which.

It was a good plan.

Except for Ralph being astronomically lucky in ferreting out information that no one else seemed to find—at least not in time to do anything with it. See, Ralph had found out that all five were decoys, not just four. Marie grinned at the memory of his glee when the lanky, fair elf had told her. His delicately-pointed ears had practically twitched with excitement.

She and Ralph the Elf made a perfect team: she a hacker extraordinaire and he a highly skilled mage as subtle as he was strong. They'd teamed up several years ago and had yet to fail on a run, partially because they were *good* but also because they knew their limitations and didn't accept jobs they knew they couldn't yet handle.

He'd had to persuade her about this one; it was on the cusp, in her opinion. Marie had found it hard to believe that all five were decoys. There was a sixth, one most spies didn't know about.



The sixth courier, totally oblivious, would be transporting the actual data.

Marie couldn't imagine what excuse the person would have been given. In this age of instant communication via the Matrix or courtesy of VR workplaces, business meetings were virtual if they happened at all. It wasn't as if any employee *needed* to see another worker face to face. Email, texting, videophone: all were much more immediate and therefore more efficient.

The hacker shrugged, still pretending interest in the store even as she watched the cops get closer.

She debated the merits of further perusing the colorful merchandise in the window or strolling into the store itself. She watched the cops weave their way through the lunch crowd of wage slaves out despite the wet weather. People sensed their intensity and got out of their way, allowing them to move even more swiftly.

Then a movement in the periphery to her left was abrupt enough to make Marie turn and look, along with everyone else.

A kid broke into a sprint, shoving people roughly out of the way and leaving angry screams and annoyed shouts in his wake as he vanished around the next corner. The KE dashed past, quickly making up the distance. They were augmented, judging by how swiftly they disappeared around the same corner.

Marie wondered what the kid had done. He'd been tall and lanky, dressed all in black and scruffy-looking—but experienced scruffy—so as not to stand out much. Rebel chic. She felt like rolling her eyes in disdain at the pretender but stopped herself in time. Whatever it was he'd done she wished him luck. It was the least she could do, she thought, as she thanked him for drawing the cops away. She loved false alarms and distractions.

A false alarm was better than being the real target.

Yes, Marie loved Seattle.

For how long? Well, she'd have to see.

She had her own target to find.

Their client didn't care about intercepting the information. That would have been a tall order indeed. All she and Ralph had contracted to do was to *stop* the transfer. It would only delay Shiawase for a short time, but that time was all the client—one of Shiawase's rivals, no doubt—wanted. Whatever delay, whatever chaos, was good enough.

There.

She'd spotted her target, an older man who somehow managed to look both weary and distinguished. Tall and broad, thick white hair. There was no urgency to his step as he emerged from the restaurant and turned to go up the hill, moving against traffic.

Marie believed he had no clue he was being watched. Why should he, when he had no idea what he was carrying? She almost felt bad for him. Almost.

But it wasn't her fault any more than it was his that Shiawase had planted the microchip on him. His blood was on corporate hands, not hers.

Marie and Ralph had considered various options but had rejected all of them as too uncertain of success. The datachip needed to be destroyed. That's what they were being paid for: a guarantee. They hadn't been able to think of a fail-safe way to do that without also taking out the man.

Mindful of traffic, she crossed to the other side of the road so she was moving with the flow of people. Just because she didn't think he was aware of her didn't mean she'd get careless. Plus, it allowed her to move faster and catch him that much more easily.

She fingered the credsticks again, easily finding the notched one that she needed to slip into his pocket.

To any sensor or scanner, as well as to the naked, magical, or augmented eye, it would appear perfectly normal. Ralph the Elf had confirmed it for her. Aside from the initial contact being his—major aside—that was the one thing he'd done on this very unmagical run. Marie would slip it into the mark's pocket. Once she had, her comm would text some innocuous message over the Matrix to some random restaurant or store. It would be spam—background noise.

The credstick would pick it up. And once it got the signal the device would detonate. Oh, there would be an EMP. Just in case. Marie believed in covering all bases—overkill, Ralph always said. So the heatflash would burn up the unwitting courier, the chip, and the incriminating credstick. Kaboom.

Marie just needed to catch him.

So intent was she that she almost didn't see his escort.

They were good. She counted seven, two flanking him close and the other five forming a discreet perimeter. They looked human, without visible implants, but there was a hardness about them, an edge that aroused Marie's instinctive self-preservation. She didn't doubt surveillance cams were keyed in as well. The cams didn't matter, she matched her fake ID.

But the seven ...

Fuck.

Now what?

They weren't keeping a buffer zone around him empty, but they studied anyone who got that close. Any approach wouldn't get past them. They certainly wouldn't miss a bump, even though she wasn't picking his pocket, but slipping something into it.

She stayed the course as she tried to think of something. She got in front of him and stopped in front of a high-end electronics store—everything anyone could possibly need for her PAN or LAN and then some—made as if to go in, then stopped, then started again, then stopped, turned abruptly, and careened right into the hapless carrier.