FIGHT NIGHT

The sharp ding of the bell signals the end of the fourth round, and Billy "The Beast" Barlow breathes a visible sigh of relief. Looking dimly out of his bruised right eye, he sees his opponent strut around the ring, raising his arms as if he were already victorious, despite a nasty cut above a swollen shut left eye. Who was this Miguel Garza guy anyway? Barlow had seen him around a few fights before, but never like this. Barlow knows the score; keep it exciting for a few rounds, then pound him to the mat in the fifth. Sid said this guy knew what he was doing. The look in Garza's eyes, that kind of crazed, bloodshot look of someone on a six-day novacoke bender, told Barlow he was in for more than he bargained for. Garza looks like he was hit by a bus, but he may as well be a machine for all the shits he gives.

Relieved at the chance for a rest, Barlow lets his guard down and moves to go back to his corner. Garza's face twists into a furious scowl as he throws a vicious punch to the back of Barlow's head, sending the house favorite to the mat face first. The outraged crowd flies into a frenzy, screaming for someone to control the fight. Garza's barely intelligible taunts are drowned out by the din of the shocked crowd, as an obviously dazed Barlow can only crawl back to his corner stool.

Barlow's manager, an aging, bald ork with the scars of a survivor, wipes down the boxer with a grim look on his face, and then turns to Sid and shakes his head. Barlow can't take another beating like that.

Sid Gambetti furrows his brow and wipes the sweat off his face with a dirty blue cloth. He's long since shed his jacket, and his tie hangs loosely around his neck. His paper-thin white shirt shows sweat stains under his arms as he raises his finger to point at Barlow's manager, the fake diamond on his pinky finger catching the light.

"You get him back in there, or you finish the fight for him!" Sid growls at the ork. He glances toward the other corner, where Garza sits, staring silently at Barlow as Garza's manager tries with frantic motions to get the rookie boxer's attention. At least he had his boys search people for recording equipment on the way in. No one needs to see this travesty again.

With a sigh the ork turns to Barlow to deliver the news. Underground boxing was never easy, and never clean, no matter what the so-called ref says.

His orders delivered, Sid spares a glance to his left, spying a group of observers too well dressed to be locals. The obvious goons stand bodyguard around several men in sharp suits, and the brightly dressed women accompanying them stood out among the others as people who had money, along with the means to turn that money into

power. One of the men, a middle-aged human with greying temples, glares at Sid with a stony look of disapproval. Obviously, someone has money riding on this fight and received a decent tip as to the nature of the outcome.

The boxers are up again, meeting in the middle while the referee keeps them separate.

Dabbing his receding hairline with this blue cloth again, Sid visibly winces when the bell signaling the beginning of Round five is struck. Before the echo of the bell can leave his ears, Garza unleashes a ferocious combination that leaves Barlow on the mat.

Sid rushes to the ringside while the ref starts his count, screaming at Barlow to get his ass up. The boxer moves, slowly at first, but eventually climbs the ropes to the point he can stand, spitting out a gob of red that hits the mat and splatters Sid's shirt. The count reaches seven before Barlow can stand on his own.

Cursing, Sid pushes his way past several ringside staff to the other side of the ring. The bell sounds, the fight's back on, and at that moment the house plunges into darkness. The bloodthirsty cries of the crowd are swiftly replaced by concerned chatter as the lights come back on from the momentary power failure.

Garza stands near the edge of the ring, his left glove catching his side. Barlow, seeing an opportunity, moves in. Garza tries to move, but he's sluggish and is caught by a vicious hook that spins him around and into the mat, collapsing into a convulsing heap.

Sid, looking shocked, removes his hands from his pockets, the slight glint of blued steel catching the light of the venue for a split second. The count is swift, and the ref raises Barlow's hand, declaring him the victor by knockout in five rounds.

Whispers of dissatisfied gamblers combined with few boos raise from the crowd, and voices call foul on the suspicious blackout, but they are silenced by the remainder of the audience, who quickly drowns them out with chatter as the venue begins to empty.

Sid leans against the ring as he is approached by the finely dressed man with greying temples. The man's expression is not one of joy, but he shakes Sid's hand as he receives an overstuffed envelope in the other. He leans in close to Sid to whisper in his ear, and Sid's already shaken expression goes white, as the man and his bodyguards move off toward the exit.

Taking his cloth out, Sid wipes his face and nearly falls into a chair at ringside, his shaking fingers searching his discarded jacket for a steel flask. Taking a long draw from the flask, he lets out a long breath. At least he's still breathing.

INTRODUCTION

SRM 05-05: While the City Sleeps is a *Shadowrun Missions* living campaign adventure. Full information on the *Shadowrun Missions* living campaign is available at shadowruntabletop.com/missions and includes a guide to creating Missions characters and a regularly updated FAQ. All maps, player handouts, and other playing aids are found at the end of this document.

PREPARING THE ADVENTURE

SRM 05-05: While the City Sleeps is intended for use with *Shadowrun, Fifth Edition*, and all character and rules information refers to the fifth edition of the *Shadowrun* rules.

Adventure Structure

SRM 05-05: While the City Sleeps consists of several scenes. These scenes form the basis of the adventure, which should be completed in approximately four hours. If you are running short on time, you should streamline each and be a little more generous with clues, target numbers, and other requirements to aid in guiding the players through the adventure.

Each scene outlines the most likely sequence of events, as well as how to handle unexpected twists and turns that inevitably crop up. Each one contains the following subsections, providing gamemasters with all the information necessary to run it.

- **Scan This** provides a quick synopsis of the scene's action, allowing you to get a feel for the encounter at a glance.
- **Tell It to Them Straight** is written to be read aloud to the players, describing what their characters experience upon entering the scene. You should feel free to modify the narrative as much as desired to suit the group and the situation, since the characters may arrive at the scene by different means or under different circumstances than the text assumes.
- **Behind the Scenes** covers the bulk of the scene, describing what's happening, what the non-player characters are doing, how they will react to the player characters' actions, and so forth. It also covers the setting of the encounter, going over environmental conditions and other properties of the location as well as providing any descriptions of important items.
- **Pushing the Envelope** looks at ways to make the encounter more challenging for experienced or powerful characters and other ways you can add some extra spice to the scene. This subsection

should usually only be used for home games, or games where time is not a factor. At most convention and Open Play events, gamemasters should omit this information. It adds to the scene but does not contain important information.
- **Debugging** offers solutions to potential problems that may crop up during the encounter. While it's impossible to foresee everything that a group of player characters might do, this section tries to anticipate common problems and other suggestions for dealing with them.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

Gamemastering is more of an art than a science, and every gamemaster does things a bit differently. Use your own style when it comes to preparing and running the adventure and do whatever you feel is best to provide the best *Shadowrun* game you can for your players. *Shadowrun Missions* adventures are designed to run in a standard four-hour convention time slot.

Please keep this in mind when running the adventure. You should leave at least 15–20 minutes at the end of the time slot to complete any necessary paperwork and pass out the players' **Debriefing Logs**. (Make sure that you have enough copies of the **Debriefing Log** for this adventure to give one copy to each player after running the adventure.) This section offers some guidelines you may find useful in preparing to run *SRM 05-05: While the City Sleeps* (or any *Shadowrun Missions* adventure).

Step 1: Read The Adventure

Carefully read the adventure from beginning to end. Get a feel for the overall plot and what happens in each scene. That way, if something different happens, you won't be caught off guard and you can adapt things smoothly.

Step 2: Take Notes

Take notes for yourself while reading through the adventure that you can refer to later on. Possible things to note include: major plot points (so you can see them all at a glance), the names of various non-player characters, possible problems you notice, situations where you think a particular character can shine and other things you'll want to keep in mind while running the adventure.

Step 3: Know The Characters

Prior to the start of the adventure, examine the PCs' record sheets and Debriefing Logs for your reference and have basic information about their important abil-

ities handy so you can refer to it during play. Also go over the characters and keep their previous events listed on the Debriefing Logs in mind when determining non-player character actions in various scenes if such a dynamic has been included.

Step 4: Don't Panic!

Gamemastering involves juggling a lot of different things. Sometimes you drop the ball and forget something or you just make a mistake. It happens, don't worry about it. Nobody is perfect all of the time and everybody makes mistakes. Just pick up from there and move on. Your players will understand and forget about it once you get back into the action.

Step 5: Challenge the Players

Gamemasters should challenge the players but should generally not overwhelm them. This is not to say that games cannot be deadly. If the characters die through their own actions and repercussions of those actions, then so be it. But the idea is to challenge the players and their characters, not to bury them. If the enemies and challenges are too light for the characters present, then increase them. On the other hand, if the characters are badly outmatched by the enemies, then tone them down. Make things difficult but not impossible.

GENERAL ADVENTURE RULES

Shadowrun Missions adventures use the rules presented in *Shadowrun, Fifth Edition* (*SR5*). Standard rules such as success tests, limits, glitches, critical successes, and other common mechanics are described in *SR5* and are not repeated in this adventure.

Please keep in mind when preparing for the adventure, that the PCs will not necessarily comprise a balanced party. It's entirely possible that the party will be made up entirely of technomancers or back-to-nature shamans. If the characters run into a brick wall because of such complications, show flexibility and use your best judgment in how you lead them back to the plot.

Non-Player Characters

Non-player characters (NPCs) are essential to any adventure. They are the allies, antagonists, and background characters in the adventure that interact with the player characters. NPCs in this adventure have already been created and can be found throughout the adventure.

Minor NPCs are found in the individual scene that they appear in, and generally have a brief write up, noting only their important skills and the gear they are carrying.

Major NPCs can be found in the **Cast of Shadows** at the end of the adventure. They have more detailed write ups and include most of the skills and the gear they have access to.

The NPCs in this adventure should generally stand up to the average player character but may need some adjustment to suit a particular group of characters, especially a more experienced and powerful group. The scenes and NPC descriptions offer tips on adjusting the NPCs to suit the abilities of the characters in your group. To adjust the power level of an NPC, refer to **Helps and Hindrances** (p. 378, *SR5*). Take the player characters' abilities into consideration when assessing the NPCs in this adventure and modify them accordingly.

Mission Difficulty

Gamemasters are encouraged to use their own judgment and to adjust the difficulty of the encounter to take into account the abilities of the players. If the players have no magical support, replace magical defenses with mundane ones. If the players are weak on combat, reduce the number of enemies by one or two. Conversely, if they're steamrolling the opposition, add one or two enemies to the fight. Missions should be difficult and something of a challenge but should not be insurmountable.

A simple method for adjusting difficulty is to simply increase the dice pools and Professional Ratings of the enemies. A simple +1 or +2 to all combat and defense tests gives enemies a minor boost in power, while a +3 or 4 will make them truly formidable. Adding to their Professional Rating will give them a larger group Edge pool to draw from, and gamemasters are encourage to use this Edge when logical.

Often a combat scene will tell you if it's supposed to be challenging or is simply there to serve as filler or a minor obstacle that the players should steamroll through. When possible, use this as a guide to know when to tweak the enemies and encounters. If it doesn't say, assume the scene should present a challenge to the power levels of the players.

A Note on Loot and Looting

Gamemasters should be careful what they allow players access to, because they can and will try to steal everything not nailed down (and even then, they often have pry bars and claw hammers to deal with those nails). *Shadowrun Missions* operate under the assumption that two players who have run the same missions will have roughly the same amount of resources available to them (give or take some negotiation and a little bit of minor loot fenced), so when players are able to steal and fence a lot of gear or are able to get their hands on high-priced vehicles, cyberdecks, or foci, it

can unbalance the game and make it unfair to players who didn't have the opportunity to get those items. Gamemasters should avoid letting the players get into a position to do high-value looting whenever possible.

Chicago, The CZ, Noise, and Background Counts

While for many the Chicago and the Bug City Containment Zone are synonymous, the CZ comprises less than one-third of the total landmass of the city of Chicago proper, not counting suburban areas and farmlands connected to the city. But the CZ is still big, and it is the rotted, gutted, feral heart of the Windy City. It starts at 115th Street to the south and runs nearly thirty kilometers north to Belmont Avenue, and reaches from the Lake Michigan on the east to an average of fifteen kilometers inland to Harlem Avenue on the west. A mass of torn-down buildings and hastily erected barricades were added to and reinforced over the three-year period that the Containment Zone was in effect, and even now nearly twenty years later this barrier stands as an imposing divide between the Zone and the outside world. Anyone can supposedly freely travel between the Zone and Chicago proper, but Lone Star watches those coming out and the gangs and warlords watch those going in very closely.

Between the Cermak Blast, the bugs, the debilitating effects of FAB III, and years of death and metahuman misery, astral space in and around the Zone is horrible. Unless otherwise noted in the scene, assume a default background count of 2 anytime characters are within the Containment Zone. The count fluctuates wildly at times, so players should expect to encounter everything from high background counts and mana voids to various aspected backgrounds and mana warps. (See **Background Count** sidebar for full rules. Future *Shadowrun, Fifth Edition* rulebooks may supersede these rules). Areas of Chicago outside the CZ may also suffer background count bleed from the Zone.

Besides the background count, the CZ is a virtual nightmare for deckers and technomancers. The persistent low-level background radiation coupled with a distinct lack of modern matrix broadcasting equipment through the area results in a high level of constant background Noise that makes even basic matrix communication difficult. Noise levels will vary from area to area, but unless otherwise specified in the scene, assume a default Noise level of 2 anytime the characters are within the Containment Zone.

BACKGROUND COUNTS

Background counts impose a negative dice pool penalty equal to their rating for all tests that are linked to or utilize magic in any way (i.e., spellcasting, summoning, assensing, any test made while astrally projecting, and any active skill that benefits from active adept powers such as killing hands, critical strike, great leap, or improved skills, etc). Dual-natured creatures and spirits suffer this penalty to all actions.

Aspected background counts grant a boost to any limit that utilizes magic in any way (see above) to any metahuman, spirit, or dual-natured creature that matches the aspected domain. This includes spellcasting Force limits, so spellcasters need to be careful as it can be hard to control the additional surge of mana. Any magically active being that does not match the aspected domain should treat this as a normal background count and suffer penalties.

Background counts above 12 are called either a flux (for aspected domains) or a void (for magically dead zones), and are very dangerous. Any being that is magically or astrally active in any way (dual natured, astrally perceiving, casting a spell, has an active adept power, has an active foci, etc.) takes background count – 12 unresisted Stun Damage each turn that they are active and exposed to the flux or void.

Paperwork

After running a *Shadowrun Missions* adventure, there are several important pieces of paperwork that need to be filled out.

The first is to make certain to distribute a copy of the adventure's **Debriefing Log** to each player. As the gamemaster, please make certain to fill this out and sign off on it for each character. In the interests of time, you may have each player fill out the sections, with appropriate values that you give them. Please consider the PCs' actions in the scenario when providing Reputation modifiers, per those rules (p. 372, *SR5*).

The second is to make sure that all players have updated their character's **Mission Calendar**. PCs are allowed to go on one run per week. The calendar is used to track the character's monthly lifestyle expenses, adventures, and their downtime exploits.

Finally, once an adventure is completed gamemasters should head over to the official *Shadowrun* forums at forums.shadowruntabletop.com and look in the *Shadowrun Missions* section. There will be a section to post the outcome of the Missions adventure. Future adventures will be affected by these results. Without gamemaster feedback, the PCs' exploits will be unable to affect the larger campaign.

MISSION BACKGROUND

Sid is a guy with a checkered past. As a fight promoter he has had his share of shady deals. This time, Sid's past has finally come a-knocking.

A couple of months ago, Sid was taking bets on an underground bare-knuckle fight between William "Billy The Beast" Barlow and newcomer Miguel Garza. It should have been a simple but brutal affair, with Garza going down in the fifth. The problem was, Garza had pumped himself full of kamikaze in order give a better show. By the time the fifth round rolled around, The Beast had beaten him to a bloody pulp. Garza didn't even notice. As it became more and more apparent that the bets made would turn out against his prediction, Sid panicked. With visions of large men named Mario chainsawing his legs off at the knee, Sid killed the power to the venue. Less than ten seconds later the lights came on just in time for everyone to see The Beast land the knockout punch. The crisis was averted.

What Sid didn't know was that several of Garza's promoters lost a lot of money that night. Garza did too, as he had bet on himself. Garza knew something fishy had happened in those ten seconds of darkness, but because of the haze of combat drugs in his system, he couldn't figure out what. At least, not until an anonymous source came forward with some hi-res thermographic footage of that night.

Looking to cash in to the highest bidder, the source, a small-time mob hacker named Richard Bryson, sent a piece of the data Garza knowing that Garza and his people would be incensed—and possibly in the mood to pay big for something they could use to bury Sid.

Garza, who had missed his big chance, was now given a reason to go after the guy who he blames for his descent into the life of a broken, petty thug. He plans on contacting his old promoters, a gang called the Chemical Boyz, who lost big on his fall. He will then use the data to blackmail Sid.

Sid, on the other hand, wants to know where the data came from, so he hires a team to get to Bryson and acquire or destroy his copies of the data and get out without attracting too much attention. Hopefully they can get to him before he has a chance to make any more copies.

MISSION SYNOPSIS

The team is contacted by a frantic Sid, who hires them to secure some sensitive information on a short time table. Sid tells the runners that he's being blackmailed over a fight gone bad a couple of months back. He also tells them that threats have been made to release the data to people who would very much want him dead if they got their hands on the information. He has some money but not a lot of time, and he hires the team to go get the data before it is sold.

He knows who contacted him, a small street gang known as the Chemical Boyz who are known to affiliate themselves and pay tribute to The Raging Horde, but he knows this kind of information brokering isn't their style. Suspecting the gangers were hired to lean on him, he suggests the team start by paying a visit to the Chemical Boyz at a hangout that isn't too far away from The Vault, where Sid last did business with the team.

The Chemical Boyz' hangout is a biker bar and pool hall in the building that used to house The Hole. Several of the Boyz are present, including the group hired to put pressure on Sid. They aren't willing to part with the information about their employer, though, and they will have to be convinced, one way or another, to give it up.

Once the runners have found, one way or another, out the gang was working for, they find that the gang was hired by none other than Miguel Garza himself to put pressure on Sid. The runners find out that Garza hired the Boyz in order to put pressure on Sid to force him to pay up, or he would sell the data publicly, ruining Sid's reputation and putting him in the crosshairs of people who lost a lot of money.

Finding Garza is easy, as he is spending the rest of his night in a drug-induced haze in his garden-level apartment. He is now firmly addicted to kamikaze. Forcing the information out of a drug-addled and augmented boxer is another matter altogether. Once they deal with Garza, they find that Garza came into possession of the information from the one who recorded it, a small-time decker named Richard Bryson who is on retainer to former Mafia Don Leo McCaskill as a live-in security agent.

Some quick legwork can uncover the fact that McCaskill's residence is in an upscale gated community with round-the-clock security and high-end alarm systems. It's up to the runners to penetrate the security around the house, get into McCaskill's house to find Bryson, and get the information.

SCENE 1:

VEGAS STAKES

Scan This

The runners are contacted by a frantic Sid, who needs a job done right now. He's willing to pay a price for the short notice, but he hopes his new friends can do him a solid.

Tell It to Them Straight

The dull roar of the crowd at the bar dies down as the announcer for the urban brawl game comes on the trid. Tonight is the grudge match. The New York Slashers are coming to town to take on the Chicago Exterminators. Ever since the walls came down, there's been demand for urban brawl closer to old downtown. Last time the Exterminators took on the Slashers, it was two penalties for unsportsmanlike conduct and one for unnecessary destruction of property, when the second-string Blaster for the Exterminators decided it was a good idea to hose down a media van he thought two Slashers were hiding behind. New York took the game 6 – 5, and the bet you lost to Jerry, the night bartender down at Emmett's, is something he won't let you forget.

This time it's a real home-field advantage. The Slashers are deep into injured reserve, and the Exterminators are coming off a bye. It's going to be glorious. You can already taste the free Soyweiser as the trid starts blaring the aggressive theme music amidst the rising volume of cheers and excited talk.

You feel a quick jolt as your commlink buzzes in your pocket, and your heart sinks as you remember it's the work number. You ignore it for a couple of seconds, hoping whoever is calling you would end up contacting someone else. That's when it hits your AR, a text in all caps, "PICK UP IT'S IMPORTANT - SID."

With a sigh and a quick flick, the display pops into AR, showing a disheveled Sid, a dull sheen of sweat covering his red face. His normally smirking façade cracks with lines of worry.

"I'm glad you picked up. I need something done, and I need it done tonight," he blurts abruptly, "I'm going to patch in everyone else on a conference here."

You look up regretfully at the trid screen one more time as the bartender finally delivers you what was going to be the first of many cold ones.

Looks like you're missing the game after all.

Behind the Scenes

Being an underground fight promoter, Sid has had his share of shady dealings. This time, though, his fight fixing has landed him in trouble. After a fight went south

when one of the combatants tried to bet on himself against what was planned, Sid had to take measures to make sure the people who invested in his strategy didn't lose out (see **Adventure Background**).

Unfortunately for Sid, despite his best efforts, his actions were still caught on camera. Looking to make a cool payday on this, the whistleblower, Richard Bryson, sent out the information to Garza, looking to offer him the data. Garza took the opportunity and has hired a gang of thugs to put pressure on Sid to cough up some cash in exchange for the data. Sid has other plans, though, and as a low level Mr. Johnson, he decides on a pre-emptive strike to get a hold of the data, and teach a lesson to the guy making threats.

So far, Sid has been contacted by a member of the Chemical Boyz, who has threatened to release the information to Sid's enemies in the morning if he doesn't pay up. They have demanded 150,000 nuyen and provided the address of one of their hangouts where the money should be sent. What the Chemical Boyz didn't count on was Sid hiring a team to get the data back by force on short notice.

Sid thinks, and is likely right, that the gang will take his money and anything else he happened to bring with him, and will probably beat him to death if he shows anyway. He also knows that it is not the normal operation of this gang to do this sort of thing, so he suspects a third party behind it.

Once everyone is on the conference call, Sid takes a deep breath and explains the job to them. He wants the team to go to the location of the drop off, find out who hired the gang, get to the original culprit and get the data back.

> "I'm glad you all are here. I'm not sure what I would have done if you didn't pick up."
>
> Sid takes a moment to calm organize his thoughts then speaks up. "I have some folks who are trying to lean on me pretty hard. They say they have data on me regarding a fight I did a couple of months ago, and they are going to release it unless I pay up. The thing is, the guys putting the pressure on me are thugs, real Cro-Magnon types, if you get my meaning. No way they had the contacts to put this together this way. Shit, they probably don't care anyway and are just in it to make a buck. I need you to go up there and find out who hired them. Then I need you to get to that person and get the data from him. Rough him up a little if you want to. Make sure he doesn't ever want to screw with me again, see?"
>
> A grin crosses his face at this point, "I can pay you each ten large. I know its short notice, but I was hoping for a little help from my new friends."