IT'S JUST BIZ

By Steven "Bull" Ratkovich

In this biz, when you get a call for a job, you don't turn it down--especially when they say "rush job." That always means extra pay. I dropped a line to the rest of the gang to have them meet me at the Purple Pig, a place inside the CZ. I hate going in there; feels like my boys are gonna shrivel up from the radiation every time, but again, you don't turn down an opportunity for work. The bills gotta get paid even when there's no Mr. Johnson with a paycheck waiting for you.

I popped onto the Matrix for a quick zip through NooseNet to see what to expect from the Pig. Surprisingly, it appears to be a fairly upscale joint, despite being nestled close to both the glowpit in Cermak and the haunted hellhole of the Shattergraves. Frankly, any restaurant that survives in the CZ should get a gold star. From what a couple old-timers tell me, back then, if you got a cockroach in the kitchen, the health inspectors wouldn't shut you down; some boys with Ares did it with flamethrowers and high explosives.

The checkpoints into the CZ are light, but that's no surprise. They never care about you going in—just coming out. I always stash a bit of cred aside as a "tip" for the Star so I can get through unmolested. It's annoying, but I don't begrudge them that. Again, you gotta make your 'yen where you can. The streets have been cleaned up quite a bit since the mayor started his little "Take Back the Night" campaign, or whatever he calls it, so that's a plus. The first time I ever had to come through the CZ, between potholes big enough to swallow a behemoth, a maze of rusted-out old cars, and barricades erected by the various street gangs, it would take you an hour to travel a single block. The potholes are still there, and occasionally someone sets up a roadblock to charge a toll, but it's not nearly as bad.

I arrive at the Pig and park my bike, setting the alarm system to setting number four, "lightly fried," and then head inside. The nice girl at the scanner asks for my weapons, and I hand them over. The outside doesn't look like much, but inside the place is clean and well maintained, and the weapons scanner seems to be of decent quality. It's a family joint and I'm not expecting much trouble anyway, so I hand over my Colt and my Cougar Fineblade. Then I step inside and look around.

Drek. I should have kept my weapons. Maybe brought something heavier.

At the bar I see a troll in a kilt that I recognize. Angus. He's a right bastard; we don't get along at all. Worked with him twice, regretted it both times. He's running with a new crew now, and it looks like they're crowded around the bar as well.

Seated around a couple tables to one side I spot a dwarf I recognize, Trashmouth, and the boys he runs with. Don't know him too well, don't have a beef with him, but the way he's eyeballing me makes me a little nervous. There are a couple other groups that I recognize, but don't really know offhand, seated at other booths and tables as well. I'm not loving the looks of this.

Then I see her. Platinum hair, curves to make a man murder for, and those lips ... Frag. Seriously? She's here too? Vixen, accompanied by her girls. Not a face I wanted to see. Well, I technically want to see it. I still see it in my dreams. But after what happened last time, well, let's just say the feeling is mutual. Neither of us is happy to see the other.

There's a lot of talent in the restaurant here, a lot of good talent. I head over to where Josh and Wrecker are sitting and plop down with a sigh. Competition. Competition means less money, and means that chances are we're not getting the job.

I hate this biz.

INTRODUCTION

SRM 05-06 Take A Chance 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 05-06 Take A Chance 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 05-06 Take A Chance 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 05-06 Take A Chance* (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.

Given 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 will fluctuate 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 p. 30, *Street Grimoire* for full 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 SYNOPSIS

Twenty years ago, Yamatetsu (later Evo) was a leading force in the exciting new field of genetic research and bioware, subject to many attempted shadowruns. Borrowing a page from the AA-rated Proteus Corporation, Yamatetsu moved many of its research facilities to stand-alone islands or, when able, underwater facilities. One of these, Yamatetsu Research Facility #42, *Ryugo-jo*, was present in Lake Michigan off the coast of Chicago when Bug City fell. While never directly affected by the inspect spirit incursion, the detonation of a nuclear device and following lockdown of the city were enough to disrupt the project.

As part of the ongoing Project: Takeback, where corporations snatch up land and resources in the former quarantine zone, Evo has discovered records that indicate the facility exists and is sending a small team to investigate it for any possible use it might have. Unfortunately for them, a mole in their organization got this data before it was passed along, and sold it to several corporations including Renraku and Saeder-Krupp. With a window of opportunity quickly closing, Sarah Silverleaf, a local Ms. Johnson representing Renraku's interests in Chicago, has decided to beat Evo to the punch and hire her own team of shadowrunners to swoop in and gather whatever data they can.

The adventure begins with the team being called in for a meeting with Sarah, where they discover they're not the only team being interviewed for the job. Simon Andrews, the lizard-like changeling working for Saeder-Krupp, is also interested and asks the team to sell him information as well.

Once brought in to meet with Sarah Silverleaf, the team gets a rough outline of what would be required and is given a stiff interview where their reactions are measured. Once finished, they are dismissed, and a few moments later are told that they have been chosen for the task at hand. When the other teams pack up and leave, the player characters are brought back in for a second, more detailed data dump of the task at hand. Here, they are given full information about the mission and introduced to Goober, a dwarf smuggler who will be offered to the team for a cut of the payout. The runners then have twenty-four hours to complete the job.

Now armed with the knowledge of an underwater mission, the runners will be given a chance for shopping as well as possibly acquiring their own boat or captain if they decide they can find help cheaper than Goober. Options are somewhat limited due to the hour, location, time allotted, and special needs, but they should find themselves quickly in possession of basic gear beyond normal shadowrunning needs. Once this is done, they assemble at the docks and launch the mission.

Once the team arrives at Facility #42, they find it damaged and teetering, clearly no longer operational, and investigate. The primary lab area is a shambles with little information, while further exploration reveals little until a stowaway named Otoko is found. This is somewhat odd as he shouldn't be alive, which leads to many questions and, eventually, the conclusion that the second facility is less destroyed than it seems and, moreover, contains one of the original scientists.

The player characters need to find a way to reach the second facility, where they will be quickly accosted by the merrow who have claimed it for themselves. If negotiations go well, the runners will find themselves taken to the merrow's chief and introduced to Dr. Urashima, the project lead from Facility #42 who stayed behind when it was abandoned. Convinced to give up his data, he passes it along to the player characters with a gentle request that they tell no one of the merrow colony that has taken him in.

Upon their release by the merrow, the team finds themselves beset by Saeder-Krupp agents and have to choose between fight or flight, after which they will decide to whom the data goes, if anyone at all, and return to shore, wet and exhausted but alive. Just another night in the life of a shadowrunner, chummer.

SCENE 1:

PACING AT THE PURPLE PIG

Scan This

The runners get a call from Sid Gambetti that Sarah Silverleaf has a job on a tight schedule. He needs a team on short notice and tells the team that if they're interested in a job they need to be at the Purple Pig in a few hours. The runners aren't the only ones up for the job though; he's heard that Sarah is interviewing several other teams, so they should be on their best behavior and not do anything stupid.

Tell It to Them Straight

Is it so much to ask for a night off? A few Aztex-Mex Meltdown Soydawgs, some Fizzygoo HiProof beer, and maybe watch the Chicago Sensations lose to the Cleveland Chaos in the latest urban brawl match (because let's face it, the Sensations would probably lose to a random team of squatters and street kids this season). That's the life. But nope, no night off for you. Your commlink buzzes; a local fixer named Sid Gambetti is on the other end.

"Heya chummer, got a hot one for ya! Sarah Silverleaf is looking for a team to pull a job of some kind," he says into the phone. He must be working his day job as an underground fight promoter, because you can hear a crowd yelling in the distant background. "Schedule on this one's a little tight, and you won't be the only ones up for the job. If you're interested, head to the address I'm sending along to you sometime within the next four hours. And try to be on your best behavior. I talked you guys up to her pretty big."

When the runners reach the Purple Pig:

Surprisingly, the Purple Pig weathered the years of quarantine and feral nature of Chicago with dignity, if damage. A rare bastion of civility in the middle of all the chaos, the Pig managed to emerge mostly intact, with stories to tell about her new scars. As life returns to the city, she's easy to overlook, no match for shiny new restaurants and their trendy diners, but that suits her just fine. Those who attend are loyal, serving almost as an extended family. In this cozy atmosphere, shadowrunners have always been welcome, as long as they keep their manners.

The Purple Pig, whose colorful, old-fashioned wooden sign swings over the door, welcomes you with the smell of real meat; you can't help but wonder how painful the prices are going to be. An attendant at the small coatroom by the door asks for your weapons, giving you a ticket for their return as they're stored safely for later, and you're directed inside. While the Pig has grown over the years, absorbing neighbors during the feral times, it's still a cozy environment consisting of dim lights and tables far too tightly packed for trolls to really get comfortable. Sid has reserved a booth for you, to which you are quickly shown, and he pings your commlink as you sit. "Sarah Silverleaf's busy with another team, so it'll be a bit until she sends for you. You should probably snag an appetizer but stay on your toes. I know you lot are professional, but I can't vouch for the others."

Looking around the room from your table, you can see quite a number of semi-familiar faces. Looks like there's at least four or five other teams interviewing for this job as well, and the tension in the Pig is thick as everyone stares warily at their rival teams.

Behind the Scenes

The Purple Pig has a Rating 5 weapons detector in the entrance; anyone trying to smuggle weapons into the restaurant will be turned away. This includes blades and explosives.

> # THE PURPLE PIG
>
> ## 500 N MICHIGAN AVENUE
>
> Ultimately a mid-range eatery with an excellent wine list, the Pig is the sort of place a middle-class couple might go for a special anniversary or a company's vice-president might stop in for lunch. Lower-class patrons are generally frowned upon, but the owner has an understanding with many fixers, making it a surprisingly handy place for shadowrun meets. One of the three private rooms is usually reserved by some Johnson or another on a monthly basis. While those with a middle-class lifestyle or higher can absorb the cost of the meal, those of lower income have to go above and beyond their usual budget. Appetizers start at thirty nuyen while meals start at sixty, but both can go much higher. Real pork is served in a wide variety of styles, starting at seventy-five nuyen a plate. The wine and cheese list is far more extensive than you'd expect, a feature that entices many corporate suits to entertain clients here.
>
> ● I took my wife there for dinner a couple times before the bugs hit for a semi-fancy, but still affordable, night on the town. Considering how close the place is to both the Shattergraves and the Cermak blast, I'm frankly shocked it's not only still open, but also apparently thriving.
> ● Bull