

GROWING MUSHROOMS

The air in the auditor's office was cold on the face of the two embarrassed scientists who had been 'invited' to pay a visit. The office was only for visiting auditors, and most of the time was used to store agricultural samples. The smell of wheat and grain seeped from sacks of seed stock stacked against the wall. A trid, fluorescent tube and the auditor's cigarette were the only sources of light; serving more to emphasize the darkness than to show anything. It didn't matter. They knew what the auditor looked like; sitting behind the metal workbench that served as a desk, staring at them.

"I was here one week ago. One week. What was the promise that you made to me?" A dim projection sprang to life on the bench surface. Two motionless scientists stood proudly on the desk—the same two scientists that now sat wide-eyed in the musty dimness.

Twenty agonizing minutes later, the door opened and they escaped into the hallway.

While the two terrified scientists were retreating, a call was being placed from the auditor's office. The trid display now showed a faceless manager in a charcoal suit with a thousand-nuyen haircut.

"Barry, my Australian colleague," he said.

"What do you want, Teller? I've got things to do."

"Yes, now you have things to do, now that you have made a name for yourself in our 'expendable asset management' division. I remember talking to you three years ago. You seemed to have a lot of time for me then, didn't you? When you had almost a hundred kilos of organic matter that needed recycling."

"I always pay my debts." A plastic smile grudgingly wedged itself onto the face of the suit. "And I always remember my friends. How can I help you, mate?" The jocular phrase sounded like it was being intoned at a funeral.

"Well, let me tell you that I no longer want to be an auditor in the agricultural services, and I am looking for a career advancement."

The suit let the silence grow until the auditor couldn't stand it anymore.

"I have an opportunity I wish to refer to your department," he said.

"You want your manager assassinated?"

"No, she's not important. I have much bigger ambitions. I want you to sabotage a competitor—a competitor to our business, not a personal one. It's for the common good."

The suit didn't move, but the projection seemed to emanate skepticism.

"No, really, it will help us out, and I see an opportunity that I can wedge open if I know about it ahead of time."

"Fine. I don't need to know why you want it to happen. I do need to know *what* you want to happen, and *when* you want it to occur. If you say it's for the benefit of the company, you'll be able to put together a simple business case that I will be able to get approved for you.

"Here is what's going to happen. You are going to write down, in words that deranged lunatics can't misinterpret, what you need to have happen. You are going to supplement this with a dossier of background information that ex-ganger drugged-out freaks can use to put together a plan. Additionally, you are going to make 80,000 nuyen available from somebody's departmental budget to pay for this. I'll use some of that money for bribes to pay the shadowrunners, and some of it to blur the trail so that nobody can trace the money.

I expect to have a data chip with this information couriered to me no later than 10 hours before you want the mission to begin."

The auditor took a moment to take a drag from a cigarette and smiled, teeth glinting in the darkness.

"It will be on your desk in an hour," he said. "I'm impressed. By my calculations, you aren't even skimming off the top."

The trid went dark.

A few moments went by with the room lit only by the burning end of a cigarette. Eventually, the auditor opened the door to the hallway and started after the two lab coats, now huddled at the far end of the hallway next to a hot soup vending machine.

"My friends," the auditor said with a snake's smile on his face, "I have an idea that could get us all out of trouble. How much of your budget do you have left?"

COVER

GROWING MUSHROOMS

INTRODUCTION

MISSION SYNOPSIS

SCENE 1

SCENE 2

SCENE 3

SCENE 4

SCENE 5

PICKING UP THE PIECES

LEGWORK

CAST OF SHADOWS

PLAYER HANDOUTS

DEBRIEFING LOG



INTRODUCTION

SRM 06-02: Amber Waves of Grain is a *Shadowrun Missions* living campaign adventure. Full information on the *Shadowrun Missions* living campaign is available at <http://www.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 06-02: Amber Waves of Grain 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 06-02: Amber Waves of Grain 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, gam-

emasters 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 play 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 06-02: Amber Waves of Grain* (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 abilities 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.

COVER

GROWING MUSHROOMS

INTRODUCTION

MISSION SYNOPSIS

SCENE 1

SCENE 2

SCENE 3

SCENE 4

SCENE 5

PICKING UP THE PIECES

LEGWORK

CAST OF SHADOWS

PLAYER HANDOUTS

DEBRIEFING LOG



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 not generally 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 overwhelm 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, 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 compose 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, and 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 steam-rolling 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 encouraged to use this Edge when logical.

When 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

COVER

GROWING MUSHROOMS

INTRODUCTION

MISSION SYNOPSIS

SCENE 1

SCENE 2

SCENE 3

SCENE 4

SCENE 5

PICKING UP THE PIECES

LEGWORK

CAST OF SHADOWS

PLAYER HANDOUTS

DEBRIEFING LOG



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 30 kilometers north to Belmont Avenue, and reaches from the Lake Michigan to an average of 15 kilometers—generally to Harlem Avenue—to 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 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 the 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.

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

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.

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 <http://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 campaign.

COVER

GROWING MUSHROOMS

INTRODUCTION

MISSION SYNOPSIS

SCENE 1

SCENE 2

SCENE 3

SCENE 4

SCENE 5

PICKING UP THE PIECES

LEGWORK

CAST OF SHADOWS

PLAYER HANDOUTS

DEBRIEFING LOG





MISSION SYNOPSIS

Sid Gambetti hires the runners to break into a massive farming operation south of Chicago (UCAS Farmers Co-op, an Ares Corporation) that handles massive (and largely automated) wheat, corn, and soybean crops as well as beef, chicken, and pork farming. Sid, operating for an unknown third party, hires them to introduce a nasty, highly concentrated herbicide into the farm's main water supply, which damages or kills the crops and hurts Ares' produce division badly. When the runners accept, another Johnson, Martin Tate, contacts the runners for a bonus side-job, which involves planting evidence.

The runners' first task is to retrieve the herbicide. It is in a run-down cargo terminal in the CZ, which is home to a bunch of homeless and societal outcasts with whom the runners bargain, evade, or eliminate in order to collect the old tank.

The runners then get the tank through a Lone Star checkpoint and out into the countryside. Once there, the runners must break into a large automated farm and ensure the toxin gets into the water supply leading to a bunch of plants. The runners also have the opportunity to ensure the animals on the farm are not killed.

After successfully killing the plants, the runners get back to town and collect their pay from Sid.

Scene 1: PANCAKES

SCAN THIS

Sid Gambetti (see **Cast of Shadows**) contacts the runners for a job. The meet takes place at a diner; Sid asks the runners to steal some chemicals and dump them into a water tank. A rival also contacts the runners for his own purposes.

TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

"Your commlink buzzes right in the middle of your lunch. You see: "Incoming Message: Sid Gambetti—I hear you need a job to keep the cash flowing. Well buddy, I got something on the books today that needs a steady hand and closed mouth, and I thought I could help you out with this sweet run. If you're interested, I'll be at the Flapjack Palace at 4 p.m." The message ends with the address of a diner—looks like you have a few hours to get to Fullerton, Illinois.

COVER

GROWING MUSHROOMS

INTRODUCTION

MISSION SYNOPSIS

SCENE 1

SCENE 2

SCENE 3

SCENE 4

SCENE 5

PICKING UP THE PIECES

LEGWORK

CAST OF SHADOWS

PLAYER HANDOUTS

DEBRIEFING LOG



FLAPJACK PALACE

CORNER OF FULLERTON PARKWAY AND HALSTED ST, FULLERTON

A place where middle-class office workers, construction workers, and truck drivers mix while eating breakfast, the Flapjack Palace is an all-day breakfast bar that serves good food at a reasonable price, and even has an area set aside for children to play in.

The menu consists of a range of soy and krill breakfast products, which taste good and are fairly healthy. Flapjacks, waffles, crêpes, bacon and eggs, various syrups and condiments, and other food products are all well-shaped and flavored by the wait staff. A basic breakfast will set you back about 5 nuyen, and the “Workman’s Breakfast,” which contains enough calories to sustain a human for a day and a half, costs 30 nuyen and is served on a 1-meter platter.

Open from 4 a.m. to 10 p.m., the Palace always has a few shift workers eating inside, and becomes properly packed during the lunch rush and around 6 p.m., when many of the construction crews start coming home from a hard day working in the CZ.

Rated 4.1 stars in the Chicago Family Restaurant Guide.

- Not what most people think of as a place for meeting fixers or shadowrunners, it is fairly noisy and quite public, which makes it a surprisingly good place to talk biz.
- Sticks

BEHIND THE SCENES

The Flapjack Palace is a family restaurant in Fullerton: a small, single-story building that feeds construction workers employed to repair the nearby CZ. The place is busy at lunchtime, but is almost empty for several hours between the lunch rush and about 6 p.m., when workers start to wander in. Sid is at the back of the diner when he makes the call, and isn’t planning on moving until after the meet. Anyone spying on the building, through the Matrix or stealth, sees that Sid has a big stack of flapjacks he is picking his way through. Sid has commandeered the large-screen trid and is flipping between boxing matches. Other than sending dirty looks his way, the waitresses ignore him and stay near the front of the restaurant.

ONCE THE RUNNERS ARRIVE, READ THE FOLLOWING:

When you arrive, the waitresses welcome you with, “Welcome to Flapjack Palace, home of the Six-Pound Flapjack. May I take your order?” You see Sid waving you to come to the back for a little privacy. The waitresses give you a dark look as you head to the back, and you feel like you need a bath. When you get to the table, Sid directs you to several chairs and pushes a stack of pancakes towards you. He is watching a boxing match on a large trid unit; whenever someone on the screen hits the deck, his forced, guttural laughter sends bits of pancake and beer across the table.

As soon as the last chair is filled, Sid turns the trid off and focuses on you. “Thank you for coming,” he says, smiling a greasy smile as he slicks back his ponytail. “As I mentioned in the message, I got a real nice job lined up for people with your skills.” He makes eye contact with each of the runners as he continues: “Are you up for some property damage? I got a client who wants some stuff destroyed in a special way, and they will pay for it in cold hard credsticks. It ain’t network, but the customer don’t care if people die or get hurt—it’s just not what they are slapping the money on the bar for. You guys interested? Have you guys even met before? Hey, I gotta make a leak. Why don’t you talk it over; I’ll be back in a mo.” He is sitting against the wall, so he has to get a couple of runners to move to let him out. As soon as he steps away from the table, his professional attitude slips away as he swaggers through the restaurant, staring at the cleavage of the serving girls on his way.

This is an opportunity for the runners to introduce themselves and discuss whether they are up for the job.

When he gets back to the table, Sid scooches back to his seat and looks at everyone. “You’re all still here. Does that mean you’re interested?”

At this point the runners are likely to pump Sid for details. “I can’t say too much till you say yes, but I can maybe give some hints, yeah?”

- The run involves killing some plants.
- It’s gotta be done by 8 p.m. tomorrow night.
- It’s gotta be done in a special way, not just by dropping grenades.
- There is some travel involved, but nothing too far away. The runners will need a van or something, though.
- “Look, do you want the job or not? Say yes and I’ll tell you all I know.”
- Sid just points to the door if any runner(s) decline and says, “Hey, it’s your loss”.
- We can talk money if you’d like; the sponsor is offering 8,000 nuyen each.

COVER

GROWING
MUSHROOMS

INTRODUCTION

MISSION
SYNOPSIS

SCENE 1

SCENE 2

SCENE 3

SCENE 4

SCENE 5

PICKING UP
THE PIECES

LEGWORK

CAST OF
SHADOWS

PLAYER
HANDOUTS

DEBRIEFING LOG

Sample file

