

# ANOTHER DAY AT THE OFFICE

Staci's first thought when she spotted the reinforcements sneaking around to the rear of the building was: *These guys are better than the last batch that tried to get into the Spire.*

"Sierra Tango Four, what's your status?"

A long burst of automatic fire follows the voice in her earbud like an exclamation point. Dingo grunts as a few of the bullets thud into his armor, while Katy-Kat and Brutus dive for cover.

"Base, this is Sierra Tango Four. We've got a second force knocking on the back door out here. I make it one-eight hostiles."

"Copy that. One-eight hostiles. We'll send you back-up when we can, but it looks like we've got three different gangs knocking on the front door. Give us a tick to clear them out, and we'll come join you for dessert."

Dingo slumps down next to Staci and pulls Clarabelle around from where the sawed-off Defiance was slung under his jacket. "I don't think we got gangers on this

side, boss lady. I count two mages."

"On it, Mom." Katy puts her hand on the small of Brutus's back, following the ork around to get a different angle on the enemy forces. Dingo just looks at Staci while popping the clip out of his shotgun and slamming in one with a red stripe on the end of it. She nods once to the scarred elf.

"Base, be advised. We are facing legitimate forces out here, including two Awakened assets."

"Shit. How long can you hold out, Staci?"

Electricity crackles from the alcove where Katy and Brutus are taking cover. At the same time, the buzz-saw sound of a battling alley cat erupts from behind the attackers' lines; Katy must have sicced her cat spirit on one of the mages Dingo spotted.

Staci runs her fingers over the faded letters on the bracelet she's been wearing for over half her life.

"Don't take too long, Jay. We're a little outnumbered back here."

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## INTRODUCTION

SRM 06-04 *Tick-Tock* is a *Shadowrun Missions* living campaign adventure. Full information on the *Shadowrun Missions* living campaign is available at [shadowruntabletop.com/Missions](http://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

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## ADVENTURE STRUCTURE

SRM 06-04 *Tick-Tock* 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 06-04 *Tick-Tock* (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

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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 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 be comprised of 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.

## 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 time that they are active and exposed to the flux or void.

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

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Professional Rating will give them a larger group Edge pool to draw from, and gamemasters are encouraged 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 holds less than 1/3 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 115<sup>th</sup> Street to the south and runs nearly 30 km North way to Belmont Avenue to the north, and reaches from the Lake Michigan an average of fifteen kilometers 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 fluxuate 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; note that 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.

### 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 <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.

## MISSION SYNOPSIS

Melissa Truman was sixteen when Bug City hit, and went missing the day her parents were evacuated. While there were rumors she was alive during Bug City, possibly affiliated with one of the warlords, she's been missing and presumed dead ever since. Now, her old PANICBUTTON! bracelet has just gone off. All the corporate players are interested, and Dr. Martin Tate, on behalf of Truman Technologies, hires the runners to track

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down the signal and find out what's up. The runners may or may not contact any of the other corporate Johnsons floating around Chicago, but if they do, every Johnson would love nothing more than to make a deal with them.

The signal is degrading rapidly, but the location where it was first activated was the site of the old Truman Tower. When the runners arrive, they come across the aftermath of a battle. There is one survivor, a lovely dark-haired woman who gives her name as Staci, who wants to find out where the bracelet is even more than the runners do. Staci agrees to help the team find Melissa Truman if they help her rescue the teenage girl who's currently wearing the bracelet.

Staci leads the team to Grant Park, where she claims the girl is known among the people of the Haymarket Nation. There the runners are able to pick up a bit more information about the area and their guide. They can also pick up the trail of the bracelet again, as it's much closer.

Tracking the signal, or pumping the locals for information, leads the runners to the Shattergraves just as the signal dies. There they find Katherine beset by a NeoNET corporate team. When they rescue her, Staci reveals she is the missing Truman heiress, and Katherine is her daughter. The runners then have to decide just what they want to do with the information.

### Scene 1:

## CLOSING WALLS & TICKING CLOCKS

### SCAN THIS

Dr. Tate hires the runners to locate the fading signal of Melissa Truman's old PANICBUTTON! bracelet in order to rescue his employer's long-lost daughter. He gives them some background information and the general location where the bracelet first went live. He also mentions that other, less altruistic parties have been interested in her whereabouts for the last twenty years.

### TELL IT TO THEM STRAIGHT

It's a regular Tuesday. You crawl out of bed late, suck down some crappy soykaf, and contemplate eating something for breakfast. Or lunch, though the difference would really depend on how long it takes you to decide. About then is when your commlink buzzes, interrupting your train of thought, if not your stomach.

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Ah, well ... if you're lucky, it's biz, and maybe a Johnson who will spring for breakfast. Or lunch.

When you answer the call, a dark-skinned human looks out from the other end of the connection. "Good morning," he says in a brisk, cultured voice. "I am Dr. Tate, and I have a task I would very much like you to do for me. Time is a bit of the essence. Would you be willing to meet me at Park Woods in under an hour?"

### WHEN THE RUNNERS ARRIVE AT THE MEET:

Dr. Tate rises from his seat when you file into the private dining room. Chairs, obviously intended for all of you, are set around the table in front of him. It resembles a well-stocked buffet. Dinner plates, each with a set of flatware wrapped in a cloth napkin, are placed decorously at every setting. Perfect.

"Thank you for coming on such short notice. I've taken the liberty of ordering brunch already, so that the niceties can still be observed without costing any additional time. Feel free to partake while we talk business. Specifically, I wish to engage your services to locate a missing person, whom we believe may be in peril as we speak."

### JACKPOINT SEARCH PROFILE

## PARK WOODS TAVERN

*West 127th and Bishop Street*

Park Woods is a mid-range restaurant on West 127th Street, on the southern edge of the core. It's more bar than restaurant, but the food is good and the staff leaves anyone alone who makes an effort to conceal their weapons, whether the effort is successful or not. Recently remodeled in the wave of gentrification around the core, the place now sports a mid-twentieth century retro look. Now, if there's a fly in your soup, it's only the garden variety house fly... and they won't even charge you extra for it!

—Excerpt from *Gwinny's Guide to Gustatory Gratification* (Chicago Edition)

## BEHIND THE SCENES

The hostess inside the front door of the Park Woods Tavern stops anyone openly carrying and asks them to either remove or check the weapon.

Dr. Tate (see **Cast of Shadows**) offers 5,000 nuyen each. Any net hits on an opposed Negotiation test adds

a 5,000 nuyen bonus for the safe return of the person in question. Any net hits also increase the pay and the bonus by 250 nuyen, to a maximum of 4. He does not answer questions regarding the individual, not even their gender, until the runners agree to the job. He admits they will most likely be operating in the Containment Zone, though he cannot give them an exact location, and the timeframe for the job is "As soon as possible."

After the runners accept the job, Dr. Tate explains that the individual they are tracking down is Melissa Truman (see **Cast of Shadows**), the daughter of Truman Technologies' CEO. He can only tell them about her from before her disappearance, but he knows everything listed in her description from that timeframe. He provides the runners with several images of a sixteen-year-old Melissa from her modeling days. If asked about previous efforts to find her, he details how forces unknown blocked magical search attempts and the Containment Zone's erection hampered physical search attempts. All efforts were obviously unsuccessful. New attempts by the runners using the pictures from Tate can be attempted, but they are not successful because the picture does not match what Melissa looks like twenty years after it was taken.

Tate informs the runners that Melissa's PANICBUTTON bracelet was engaged less than two hours ago, but the signal is degrading rapidly. That is why there is such a hurry now to locate her; if the rate of degradation stays the same, the signal will disappear completely within four more hours and she will once again be lost. When it came live, the signal originated from the old Truman Tower, on the northern edge of the core. It then moved north, where the distance and signal degradation caused it to be lost almost immediately.

Tate is obviously troubled and lets it slip, at some point during the discussions, that other parties would be extremely interested in recovering Melissa themselves. He won't name names, even if pressed, but points out that his employers have the moral high ground for wanting to find Melissa, due to the relationship between her and the corporation.

Tate acknowledges they may not find Melissa alive, but only if the runners ask first. In that case, he reluctantly admits that, while he expects the runners to do everything in their power to ensure Melissa's safe return, the family should still be able to provide some compensation if the runners return with her bracelet and the story of where she has been all these years.

When the meeting is concluded, Tate hands the team a small unit calibrated to the signal from the PANICBUTTON! It is a Device Rating 3 scanner that gets a +1 modifier to any Matrix Search tests to locate the PANICBUTTON!

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