A LIFE TAKEN

Samantha's head made an echoing thud as it hit the top of the altar at the Basilica of St. Hyacinth. Remo could feel the impact inside Samantha's mind, even though he couldn't feel her presence there. Her fight with the hit team had gone wrong. Very wrong. Remo reached out to the Matrix and found only a gun camera pointed into darkness, as if the gun were holstered and concealed.

A bishop, in full vestments and mitre, took a step back from Samantha's body and gestured as if to present her as an offering. "Master, we offer this vessel for inhabitation. It will serve you well as an instrument of death." The bishop spread a dark, greasy ointment around the edges of the altar and finally across Samantha's forehead as tendrils of unnatural darkness surrounded her from below. The tendrils wrapped around Samantha's body and then shot into her nose and mouth toward her brain. As the tendrils vanished into her, a cold wind howled through the sanctuary.

Remo reached back into the gun camera's memory as another person might flip through a paper file. He found what he hated to see: an hour ago, this gun had shot Samantha in the back. Remo screamed as if no one could hear him.

But the abyss answered back. "This vessel is ours now. We will use it to bring death to this world."

Remo screamed at the voice. "She is not an 'it'! You will pay for what you have done to her!"

The voice laughed from the abyss, and Remo felt himself ejected from Samantha's mind. The resonance link between Samantha and himself was severed.

Samantha stood upon the altar, now a silent guardian of the corruption that had taken the church.

Remo reached out for something, anything, in the noise of the Matrix within the Chicago Containment Zone. He found a dead guy's PAN, grabbed on, and sliced through the firewall. Inside, he found cameras for a smartgun and a pair of cybereyes. Through the cybereyes he saw a body without a head and in the corner of the smartgun camera he saw a head without a body. This was the last guy Samantha had carved up.

He also found some files in the commlink and began to do what data sprites do best: process and search for more data. Within minutes, Remo had reassembled the man's life. According to his SIN, this was Victor Bilson, a "corporate security liaison" for a company called Hephaestus Technologies. *So Shiawase took Sam again*, Remo thought. *But what's been done to Sam is not normal corporate behavior.*

Victor Bilson had access to a slush fund, no doubt to finance certain deniable assets. "What an interesting idea, Mr. Bilson," Remo whispered into the Matrix. "I believe I shall have to assimilate it into my own code." He transferred a small amount of money to Bilson's personal account for later retrieval. He uploaded a portion to a fake SIN he'd helped create a few months ago. The SIN wouldn't hold up long under scrutiny, but Remo hoped it would hold long enough. The rest he transferred to the account of the man he knew would care too much about what had happened to Samantha because he had cared before: Nick Ryder.

INTRODUCTION

SRM 06-06 Falling Angels is a *Shadowrun Missions* living campaign adventure. Full information on the *Shadowrun Missions* living campaign is available at shadowrunt-abletop.com/Missions and includes a guide to creating Missions characters, what characters are eligible for Prime Runner status, 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 06-06 Falling Angels 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 06-06 Falling Angels 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 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 06-06 Falling Angels* (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.

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.

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.

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.

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

Since Prime Missions are designed for a higher tier of player power, the usual *Shadowrun Missions* rules about looting should be relaxed some. High-priced and powerful weapons and gear should not be left lying around for players to just pick up, but if a player is creative and resourceful, there's no reason he shouldn't be able to obtain a nice cyberdeck, a sweet new ride, or that shiny weapon focus the enemy mage was using to slice him up.

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 mission, 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. Further, because of the heavy downpour and threat of storm, increase the Noise level to 3 whenever the runners are outdoors.

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 GM, 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 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

About a year ago, a shadowrunner team discovered clone tanks in the basement of Janus Industries, a long-forgotten, Shiawase-owned research facility in the CZ. Shiawase owned it through a company called Hephaestus Technologies. One of the twelve tanks was empty, but the other eleven held clones of Samantha, a genetically-augmented technomancer who had been kidnapped as a child two decades before. The runners gave the facility's ownership information to Simon Andrews (see *SRM 5A-01 Chasin' the Wind*), so Saeder-Krupp took over facility ownership shortly after, but the runners tracked down the escaped Samantha and turned her over to Nick Ryder. Detective Ryder managed to get her out of the CZ for a while, but Samantha never found her family, so she came back

to the CZ to look for her old family home. Last night, during this search, a Shiawase hit team ambushed her with the intent to recapture her. Since the fight went down on Ancients' turf, the Ancients ambushed Sam and the Shiawase team. In the chaos, both Sam and the team members were killed.

Several weeks ago, an Ancients gang (see *SRM 06-01 10-57*) took Tasha (a young technomancer with the Desolation Angels; see *SRM 5A-02 Critic's Choice*). This same Ancients group stumbled across the Shiawase team's ambush of Samantha. One of the Ancients assensed well enough to discover Samantha was a technomancer as well as heavily augmented, so he called for backup. The reinforced gang interrupted the fight, killed all the combatants, and carried off Samantha's body. They carried Samantha to St. Hyacinth, where Marcus Stanton, a master shedim-possessed toxic shaman, caused her to be similarly possessed. He had hoped to assimilate a techomancer's abilities, as he had hoped to do with the Altar Boy's attempt with Tasha (a Desolation Angels member and "sister" to Becky 99) in *SRM 06-03 Ancient Rumblings*, but both attempts failed and both technomancers' resonance connections were severed through their shedim possessions.

The runners get a call from Nick Ryder's commcode, but when they pick up the call, Remo (Samantha's free sprite, from *SRM 5A-01 Chasin' the Wind*) is on the line; he hacked Ryder's commlink to find some help. Remo tells the runners that something bad happened to Samantha in the CZ. Something took control of her (he conjectures it's something like what humans call "being possessed," and the possession severed her link to the resonance). Remo wants the runners to free Samantha by whatever means are necessary. In order to find her, the runners can track the frequency of an implanted commlink belonging to Victor Bilson, a "corporate security liaison" ("Mr. Johnson") for a company called Hephaestus Technologies, which is a Shiawase subsidiary. Bilson died within the last 12 hours, but he had a small slush fund (for Johnson activities) to which Remo now has access, so he offers payment. Remo's initial lead is to track down Bilson's commlink and he provides the last known coordinates.

The runners arrive to find an Ancients gang and a second Hephaestus team fighting over the first team's remains, as well as Bilson's body. If the runners show some restraint and good timing, they capture and interrogate one or more members from each side. If not, they do some legwork to find out who's running the local Ancients gang ("the Bishop" and his lieutenant, "Altar Boy") and why a corp sent two teams into the CZ (to hunt down Samantha). They also find out where the Bishop lives.

The runners have opportunities to investigate the Bishop's (Marcus Stanton's) apartment. Here they gain some clues about the Bishop's true nature, at least that

he was a toxic shaman in life, and possibly that he is a master shedim in death (after the run-in with Altar Boy in *SRM 06-03 Ancient Rumblings*, this should scare the hell out of them). All signs point to a new hideout for the Ancients, the former Basilica of St. Hyacinth. At this point, let the runners call in a little backup from Becky; it'll add to the gang war vibe, and the runners may need the help to take down a toxic shaman leader, shedim-possessed Ancients, a mystic adept, and a heavily-augmented street samurai, all possessed. This is the finale of the *SRM 06* arc, and we see unfortunate ends for characters from the beginning of Season 5, so pump up the carnage.

Scene 1:

10-57 Redux

Scan This

In this scene, Remo contacts the runners and wants them to free Samantha from her possession.

Tell It to Them Straight

It's raining in the city by the lake. A hard rain. There's no lightning—yet—but thunder rolls almost continuously. Your ringing commlink jolts you out of your reverie. The caller ID says "Nick Ryder."

"Hello. This is not Nick Ryder." The voice over the commlink pauses between each word, as if Ryder were auditioning for a Shakespearean play. "My name is ... " In mid-sentence the voice switches from Detective Ryder to something more obviously artificial. " ... Remo. I have a job for you."

Remo's speech assumes a normal talking pace as he gives up using Ryder's recorded words. "Something is wrong with my friend, Samantha, and I have need of your special skills to correct her problem. Last night, she was ambushed by a team, and a second team stepped in to take down all of us. My resonance link with Samantha was severed shortly after that, when her mind was hacked." He pauses, as if searching for something. "No, not quite hacked, but what people call 'being possessed.' I need you to remove the hacker from her mind and save her if possible. In the short time since her hacking, I have done some research. I understand it may not be possible to save her, but she is dangerous and needs to be stopped before she does something terrible against her will."

Read this when the runners begin to talk money:

"I know you will require compensation for this tasking and I believe I have acquired an ap-

propriate funding source. One of the first ambush team members was named Victor Bilson, he was employed by Hephaestus Technologies as a corporate security liaison, and he had access to a fund for deniable assets. I decided I would incorporate that portion of his code into my own and employ some assets to do what I cannot. I can compensate your team for the amount of eight thousand nuyen per member."

Read this if the runners attempt to negotiate for higher payment:

"You may understand that I am inexperienced in human negotiations. However, if you find the corpse of Victor Bilson quickly enough, you should find that there is another two thousand nuyen per member of your team in his funds. I left it there so that undue suspicion would not fall upon my activities too soon, but you may assimilate those funds as you see fit."

Read this when the runners agree to the run:

"Excellent. My remaining information is the identity of Victor Bilson and the last known co-ordinates of his corpse." Remo sends you a data packet containing Bilson's picture and coordinates corresponding to the corner of N. Hamlin Ave. and W. Diversey Ave. "I will check back occasionally or, if you prefer, I will stay resident on your network during this tasking."

Behind the Scenes

The runners get the call from Nick Ryder's commcode, but when they pick up the call, Remo (Samantha's free sprite, from *SRM 5A-01 Chasin' the Wind*) is on the line; he hacked Ryder's commlink to find some help. Remo tells the runners something bad happened to Samantha in the CZ. Something took control of ("hacked") her and it severed her link to the resonance and Remo. Remo wants the runners to free Samantha by whatever means necessary. In order to find her, Remo gives the runners the frequency and last known location of an implanted commlink belonging to Victor Bilson, a "corporate security liaison" ("Mr. Johnson") for a company called Hephaestus Technologies, which is a Shiawase subsidiary. Bilson died within the last twelve hours, but he had a small slush fund for Johnson activities to which Remo now has access, so he can offer payment. Remo's ini-

tial lead is to track down Bilson's commlink and find out who the second team was and where they took Samantha (since Remo did not see her through Bilson's cyber-eyes). Remo also provides the runners with a picture of Samantha if they haven't met her already (in case they haven't played *SRM 5A-01 Chasin' the Wind*).

REMO

Remo has increased in power since the runners last encountered him in *SRM 5A-01 Chasin' the Wind*. When Samantha was a child, Remo was a Data Sprite. He is now equivalent to a Rating 7 Free Data Sprite with some extra abilities. He has been fiercely loyal to Samantha, but her recent possession severed their resonance connection. Before Remo fades back into the resonance, he has one last chance to serve the Samantha he once knew.

Rating	Attack	Sleaze	Data Proc.	Firewall	Res
7	6	7	11	8	7

Initiative: 12 + 4D6
Skills: Computer 7, Cybercombat 7, Electronic Warfare 7, Hacking 7, Negotiation 1 (Matrix +2), Software 7
Complex Forms: Cleaner, Editor, Puppeteer, Static Veil, Stitches
Powers: Camouflage, Watermark

WEATHER

During this mission, the CZ is covered in a severe thunderstorm. For most scenes, the rain counts as Moderate Rain (p. 175, *SR5*) and gives a –3 visibility modifier, reduced to –1 with thermographic vision or ultrasound (but ultrasound has a range of only 50 meters and is useless for driving). Note the visibility modifier also applies to any attack tests outdoors, unless the runner has some means of compensating. Most of the CZ (especially the parts the runners visit) still has lousy roadwork. Anyone piloting a vehicle should make a Vehicle Skill + Reaction [Handling] (2) Test to arrive at the destination without incident (see **Crashes**, p. 201, *SR5*); apply another –2 penalty if the vehicle is moving faster than its walking speed.

Under normal circumstances, a runner can get hold of a contact on a 2D6 roll that meets or exceeds the contact's Connection Rating (to reflect how busy the contact is: p. 387, *SR5*). Because of the storm, Chicago-based contacts are less likely to be out and about and more likely to be bored and looking for something to do; grant a +1 on the 2D6 roll for any Chicago-based contact. Once the runner connects with the contact, use the rules in the **Legwork** section, with a +2 to the Connection + Connection Test for a Chicago-based contact to determine if the contact has information. These bonuses have no bearing on the contact's Loyalty or anything based on Loyalty.

SCENE 1: 10-57 REDUX