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PREFACE

RULES ARE MEANT TO BE BROKEN

It was the summer of 1989 when I was first exposed to *Shadowrun* via a four-page preview pamphlet at my local game store. A few weeks later and I had purchased the First Edition rulebook and taken the first steps on the path to what would become the greatest RPG love affair of my life. Wait, elves *and* cybernetics? Megacorporations *and* dragons? You can't do that!

I spent the next nineteen years running a campaign, and for most of it we were playing weekly, every Monday night. There are living, breathing stories and characters that only exist within the minds of the few people that sat around that table, and any one of them will happily regale you with tales of the duplicitous machinations of a dwarf fixer named Redeye or the tragic end of Eddie Garrett, ex-Lone Star cop turned reluctant shadowrunner.

Shadowrun occupies a very special place in my heart. The walls and shelves of my home are covered in *Shadowrun* books and art, and indeed sometimes I have to remind myself of the countless people who have fallen in love with the *Shadowrun* world not through the classic tabletop role playing game, but instead through one of the many *Shadowrun* video games, or any of the more than fifty published novels.

But everything ends. My beloved campaign came to a satisfying conclusion in the fall of 2008, and while I have kept up with the game's new editions and releases, and flirted with some short story arcs, it hasn't returned to my table in any meaningful way for a while. I find that my tastes have changed over the years, and while I have lost no love for the *Shadowrun* world, these days I prefer

RPG game systems that are lighter on the rules and more focused on story and character. There has been a massive explosion of indie-style RPG game play in the last few years, and many people are engaging with the hobby in intriguing new ways. As a hobby-game retailer myself, I have also witnessed no shortage of gamers interested in playing tabletop *Shadowrun* but utterly intimidated by the massive rulebook. The fact of the matter is that that big black book isn't going anywhere, and there will always be players who want to joyously fiddle with every last glorious detail and chrome widget of rules found within those pages, and more power to them. I was one of them for a very long time.

Shadowrun has been part of our collective gaming consciousness for well over twenty-five years now, and it's been actively in print the whole time, something very few games can claim. It's been so long in fact, that what was a game of a speculative future has now become what is veritably an alternate *history* game! (Since magic did not, alas, return to the world in 2011. Although there's still a slim chance that my friend Warren might goblinize into an ork in 2018, as we've all long suspected he will, but that remains to be seen.)

Some of us shadowrunners are now getting long in the tooth, lacking the time to play or facilitate a game with such a robust and exhaustive rules set. Meanwhile, more collaborative storytelling-style RPGs and even gamemaster-free RPGs are seeing some real popularity as the hobby continues to grow and evolve.

That's where *Shadowrun: Anarchy* comes in. It's flexible enough to be played as a rules-light version of a traditional roleplaying game, or as a much more freeform "open table" style storytelling experience. I am incredibly pleased with what the Catalyst team has come up with here, and I think it has the potential to inject a



whole lot of new energy into the *Shadowrun* community. It's certainly going to get a new campaign to my table for the first time in years.

So if you're new to the Sixth World, welcome. Maybe you've always wanted to be an elf street ganger with an adrenal pump and a heart of gold. Or you've always entertained fantasies of summoning spirits from the back alley streets of Seattle by muttering arcane mysteries through your massive ork canine teeth. Or you're dying to see your *Shadowrun* video-game character come to

life in a tabletop pencil-and-paper RPG. There's plenty of room for all of us in the shadows.

If, like myself, you're returning to Mr. Johnson's table after a few previous jobs, you'll fit right in, but you'll find that the rules have changed a bit. But rules are meant to be broken.

Paul Alexander Butler
July 2016, Baltimore

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SYNCHRONICITY

BY RUSSELL ZIMMERMAN

"I don't like it," Sledge said into their huddle, casting a wary glance clean over Hardpoint's head.

"You don't like anything," Gentry said, then stuck his tongue out. "It's barely even worth saying any more."

"Boys." Coydog shot a glance between the two of them, quirking an eyebrow.

"Listen here, you little squi—" Sledge started in, but got himself cut off.

"Boys," Ms. Myth's troll-deep voice ended the argument before it really got started. "We need in the building to get the focus. They need in the building, too. There's no need for two teams to be at odds with each other, is there? They're short on technical support, so we've got an advantage if things go sideways, and Sledge's worst fears come true."

"M'not scared," the big ork mumbled to nobody in particular.

"It just makes sense," Hardpoint cut in with dwarven certainty. He didn't speak up as often as the others, and when he did, they listened. "I say aye."

"Aye," Gentry nodded, shooting a glance at a particularly leggy member of the other team.

"Aye," Coydog nodded with a bright smile.

"Nay," Sledge crossed his blocky cyberarms over his broad chest.

Myth spoke last, like she so often did.

"Ayes have it, not even countin' mine, sweetie. If they're in, we're in."

"I don't like 'em." Lefty shot the larger group a concerned look, glaring a bit at the decker who kept staring at her. Her chromed-up left hand flexed and straightened with tension. Her right hand—her shooting hand—didn't move.

"You rarely do," Alyosha teased, the good-natured dwarf shooting her a smile that took the edge off.

"I know Myth," Tiny's bass rumbled. The troll easily doubled Alyosha's height and even loomed over the elf-lanky Lefty. "She's a righteous tusker. An' I've heard good things about her crew. They'll do fine."

"Yeah, but what will they be fine at *doing*? I heard 'em say they're after some magical doohickey—"

"A focus," Alyosha said, since he was the one who was supposed to know magic for the rest of them.

"Doohickey," Lefty doubled down. "And this isn't a retrieval job for us, as you two well know. We can't let 'em slow us down. In and out, maximum speed, minimum time, that was our plan."

Alyosha sighed. Precision was great, right until the moment that it interfered with actually getting the job done.

"Well without 'em, I'm our only way through the front fraggin' door, Left-o, and same with every other stinkin' door we come across. That's gonna slow us plenty, right? Highball's still down, can't run off-site info-tech for us. Without a decker, we're hosed, and they got a decker."

Lefty peered over at Gentry, who smiled at her.

"Some decker," she grumbled.

"I and great Bear," Alyosha Duska gestured everywhere and nowhere in particular, as he often did when talking about the spirits he could call, "Vote aye."

"Aye," Tiny's massive head shifted in a nod.

"Nay," Lefty pouted. "Fat lot of good it'll do me. Fine. If they're in, we're in."

She glared over at Gentry who lifted a hand to wave.

"But I'll be using an 'I told you so' later."

"Hey." Sledge introduced himself to the massive troll—massive even compared to Ms. Myth, who was partic-