

*"Imagine a hatred that has endured for 5000 years..."*

The shadowrunners are sent on a string of missions, collecting obscure items, all seemingly unrelated...or are they? From the streets of Seattle to the frigid heights of the Bavarian Alps, from the magical mayhem of Columbia, Missouri to the headwaters of the Amazon, the adventure unfolds.

Who would go to all this trouble to destroy one man... and why?

- A datafile
- An ancient magic tome
- A flower
- A collection of Elven ears
- The manuscript of a soon to-be-released bestseller
- A young man of mysterious heritage
- A world famous Elven social theorist

*All are pieces to the puzzle.*

*Finding them is one thing.*

*Putting it all together  
is another!*

HARLEQUIN is a series of eight adventures for SHADOWRUN designed to be interwoven into an already existing campaign. Over the course of these adventures, the players are presented with a progressively larger picture of a very complex tale of revenge.

#### HARLEQUIN AUTHORS

W.G. Armintrout  
Tom Dowd  
Jerry Epperson  
John Faughnan  
Paul R. Hume  
James D. Long  
Lester W. Smith  
Ken St. Andre



**FASA**  
CORPORATION







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**1990**



**CONCEPT, OVERALL STORY,  
and GENERAL BLAME**

Tom Dowd  
Sam Lewis

**WRITING**

**Physical**

Ken St. Andre

**Hates**

John Faughnan

**Past**

W.G. Armintrout

**Loves**

Jerry Epperson

**Counterstroke**

Paul R. Hume

**Spiritual**

Lester W. Smith

**Future**

James D. Long

**Present and**

**Additional Material**

Tom Dowd

**DEVELOPMENT**

Tom Dowd

**EDITORIAL STAFF**

**Senior Editor**

Donna Ippolito

**Assistant Editor**

Sharon Turner Mulvihill

**PRODUCTION STAFF**

**Art Director**

Dana Knutson

**Cover Art**

Todd Hamilton

**Cover Design**

Mike Nielsen

**Illustration**

Joel Biske

Jeff Laubenstein

Jim Nelson

Tim Bradstreet

Terry Pavlet

Larry MacDougall

Earl Geier

**Layout**

Tara Gallagher

Sample file

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# DUEL AT DAWN: A Prologue

Emile:

I write to you this evening, driven by the need to tell you of the amazing event I witnessed today. As you know, my employment for the last season has been in the household of one Monsieur E., a nobleman of much culture, learning, and influence with this fair city's most illustrious citizens.

These past months have been the most joyous of my life. Never have I had the opportunity to remain so close to a mind as brilliant as Monsieur E.'s and never have I dwelled in a house where I am treated with such respect. As I told you, I believed for a time that all was glorious with the world.

A few weeks ago, just before the festival and just after my last letter, there began a sequence of events leading to the amazing occurrence that I just mentioned.

The first sign of the chaos to come was the disappearance of an illuminated manuscript that my master had lent to an acquaintance of his, a Monsieur R., of the university. From what I have been able to learn, the manuscript disappeared from Monsieur R.'s library under the oddest circumstances. Even more mysterious than the theft is the dagger of the strange design and construction that Monsieur R. found in the exact place where the manuscript had been. He gave it to my master, thinking that Monsieur E. might recognize some connection between the dagger and the theft. Though I know now whether he has, I have witnessed him standing in the garden late at night, examining the dagger.

What followed was a bizarre series of thefts, disappearances, reappearances, misunderstandings, and allegations that culminated in a minor scandal in the palace that has damaged my master's reputation. In addition, these events contributed directly to the dissolution of a relationship between my master and a Mlle. M., the young lady with whom he was deeply enamored.

As it happened last evening, only I, a few scullery maids, and my master were present in the house, the rest having been sent on various trips and errands. After an uncommonly light day, I was up later than usual, reading a manuscript from the library. Monsieur E. must have noticed my light and come knocking at my door. When I opened it, I found him standing there in the hall, his face showing an expression I had never seen before. He appeared as I imagine might a veteran who has readied himself for the most important battle of his life.

Before I could say anything, Monsieur E. grabbed me roughly by the shoulders. "André," he said, "at dawn I finish this and I need you by my side. The time for reckoning with that fool is here." As you can imagine, I was aghast. By his words and tone, I could only infer that he intended a duel and was instructing me to be his second.

Though I am far from being an old man, the spring of youth is long since gone from my body. To expect me to fulfill the role required was sheer folly. In my surprise, I told him so directly. My master reacted only by smiling wider and reaching out to

twitch my left ear in a manner that seemed completely natural but completely out of character for him. "You need not worry," he said. "I require only your presence."

He grasped me again by the shoulders as though we were the oldest of friends, then released me and made off down the corridor toward his rooms. Stunned, I stood there watching him until he disappeared behind his doors, knowing he was happier than I had seen him in weeks.

I will spare you and my pride a description of the fear that tore at me during those few hours before sunrise. By the time the first glimmer of morning appeared, however, I had sufficiently steeled myself for what was to come. Monsieur E. wished me present and I would not disappoint him.

I found him in his study, carefully tending his sword in that corner of his. (You will perhaps remember a previous letter in which I described the mysterious silver stone he used to maintain the razor-sharpness of his arms. I must say this blade is one of the most lethal weapons I have ever seen.) As I entered, he finished his work, sheathed the weapon, and tossed it to me. He was wearing a simple white tunic, black breeches, and boots. Over that, he wore a full cloak cut from cloth the seamstress told me he'd brought back from Persia. His eyes were alight with a fire that, truth be told, frightened me.

"André," he said, "let us be on our way."

I followed him out, but instead of heading for the carriage as I had expected, we made our way on foot. We traveled south for a short distance, but I could not imagine where we were heading. As it turned out, our destination was the river, or rather, one of the new stone bridges crossing it.

Halfway across, Monsieur E. stopped and declared that we had arrived. With those words, the fear I had fought aside earlier returned with a cold vengeance. Not only did my master intend to duel that morning, but in a place as public as the town square! Now, admittedly, anyone's chance of discovering us would only become likely when the city awoke at dawn, but even in the dark, some travelers were about. Not to mention the likelihood of our being interrupted by a patrol.

No matter. I swallowed hard and dug my fingernails into my palms. My master needed me and I would be there.

We had stopped only a few moments when I spied two figures approaching the bridge from the opposite side. Closest to us was a tall man, who moved with the long strides and deliberation of someone with military training. My fear arose again, but the sight of the second man drove it from me.

As they approached the bridge, this other man quickened his stride and all but pranced ahead to the edge of the bridge. There he paused, bowed grandly, and turned to his companion. I glanced at my master and saw that a hard look had come into his eyes, but I could make out the barest trace of mirth about his mouth. I turned to look back across the bridge, and my master surprised me by placing his hand upon my shoulder. "Whatever



## DUEL AT DAWN: A Prologue

happens, André, you will let it occur. The time for pawns is over. Now it is he and I again."

His words perplexed me, but before I could utter a question, the newcomers began to make their way toward us. The tall man hung back while the light-footed man led, his hands thrust into the side pockets of his long coat. As he neared, I could begin to make him out more clearly.

Of average height, that is, slightly taller than myself, he cut a careless figure, his hair uncoiffed and his clothes unkempt. I almost took him for a ruffian until I realized that what I had taken for shadows on his face were something else.

His visage was powdered properly enough, Emile, but it was also marked in a most outlandish fashion. I was immediately struck by the resemblance between him and a character in a farce-play that passed through early last spring. A more odd-looking fellow I have never seen.

When the painted man finally drew close to us, my master began to remove his gloves and addressed him. "My old friend," he said, "again we find ourselves at odds? Why do you vex me so? What have I done to deserve this treatment from one—"

As my master spoke, I could see the newcomer's face begin to cloud. He yanked his right hand free and began to wave it violently in front of him. Then he threw both hands into the air and called out to my master loudly in a language I did not understand. Emile, I do not claim a scholar's knowledge of language, but I do pride myself in being able recognize those tongues that I do not speak. You must believe me. Though this man spoke to my master in a mysterious, incomprehensible tongue, Monsieur E. understood him.

Not only that, but he replied in the same tongue! When the newcomer interrupted him, I saw my master's face grow hard for a moment. He then spoke in the tone that I have only heard him use to reprimand someone who has failed him. The newcomer responded by laughing uproariously! Never before have I seen a person lapse into such a sudden, unexpected peal of laughter. He then lashed into my master, still in that odd tongue, like some school teacher scolding an ill-prepared child. My master's eyes narrowed and I could see the tension build in his jaw. It was obvious that it galled him profoundly to be addressed in such a manner.

Finally, my master had enough and verbally lashed back, waving his right hand in hard, sharp, cutting motions. The other man smiled, nodded, and turned quickly, allowing his coat to spin. As the man walked the few steps to his second, my master turned toward me. "Why do I let that fool rile me so?" he said. (I should point out Emile that he did not say "fool." The word he used I could not understand, but I believe it had a similar meaning.)

I started to reply, but he held up his hand. "A rhetorical question, André. There is no answer. My sword, if you please." He stepped away from me, to my side, and held out his right hand. Holding the sheathed weapon flat before me, I placed the grip in his palm. Slowly, he drew it out, allowing the peeking sun to gleam off its fine edge. Across from us, the other man drew his blade in a quick, well-practiced manner. He slashed it once before him and then advanced a step.

My master's sword came clear and he held it vertical before him. Without turning, he spoke to me softly so that his opponent would not hear. "André, if I fall here, I ask that you burn the small black chest beneath my bed. Do so without opening it."

I assured him that I would, and he stepped forward to meet his foe.

What I witnessed next, Emile, mere words cannot describe. Indeed, I still wonder if it was part of some delusion I suffered. There, as the sun crested the hills to the east, before man and God, my master and his opponent did duel.

What a fight it was, Emile! Would that you could have seen it. I cannot claim to have witnessed many duels. Nor can I claim to have previously seen many displays of the art, but what occurred before me this morn was spectacular.

There is no doubt in my mind that my master and his foe are the two best swordsmen who ever lived. Better than those of the King's guard, and even better than those who duel to entertain in the traveling shows. Better, I dare say, based on your own descriptions, than that gentleman from Verona of whom you are so fond.

For what seemed like hours, my master and his foe fought, the art as we know it giving way to styles and techniques I have no words to describe. Lesser men would say they fought like ruffians, but the art was always with them.

And Emile, there is no doubt that each knew the other well, that they had fought in this manner before. As they dueled, they bantered, at least so I believe, in languages I know not. Once, many times, I thought I recognized a word, but that is all. The longer they fought, the more joy appeared on their faces. I was so enraptured by their display that it took my poor mind a few moments to realize that it had ended.

My master's foe advanced with a lightning flurry of slashes and thrusts, which my master strongly deflected, losing only a few steps. Then, quickly, my master aimed his own low slashes at his foe, striking down and leaning left. The other parried deftly, then realized his mistake as my master shifted his weight, crossed him, dipped his point under his guard and thrust up and away.

At first it seemed that nothing happened, but the spray of blood from my master's foe said otherwise. My master had severed the man's ear, cleanly and sharply along the skull, taking much hair with it.

My master immediately withdrew, holding his sword vertically before him. His foe, stunned, dropped his sword, and brought his hand up to where his left ear had been. I glanced at my master and saw an odd look cross his face, as though he somehow regretted what he had done. His foe held his hand in place, looked at my master, and spoke to him calmly in that odd tongue. He said only a few words and then turned and walked from the bridge. His second soon followed.

I was overjoyed, Emile. My master had shown himself better than his opponent, and I sensed the trials of the last weeks were at an end. I turned to congratulate him, but the words froze on my lips. There was a sadness in his face, Emile, which I had not expected. He watched his opponent until the man was out of sight, then stood there, immobile. Finally, with a long sigh, he relaxed and lowered his blade. I immediately offered his sheath. He slid the sword into place without cleaning it.

Almost fearing to speak, I asked him if it was over. He did not turn, but answered me while still staring off down the road.

"Over?" he said, "No, in my haste, I have maimed him. Now it will never be over."