

20 YEARS OF MAN•MAGIC•MACHINE

The year is 2072. Magic has returned and creatures of myth and legend walk among us as megacorps bleed the world dry. You're a shadowrunner—a deniable asset, a corporate pawn—using bleeding-edge science and magic to make your meat body and mind better-than-flesh. Stay on the edge, and you may survive another 'run on the mean sprawl streets.

The 20th Anniversary Edition is fully compatible with all Shadowrun, Fourth Edition books.



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SHADOWRUN



20 YEARS OF MAN • MAGIC • MACHINE

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—Peter Taylor

Just over two years ago, *Shadowrun* and *BattleTech* were in a dark place. Since then, we have fought, clawed, and scraped to not just continue but continuously better these great games. For all of you that have helped: family, friends, lovers, business partners, and most importantly, fans, thank you.—Adam Jury

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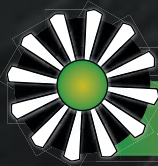
http://www.catalystgamelabs.com

(Catalyst Game Labs website)

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WHAT IS INSIDE YOUR HEART



by Steven Mohan, Jr.

Mark Atherton was never more alert than when he was surrounded by luxury. The clink of fine porcelain, the subtle taste of maguro, the smell of a woman's skin accented with cherry blossom, any of these things could mean death as surely as the brutal rattle of an AK-97.

Comfort was not the same thing as safety.

This is what Atherton thought as he stood in the cool darkness of the exclusive restaurant called Irori, a small lacquer cup of chilled koshu sake warming in his hands, looking out a giant picture window that admitted city and sky. The full moon was shrouded in clouds. It shadowed the black sky with silver and splashed cold light across Seattle's skyline, limning the Space Needle, accenting the dark waves of Elliott Bay, transforming the seaport's container cranes into Jurassic monsters.

Behind him was a score of tables draped in white linen and lit by the soft golden glow of blue tapers. The bar was a long run of gleaming mahogany off the dining room. Spirits lined the wall at the bartender's back, bottles fashioned from translucent glass of amber, green, and pale rose.

There were three exits: main entrance, kitchen, and the women's bathroom, which offered a small window that led to a ledge fifteen stories above Seattle's rain-slicked streets.

Always paid to have options.

Atherton heard nothing louder than the gentle hum of conversation, and the soft notes of a kugo harp. It was quiet in another way, too. His PAN's sensors detected no trace of the Matrix, as if the electronic world had been extinguished. The customers of Irori were paying dearly for privacy and peace.

An Irori was a Japanese cooking hearth. The name was meant to convey warmth and hospitality—but it meant something else as well, something more subtle.

Tradition.

That one word had forced him to come here alone. This was the kind of place that wouldn't serve orks or trolls or even dwarves, and the rest of his team wasn't human.

He studied his reflection in the dark window: tall, handsome, pale blue eyes that looked grey in the half-light, long ash-blond hair combed straight back except for his bangs, which hung past his chin, jaw line clothed in a neatly trimmed beard that matched his slim moustache.

Then he saw the reflection of someone behind him.

A woman.

He turned and his breath caught. She stood at the bar, half-hidden by the press of bodies. Even so, he realized she was like no woman he'd ever seen before, slim with raven hair cascading down her back, a shapely figure in a silk dress of pale green, an Ares Predator IV worn high in a shoulder holster, graceful pointed ears that marked her as an elf, beautiful enough to make the club overlook its "humans only" policy. And there was something else, too, something—

Her eyes widened as they met his.

Atherton felt a jolt of electricity.

She turned and rushed away through the bar. Atherton took a step to follow her, but right then someone called his name. He turned to see a forty-something Asian man in a stylish dark suit, black hair cut corp-short.

Mr. Johnson.

Atherton licked his lips. He wanted to go after the woman, he burned to go after the woman, but this Mr. Johnson was from Mitsuham, a megacorp noted for its complete and total lack of a sense of humor. And the meet was set up by PikePlace, the best fixer in the city. If he bailed on the meeting, it would be a deadly insult to both the corp (which he could live with) and the fixer (which he couldn't).

But that woman—

And then the salaryman placed a hand on Atherton's shoulder and he turned away with a sigh.

They sat at a discreet table by the big window. The Mr. Johnson (who called himself Ishida) glanced at the honey-colored liquid in Atherton's cup and raised an eyebrow. "Koshu?"

"I like the complexity of aged sake," said Atherton easily. "The notes of rice and straw, mushrooms and pine."

"It is unusual for a—" Ishida bobbed his head. "Forgive me. For a gaijin to enjoy koshu."

Atherton shrugged. "Once upon a time I spent a few years in Chiyoda," he said, naming Neo-Tokyo's most important ward.

"So ka?" The salaryman nodded his approval. "I see the fixer was right about you." He pulled out a folder and set it on the table. "Because of sensitivity, I only brought hardcopy. I will take it with me when I leave. We propose a simple operation." He flipped open the folder.

Atherton leaned forward and read about a warehouse in the port district: security measures, patrol schedules, customs areas. All standard.

His eyes flickered up. "What's the target?"

The Mr. Johnson turned the page, revealing an eight by ten glossy of a medallion on a slim chain. "It's currently delayed in customs. We are paying to make it so." The device was gold, a little bigger than a large button, and inscribed with arcane markings in a language Atherton didn't recognize. "Magic," he guessed.

The Mr. Johnson nodded. "It will require a mage of some skill to handle. This is why you were recommended."

"Fee?"

The salaryman didn't blink. "Twenty-five thousand nuyen." Atherton sat back in his chair.

The Johnson smiled tightly. "Perhaps Atherton-san is wondering if, for a fee that large, there is something I neglected to tell him."

"Is there?"

"Many things," admitted Ishida, "but none pertinent to your decision to take the job. The task is simple, but the item is most valuable."

How did he say this delicately? "It has been my experience, Ishida-sama, when an item is valuable, it is also well protected."

"Hai—when the owners recognize the value of what they have."

Atherton peered at his potential employer for a long moment. Mitsuham was lethally intolerant of failure. But the money was incredible for a simple snatch and grab.

And Atherton thought he understood Japanese culture well enough to work with the megacorp.

He bowed his head graciously, accepting the deal. All the while thinking of the clink of fine porcelain, the subtle taste of maguro, the smell of a woman's skin accented with cherry blossom.

Any of which could mean death.

They stood on the gently rocking deck of a little fishing skiff. The water off the coast was a deep, bright cobalt, so blue you almost didn't believe it was real. The sun had burned through the clouds, which was rare for Seattle in February. Bone white seagulls swirled around the boat, screeching.

Martin Temple amused himself by luring the birds in with thrown pieces of bread and then drawing on them with his Ceska Black Scorpion, firing blanks and letting his targeting system estimate hits. The troll wasn't normally so reckless.

He just hated gulls.

Atherton put the binoculars to his face and looked across the bay. They'd chartered the boat to go fishing, and they were fishing—just not for fish.

The target was an unassuming building named T104, aluminum sheet walls ringed by barbed wire and sodium lights. This particular warehouse was in South Harbor, across the West Seattle Freeway from Terminal 25. Most of what passed through T104 was commercial shipments not important enough to go by plane.

In short, crap.

So low security.

Bob the Big Hammer was laid out on the boat's deck, hands behind his head, a UCAS-flag bandanna covering his skull, silvered sunglasses hiding his eyes, his face swallowed by a thick, black beard, dressed in the same jeans and leather jacket he'd been wearing when he'd pulled up to the pier on his Hog. The only sign the dwarf wasn't asleep was the occasional smart-ass remark.

The only one actually studying the warehouse was the Devil, and he didn't have anything good to say: "I don't like the way it smells."

Atherton said nothing. He was the team's combat mage and its leader. When it came to tactical he was in charge, end of story. But when it came to planning, everyone had a say.

He glanced over at the technomancer who looked like, well, like the Devil. It didn't hurt that Devil had started life as an ork, with the ears and the canines and the muscular build. But the pale red skin and the carefully trimmed Van Dyke, those were affectations. He'd once told Atherton that people chose to see him as the devil just because he was different. He'd flashed a mischievous half-smile, unusual for the usually sober ork. "If that's how they're going to play me, why shouldn't I play them back?"

"Oh, don't so be such a baby," said Bob, the team's rigger and whose first question about any job was always: How big is the fee? "If anything goes hinky, I'll get you out."

"My skip through the Matrix confirms everything your Johnson said about the warehouse," said Devil softly.

"So ..." prompted Atherton.

"It's too easy. You know it's too easy."

The dwarf snorted. "Hell, Dev, you don't like it when it's easy and you don't like it when it's hard. What exactly do you want, man?"

Martin dropped his machine pistol and turned around. He had green skin and horns that arched back from his forehead. He was a weapons specialist—and a Makah Indian who'd emigrated to Seattle. He had a native tattoo of a sea monster etched into the metal of his left shoulder. The arm was good work. Even up close it looked like flesh. "We've never had any dealings with them before. Why would Mitsuhamas set us up?"

Devil shrugged. "Why would they send us on a milk run?"

"Maybe they're trying us out for bigger and better things," suggested Bob.

"Maybe Santa Claus is real," suggested Devil.

WHAT IS INSIDE YOUR HEART

"There's something you need to know," said Atherton slowly. "I, uh, already took the job."

Devil turned around and Bob sat up.

"You did what?" they both said at the same time.

"Look," said Atherton, "if I had asked for more time, I would have lost face."

"Man, I don't know if you noticed," said Bob, "but this is the UCAS—not Imperial Japan."

"There was no maybe," said Atherton. "Just yes or no. And if I said no, we'd make an enemy of Mitsuhamas. I made a judgment call."

An uncomfortable silence settled over the boat.

"Besides," pressed Atherton, "it was PikePlace who put us in touch with Ishida. He wouldn't have brokered the deal if it were a set-up."

Martin nodded. The troll had been in favor of the job from the beginning.

Devil folded his muscular red arms across his chest, then sighed. "PikePlace is honorable."

Bob snorted. "Hey! Who died and gave Atherton final say? We decide jobs as a team, or we don't decide them at all."

Martin stalked over to the dwarf and in one swift motion snatched him by the ankle, hauling him up in the air so Bob hung upside down, his head roughly level with Martin's. The troll's voice was a dangerous rumble. "First you berate Devil for raising questions about the job. Then you oppose Atherton when he tells us he took the job. I think you just want to cause trouble. Is this what you want, Bob? Trouble?"

Bob's arms were still folded across his chest, as if he were trying to maintain his dignity even while hanging upside down a meter above the gentle roll of the boat's nonskid deck. "Hell, no, Martin. I was just trying to be whatchamacallit. A devil's advocate."

Devil frowned. "You are most certainly not my advocate."

On that note of fragile truce, Atherton's team, his friends, ratified his decision to take the Mitsuhamas job.

The boat made a small scraping sound as it grounded on the shore. It was a crappy, secondhand aluminum hull with an outboard that they hadn't used yet. Martin had rowed in, making no more sound than the dip of his oar and the soft lap of the waves against the hull.

They made shore in a dark patch of land southeast of T104, away from the freeway and the freighters unloading containers at T25. The distant sound of cars and industrial cranes were barely audible over the gentle wash of the Duwamish Waterway.

Atherton wore gray coveralls with an ID tag clipped to his collar and rubber-soled work boots. His blond hair was tucked under a white hard hat. He would've felt better in black—but if anyone saw them, they would try to bluster their way through. It was better if the port believed the medallion's loss was due to bureaucratic inefficiency—rather than theft.

As Atherton's PAN picked up the arrows from various RFID tags, the night air glowed with AR notices and warnings: a scrolling list of safety rules, a red-letter warning that intruders would be prosecuted, an announcement offering overtime on the Sunday mid-shift.

Atherton ignored all of them.

The team moved quickly to the chain-link fence. Martin pulled out a set of bolt-cutters and started cutting links. Devil crouched down and closed his eyes, concentrating on hacking

the warehouse's system. There was no sound but the soft snick of Martin working one link at a time.

For once, Bob was mercifully silent.

"I'm in," Devil whispered. "Bob, I opened all the vans." He nodded at a long line of white vans with the blue-and-green Port of Seattle logo painted on their sides. They were taking the boat out, but Atherton wanted the vans unlocked, too.

Because you just never knew.

Martin laid a large section of fence on the ground. The team ducked through the hole.

Bob moved quickly to the line of white vans, where he hid himself between two vehicles. Outside lookout.

Martin and Devil moved quickly to Door Six on the southeast corner of the building. After casting a quick illusion spell to hide the damage to the fence, Atherton joined them.

Martin was already through the door.

He popped it open and the three men stepped into darkness.

The plan was simple. Take the medallion. Devil would change records to make it look like it was delivered to a wrong address. On the way out Atherton would cast a few Fix spells on the locks and the fence so no one would know they'd been there.

Easy.

Security lights painted the warehouse in dim, silent shadows. They crept toward the customs cage, floor-to-ceiling chain-link separating cleared items from quarantine. Martin popped another lock and silently swung a man-sized door open.

Atherton stole inside.

It took him only a minute to find the package and cut it open. He pulled the medallion out and held it in his hand.

Something was wrong.

He sensed nothing.

Atherton turned it over in his hand, trying to understand. It was unquestionably the same as the device pictured in Ishida's photo. Same arcane markings. But—

He sensed no magic. Nothing. Ishida had told him the device was powerful, so powerful that it required a mage of some skill to handle. It should be practically humming in his hand. But there was nothing.

"What's wrong?" Devil whispered.

Atherton shook his head. "It doesn't seem to be magical."

Martin shrugged. "That's Ishida's problem. It's the medallion, right?"

"Ye-es," said Atherton slowly. "How much do you want to bet that Ishida won't see it that way. I don't want to be in Mitsuhamas's gun sites. Let me just try—"

He held the medallion in his left hand, moving his right over it, casting Analyze Magic.

Nothing.

"This just isn't—"

He was cut off by the heavy throp-throp-throp of helo rotors.

Atherton looked up and flashed on a pair of rotary drones working their way down the aisle. "Freeze," he subvocalized.

Devil was suddenly a statue. Not Martin. The troll silently pulled his machine pistol from its leg holster with his right hand and raised his left arm.

Atherton's eyes flickered toward the drones. They looked like flying pigs, the rotor set below a mushroom-capped control suite, the long barrel of a machine gun jutting from their round, fat bodies.

Atherton held his breath. Keep going, he prayed. Just keep going.

This warehouse doesn't have drones, messaged Devil over the team's dedicated network.

Sure, tell them they don't exist. Answered Martin. That ought to help.

What's going on? said Bob.

Stand by, ordered Atherton.

The drones worked their way steadily down the aisle.

I've got the lead bastard, said Martin. You take follow.

It looked like they might just pass by.

Agreed, said Atherton, but don't fire unless—

The drones suddenly stopped, pivoted, and opened up. Yellow flame flashed from the barrels of their weapons and the rattle of automatic gunfire echoed in the warehouse.

All three men dove for the deck, Martin firing his Scorpion and the cybergun in his left arm as he went down.

Atherton hit the ground just as a stream of hot metal slashed past him, missing him by centimeters. He rolled and came up, hands extended. Lightning crackled from his fingertips, coruscating shards of white light wreathing the following drone. The machine shuddered and then plummeted, hitting the cement floor with a clank, its electrical systems fried.

He pivoted, but true to his word, Martin was dealing with the first drone. Yellow sparks flashed on the drone's metallic surface in time with the tink-tink-tink of ricochets. The machine was sinking as the troll's fire tore away rotor blades. In a moment it lay on the deck, firing into the cement, its bladeless rotor spinning madly.

"Time to go," said Atherton.

"You think?" said Devil.

We're coming out hot, said Martin. Get ready, Bob.

I'm on it, messaged the rigger.

They sprinted down the aisle, no longer concerned about silence, followed by the echo of the downed drone's sporadic weapons fire. AR notices flashed in Atherton's peripheral vision: *You may not operate cranes without first conducting a hoist inspection and All grievances must be filed with your shop steward within three days of the incident.*

Martin put his big shoulder into a door and punched through, stumbling into the parking lot.

And right into a street samurai.

Atherton flashed on a human (Japanese!) in creepy black bioware that looked like muscle-tissue with the skin stripped away. A triangle of yellow lights implanted in his helmet blinded Martin. For a second, just a second, the troll froze.

The street samurai held two blades, the long, curved katana in his right hand extended straight out from his body and the shorter wakizashi held close in like a dagger. He stepped forward, swinging the katana up in and over in a powerful blow that would surely separate Martin's head from his shoulders. Atherton opened his mouth as the blade descended—

And a white van smashed into the street sam.

Bob threw the door open and bounded out of the cab. "C'mon, we have to—"

A blade thrust through his middle stopped his words. The dwarf's eyes bulged, his mouth a surprised "oh." Then he cried out, his body jerking, as the second samurai put another blade through him.

Martin roared. The Black Scorpion shook in his hand, the ugly sound of the weapon filling the night. The sam who'd— (killed)

—attacked Bob dropped, his face a mass of crimson gore.

"Boat," Atherton shouted.

More black-clad figures were appearing. Five, six. Seven. Running from the north side of the warehouse. Atherton took the nearest one down with a fireball, forcing the rest to scatter for cover behind the vans. Devil had his Uzi IV out and sprayed suppression fire across the compound. Martin thundered forward and scooped up Bob.

They raced for the boat, firing all the way. Martin laid Bob gently in the boat and pushed it into the water. Devil splashed into the boat and hit the outboard's quick-start. The little motor roared to life.

Atherton dove into the boat, just as Devil whipped it around in a tight arc that paralleled the shore. Though exhausted, Atherton crawled forward and placed his hand on Bob's chest. The dwarf had been stabbed twice, once in the gut and once in the chest.

Atherton tried to conjure a healing spell. He closed his eyes. His hand shook with the effort, but ... he just couldn't do it. Just couldn't bring Bob back. Whether it was due to the severity of the dwarf's injuries or because of his own exhaustion, he didn't know. It didn't really matter.

Either way, it was his fault.

A good shadowrunner always has a bolthole ready in case things go bad. Atherton's team went to ground in a condemned apartment building in west Seattle. The linoleum was cracked, the light a jaundiced yellow, and black fungus was crawling up one wall—but at least it was private.

Bob's body lay in the center of the dining area. The katana had snapped in two and the blade had worked its way out during the desperate run to the boat, but the other sword, the wakizashi, still stuck out of his back.

"What the hell happened?" Martin demanded. "How did security twig to us so fast?"

Atherton remembered the nondescript AR notices as they were fleeing the scene. Cranes and shop stewards.

"They didn't," he said softly. "Port security never initiated an alert. The drones, the street sams."

He shook his head. "That was someone else."

"Set-up," breathed Devil.

Atherton nodded reluctantly. He held up the medallion. "This." He shook his head. "Is garbage." He dropped it to the linoleum floor and smashed it beneath his boot. "Someone has a grudge."

"But we haven't made any enemies," said Martin. "Anyway, not enemies powerful enough to use damn Mitsuhamas as a cut-out. Unless—" He shook his head. "Unless PikePlace was lying about Ishida being from Mitsuhamas."

"I don't think he was lying," said Devil. "I just checked the Matrix. Jacked a police report. They're saying PikePlace was wiped."

"Wiped?" Martin whispered. "Who would have the juice to murder a major league fixer?"

"I don't know," said Atherton. He knelt by Bob's body, thinking of Mitsuhamas, Irori, the street sam's Asian features. He took hold of the wakizashi's hilt and drew it gently from his friend's corpse, held it up to the light. "But all signs point to Japan."



WHAT IS INSIDE YOUR HEART

Atherton strolled down a lane laid out beneath a canopy of cherry trees. He smelled the sweet fragrance of the pink blossoms, but beyond the beauty of the trees he glimpsed the markers of Aoyama Cemetery, elegant columns of stone inscribed with kanji characters.

Beauty intertwined with death.

An echo of his thoughts at this thing's beginning.

"I do not know that this is wise," said Devil. "We are outsiders here."

"I know Japan," said Atherton softly. "And you know the Matrix. Between the two of us, we will find the information we need."

"What about me?" rumbled Martin. In Neo-Tokyo, firearms were all but forbidden. The troll had left his beloved Black Scorpion back in Seattle. He still had the cybergun hidden in his left arm and he wore a pair of swords crossed on his back.

"Do not worry, my friend. I'm sure we'll need your skills before this is over."

"It feels like we're giving up home court advantage," said Devil.

"Someone's hunting us," said Atherton. "If we don't find out who, they'll take us when we least expect it. Neo-Tokyo is where the answers are."

"But where will we start?" asked Martin.

"Here," said Atherton. He gestured at a man waiting among the graves. The man wore a blue suit, his skull shaved clean, a silver dragon coiled around his right wrist, a tiger crouched on his left. "A Yak from Mita-gumi," said Atherton softly, "a family that has ties with Evo."

They crossed from the path to the grave where the Yakuza stood.

Atherton bowed deeply and the Yak bowed in return.

Martin frowned. "But I thought Ishida worked for Mitsuhamma, not Evo."

The Yak grinned, his broad smile a bright flash of white against his sepia skin. "I believe Atherton-san understands that Evo and Mitsuhamma do not like each other."


"So, if you wish information on Mitsuhamma, ask Evo," said Devil.

The Yak nodded. "In Japan, the indirect route is often the quickest way forward."

Kazutoshi Omata (who, until recently, had been Kazutoshi Ishida) hurried from his silver Mercedes. His boss had sent him a last-minute instruction to attend a meeting in Toshima, and Omata wasn't quite sure where it was. He did not often come to Toshima. It was the ward where the ants lived, all the little workers who toiled in the factories and the sewers and the stores. Still, Omata had a reputation for problem-solving. If the old man wanted him to start solving problems in Toshima, that is what he would do.

He just hoped the job was better than the last one. Killing shadowrunners was like shoveling shit: sometimes it had to be done, but there was little glory in it.

He turned down an alley and stepped into darkness. Somewhere he heard the plink-plink of dripping water, smelled



"I see your point," said Omata, straining to think of some leverage he could use that would allow him to survive the next ten minutes. "Why should I help you when you'll only kill me afterwards?"

Atherton shook his head. The mage held his hands a few centimeter apart, fingers extended. Golden light curled between them. "I don't intend to kill you. I intend to alter your memory."

Omata snorted.

"It is our advantage to let you live," said the troll. "If we kill you, our enemies will know we're coming."

Omata considered this. "What do you want?"

"Why," said the devil. "We want to know why."

Omata shook his head vigorously. "I don't know why. I was given a task and I accomplished my task."

"Well, not quite," said the troll.

"The point is, I never asked why."

Atherton crouched down so that his face came very close to Omata's. "Then we'll settle for who."

Omata had only been able to offer a single word: shinju. Pearl.

The project he'd been given had been named pearl. What the hell did that mean? Had they somehow become entangled with interests in the Japanese pearl industry? Were they looking for someone named Pearl? Or was Pearl just a random codename that didn't have any meaning at all?

Devil stood in the middle of their little hotel room, surrounded by holoprojected images and documents, windows into the shadier corners of the Matrix. Atherton watched over his shoulder as images flickered off and on.

The hotel was a dive. A single bed with stained, gray sheets, cockroaches on the walls, women of the water trade plying their business down the hall. But no one would look for them here.

"This is a waste of time," said Martin, sprawled out on the bed.

Atherton shook his head. "With my contacts and Devil's ability to hack we ought to find something. A clue."

Devil said nothing.

"You've been at it for hours now."

"If you have another idea, Martin, I'm listening."

"You're right, Mark," said the troll. "I just don't think ..."

something dank and dirty and sweet, the sweetness of rot. Took a wrong turn.

Omata turned to leave and flashed on a green fist the size of a football. Then the world fell on him. There was an instant of excruciating pain and then bl—

When Omata woke, his hands and legs were bound. He seemed to be on a rooftop. And there was a man standing over him. He sucked in a startled breath.

Mark Atherton.

Behind the gaijin stood a hulking troll and an ork made up to look like the Christian devil. But not the dwarf. At once Omata understood the danger of his situation.

"What's the matter?" asked Atherton. "Do I look less dead than you expected?"

"They'll be looking for me, Atherton-san. I am late for a meeting."

"Oh, no," said Atherton softly. "This is the meeting."

Omata's stomach shriveled into something small and hard. "But—"

"It's amazing what you can accomplish when you have a technomancer on your team."

The devil bowed.

"If you harm me, you will make an enemy of Mitsuhama."

"So what would they do?" asked the troll. "Try to kill us?"