

# ONE STAGE BEFORE™

One  
False Step...

When Mr. Johnson hires shadowrunners to discover the brains behind repeated attempts to sabotage a major corporation's latest acquisition, their first wrong move could be their last.

...&  
the Fat  
Lady Sings!

One Stage Before is an adventure for Shadowrun. It is compatible with the original Shadowrun rules and the newly revised Shadowrun Second Edition rules.

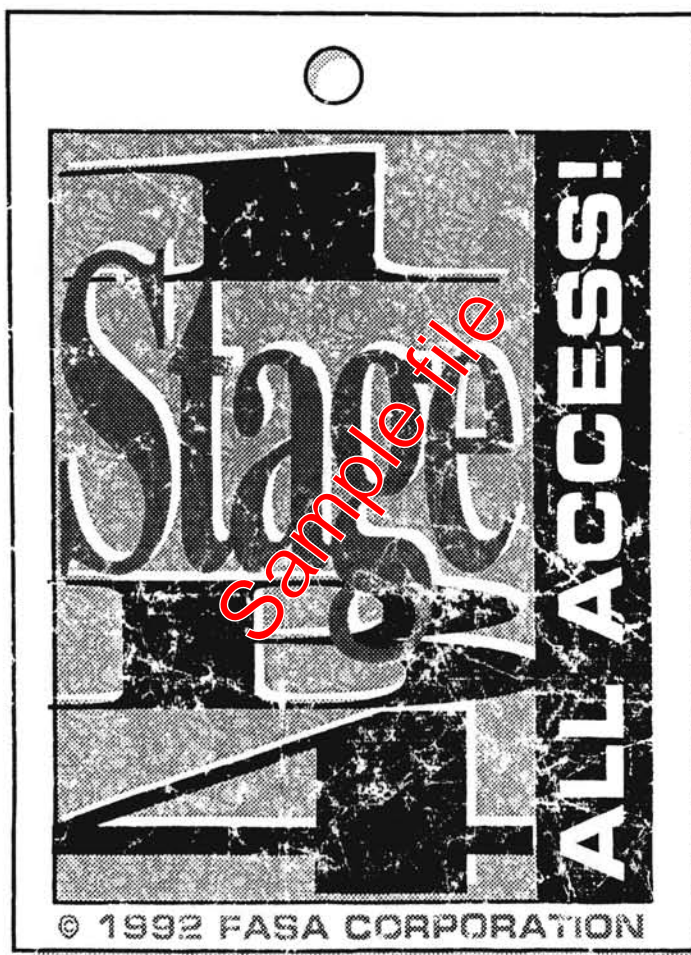
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 **SHADOWRUN**  
SECOND EDITION

**7312**





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# THE PRICE OF BUSINESS

"No! I said no, and I mean no. Your offer's drek, and you're drek. I'm not selling. Go frag yourself!" Allenby punched the Disconnect key on his telecom almost hard enough to crack the reinforced plastic. He clenched his small fists so hard that his knuckles stood out like ivory, and the tendons ached in his forearms. He spun in his swivel chair and fired a hard punch into the wall behind him, adding another fist-sized dent to the light construction plastic. The three framed platinum discs on the wall jumped, but didn't crash to the floor this time. Fragging Teague, he raged mentally. "Tangent! Get in here!"

No one moved in the outer office. He knew Tangent was there; she was giving him a few minutes to calm down. *It's not her fault, he reminded himself. Don't take it out on her.*

*Slowly, cautiously,* his office door swung open. Tangent stuck her head into the office, her mane of golden hair framing a worried face. "Yes, boss?"

With a monumental effort, Allenby forced himself to speak calmly. He laid his hands palm down on the desk, his arms quivering with the strain of *not* throwing his mug of soykaf at the wall. "Tangent," he said as quietly as he could, "you will *not* accept any more calls from Jonathon Teague, or from Highstar Incorporated. *None.* Do you understand me?"

Tangent blinked. "But he said you'd want to talk to him—"

Allenby cut her off harshly. "Read my lips. *No...more...calls.* Scan me?"

"I..." Tangent swallowed hard, her face pale under her makeup. "I'm sorry, boss, I didn't mean to—"

Allenby cut her off again with a wave of his hand. "Don't sweat it, you didn't know." He watched his secretary's face brighten a little. *Got to go easier on the kid,* he told himself. "Now come in here and sit down."

As Tangent settled herself in the guest chair in front of his huge desk, Allenby turned to stare out the window. He could see the sun setting over the docks, a swollen red ball distorted by the devil's brew of drek in the air. Fragging Teague, he thought again. He forced himself to take a few deep breaths, to flush away the anger he still felt. He turned back to Tangent. "Tell me about The Shadows' show."

Tangent glanced down at her pocket secretary. "Everything's on schedule," she said. "Twelve days to the show. The Kingdome's booked and confirmed..."

"Cancellation Insurance?" Allenby snapped.

"Taken care of," Tangent shot back. "The dome's ours. I've booked security—"

"Knight Errant again?"

Tangent shrugged. "They're the only ones who can handle something this big."

"I guess," Allenby grumbled. "Go on."

"Transport for the equipment, limos for the band—all set." She smiled at him. "The show's a go."

He could sense her excitement; he had to admit he felt it himself. He'd been in the music biz for almost twenty years now—*Twenty? Was it really that long?*—and he'd managed some of the biggest names. About the only megastar group he hadn't managed to work with was Concrete Dreams. *And if this comes off, they'll be begging me to handle their next gig,* he thought. He'd put on some of the biggest shows the sprawl had ever seen. But *this* one would dwarf them all.

He had The Shadows, the hottest band to hit the music biz since Jetblack died. Their newest disk or chip always sold out within two days. Secondary marketing—T-shirts, posters, that kind of drek—netted more each year than most bands grossed in their entire career. The Shadows were *it*. And he, Allenby, managed them.

"How about ticket sales?" he asked.

Tangent didn't need her pocket secretary to field that one. "Boss, this show sold out five weeks back within an hour of going on sale." She grinned. "The scalpers are making a killing."

"What's the street price?"

"Two hundred fifty nuyen per," she replied, "and that's up in the nosebleeds. Good seats?" She shrugged. "A thousand nuyen? Two? Nobody knows." She frowned, a pretty little moué. "What about a second show, boss? It'd sell out like *that*." She snapped her fingers. "We'd *rake*."

He smiled indulgently. *Tangent's a smart girl,* he thought, *but she's got a lot to learn about the biz.* "No second show," he told her. "Always keep the kids wanting more. Think: one show this year. How much more can we charge for next year's show?"

Tangent grinned. "I got it, boss." She shook her head in amazement. "This is big. This is the biggest show we've ever done."

Allenby nodded agreement. *This is the biggest gig Seattle's ever seen. Bigger than Maria Mercurial, bigger than Concrete Dreams. And it's mine.*

The telecom beeped. Tangent jumped up, heading back into the front office to take the call. She stuck her head back around the door. "Boss, what if it's Teague? Take a message?"

"Frag him!" Allenby screamed. "I'd rather die than talk to him!"

White-faced, Tangent ducked back into her office. Allenby's mug shattered against the wall, spraying soykaf all over the door.





# INTRODUCTION

**One Stage Before** is a roleplaying adventure set in the world of Shadowrun.

The year is 2053. Advances in technology are astonishing, with humans able to merge with computers and travel through that electronic netherworld of data known as the Matrix. Even more astonishing is the return of magic. Elves, dragons, dwarfs, orks and trolls have assumed their true forms, while megacorporations (rather than superpowers) rule much of the world. North America has been balkanized, split into several sovereign states, many occupied only by Native Americans. Moving among it all like whispers in the night are the shadowrunners. No one admits their existence, but no one else can do their secret work.

This adventure takes place in the shadows and back alleys of Seattle's urban sprawl. The vast sprawl includes the original city of Seattle and the surrounding sixteen hundred square miles on the eastern shore of Puget Sound. Yet this vast megaplex is but an enclave set amid even larger states ruled by Native American nations and other sovereign states of metahumans and Awakened beings.

## GAMEMASTERING NOTES

**One Stage Before** uses a decision-tree format, meaning that the players' team may arrive at the same encounter via different routes, depending on choices they make, and may easily skip a planned encounter. To run the adventure, the gamemaster needs a thorough familiarity with the contents of this book as well as a working familiarity with the basic **Shadowrun** rules. The contents of this book are for the gamemaster's eyes only, except for certain items earmarked as player handouts. This book includes everything needed to play **One Stage Before**.

**One Stage Before** is designed for a party of four to eight player characters. The group should contain a variety of talent, including at least one mage or shaman, and one decker. A successful run will also depend on the team's combat skills. Players may use any of the character Archetypes listed in the **Shadowrun** rules or in the various supplements to **Shadowrun**, or they may generate their own characters.

This adventure combines several approaches to gamemaster information. Some encounters are thoroughly planned and described in detail. Others merely set the scene, remaining open-ended. Hints for gamemastering the various encounters appear in each section.

## SHADOWRUN RULES

**One Stage Before** may be played using the original **Shadowrun** or **Shadowrun, Second Edition (SRII)** rules. Information, specifically game statistics, appear in standard **Shadowrun** format. Where a value or rule changed from **Shadowrun** to **SRII**, the second-edition value or rule appears in (boldface brackets).

## MAKING SUCCESS TESTS

During the course of **One Stage Before**, the players will make a number of Success Tests using a skill and a given target number. These Success Tests are indicated by the name of the appropriate skill and the target number. For example, a Stealth (4) Test refers to an Unassisted Stealth Success Test with a Target Number of 4.

Under **SRII** rules, the notation Stealth (4) refers to a standard Stealth Success Test with a Target Number of 4. The procedure stays the same; the test has simply been renamed for **SRII**.

## SUCCESS TABLES

At times, the gamemaster will use success tables to determine how much information the players receive. Each success table lists different information for different numbers of die roll successes. Rolling a high number of successes always reveals the information for the lower numbers of successes as well. For example, a character rolling 3 successes would learn the information for 3 successes as well as the information for both 1 and 2 successes.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Aside from the basic **Shadowrun** rules, this book includes everything needed to run this adventure. **Sprawl Sites**, **The Grimoire**, and the **Street Samurai Catalog** sourcebooks may also be useful. The **SRII** versions of the Contacts and Archetypes referred to within the adventure appear in **SRII**, or in the book included in the **SRII Gamemaster Screen (SRIIGM)**. The gamemaster should read through the entire adventure before beginning the game. Some important plot developments will not unfold until well into the adventure, but the gamemaster will have to lay the groundwork much earlier on. He can only do that by being familiar with the storyline. The gamemaster should also examine the maps, plans, and diagrams found throughout **One Stage Before**, especially the floor plans of the various buildings.

The **Plot Synopsis** summarizes the story background and the most probable course of the adventure.

**One Stage Before** begins with **Meet Mr. Johnson**, which offers suggestions on how to get the ball rolling and draw the player characters into the adventure.

Most of the encounters begin with **Tell It To Them Straight**, a text section to be read aloud to the players. It describes the setting