SOMEONE NEEDS TO DO SOMETHING

"Someone needs to do something," the voice says over the commlink in a calm, measured tone. "These things are showing up all over Chicago again, and if we continue operations as normal, we will be in quite the same situation as Boston, only we could have stopped it before it became worse."

"What d'you suggest?" Simon retorts. "It's not like y' have a bleedin' army. Besides, even if y' did, there's no tellin' what's actually down there."

The lizard-like man leans back in his seat and looks out over the sprawl. *He's right, and you know it*, he thinks. Encounters with the insect spirits have become more and more frequent in the Windy City, though not much media attention has come of it, thanks to corporate control of the media. That wasn't all. Something was wrong with the magic in Chicago. Nothing to directly interfere any more than was already there, but there was a sinister presence, something lurking in the depths, a shadow in the astral.

It had always been there, ever since the days of Bug City, but it had been quiet, almost dormant, even then. Now it seems to stare back at those who know where to look, a malevolent consciousness setting itself up to strike.

"No, I do not have an army, but I do have resources. Resources that can be brought to bear, if it weren't for the potential interference with the others in the city." The voice on the commlink lets out a breath before speaking again. "How do we get them to listen?"

"Make it important. It's for all the marbles, innit? 'Ave it affect their profits. If they won't earwig to ya, y' know others who will ..." Simon trails off.

"It's not exactly as if the Court jumps to the whim of anyone who comes calling. Getting them involved will take months, if not years."

"Not if what yer talkin' about is true. Nuffin' pisses in their cheerios like losin' bread and honey," Simon says smoothly.

"What are you proposing?"

"I'll find a team, and we'll go get the information we need. And we'll get it to ya. You get it to th' Court."

"Do you have a team ready to go as it is?" The voice is still measured but excited.

"I 'ave just the bloomin' bloke to find one ..." Simon grins.

Introduction

SRM 08-05: Sleeping Giants is a *Shadowrun Missions* living campaign adventure. Full information on the *Shadowrun Missions* living campaign is available at facebook.com/SRMissions/ and includes a guide to creating Missions characters 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 08-05: Sleeping Giants 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 08-05: Sleeping Giants 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, gamemasters 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 08-05: Sleeping Giants* (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. 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 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 some-

thing or you just make a mistake. It happens, don't worry about it. Nobody is perfect all 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 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 steam-rolling 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 encouraged to use this Edge when logical.

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

Gamemasters should be careful what they allow players access to, because they can and will try to steal everything not nailed down (and even then, they often have pry bars and claw hammers to deal with those nails). *Shadowrun Missions* operate under the assumption that two players who have run the same missions will have roughly the same amount of resources available to them (give or take some negotiation and a little bit of minor loot fenced), so when players are able to steal and fence a lot of gear or are able to get their hands on high-priced vehicles, cyberdecks, or foci, it can unbalance the game and make it unfair to players who didn't have the opportunity to get those items. Gamemasters should avoid letting the players get into a position to do high value looting whenever possible.

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 1/3 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 30 km North way to Belmont Avenue to the north, and reaches from the Lake Michigan an average of 15 km to Harlem Avenue to 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 20 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.

Over the last three years, the Astral Preservation Society in partnership with The Ash Union and various megacorp thaumaturgical divisions have made headway in cleaning up the background count within the CZ and the surrounding area. Thanks to their work, unless otherwise noted in the scene, assume a background count of zero anytime characters are within the Containment Zone. The count will fluctuate 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 p. 30, *Street Grimoire,* for full rules). Areas of Chicago outside the CZ may also suffer background count bleed from the Zone.

With the megacorps construction efforts moving forward in the CZ and surrounding areas, matrix connectivity has improved dramatically. Noise levels will vary from area to area, but unless otherwise specified in the scene, assume a default Noise level of zero anytime the characters are within the Containment Zone.

While for many the Chicago and the Bug City Containment Zone are synonymous, the CZ comprises less than 1/3 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 30 km north to Belmont Avenue, and reaches from the Lake Michigan to an average of 15 km away (about to Harlem Avenue) to 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 20 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 scene, assume a default

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 grants 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 suffers 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 focus, etc.) takes Background Count-12 unresisted Stun Damage each turn that they are active and exposed to the Flux or Void.

background count of 2 anytime characters are within the Containment Zone. The count will fluctuate 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 p. 30, *Street Grimoire,* for full rules). Areas of Chicago outside the CZ may also suffer background count bleed from the Zone.

Along with its background count, the CZ also holds challenges 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.

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 gamemaster, 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.

Mission Synopsis

The bugs are back in Chicago, and no one seems to want to do anything about it. When the walls of the Containment Zone came down, corporate interests rushed in to claim whatever they could: old facilities, lost cash, and even simple territory. Over the course of the last few years, what was the end of oblivion started to become a revitalized symbol of victory over the bug menace.

They never went away, though—they merely lie dormant under the ruins of the city. Now they have re-emerged, this time with help from metahumanity. Initial forays have turned up evidence of an immense hive in tunnels under Chicago, but megacorporate interests have turned a blind eye. If they know, the corps may care about the bugs. However, most assume someone else will deal with it. Others don't want to risk Corporate Court sanctions by conducting an operation that can be seen as meddling in other corps' affairs.

Sid Gambetti (see **Cast of Shadows**) contacts the runners on behalf of Simon Andrews (see **Cast of Shadows**) to set up a meet with them at the Vault. Simon wishes to contract the team for a short, but extremely hazardous reconnaissance mission into the insect spirit tunnels under Chicago, to the heart of the hive. Using an entrance under Wrigley Field, the team descends into the tunnels, past hive guardians and maggot-laid traps. Breaching the heart of the hive, the runners make a frightening discovery: a queen wasp spirit has inhabited a western dragon, and Dr. Tate is attending the "patient."

Armed with evidence of the threat below Chicago, the runners and Simon must make their escape without alerting the hive. Should the team be detected, Simon gives them the evidence and covers their escape, telling them to seek out Juan Xihuitl of Aztechnology.

Juan, and possibly Simon, urge the team to deliver the evidence to the Renraku and Mitsuhama representatives in the city, avoiding Horizon due to its relationship with Dr. Tate. Each corporation wants something in return and asks the team to perform a small task for

them. With four megacorporations, it is enough to force action. Juan hopes this will be enough to get the corps to move on the bug menace.

Scene 1:
Call Me Back Already!

Scan This

Sid Gambetti contacts the team on behalf of Simon Andrews to set up a meet at the Vault.

Tell It To Them Straight

Weak sunlight streams through the cheap blinds of your room as the incessant beeping of a commlink rouses you from your dream. Was it the one about the yacht party, like something out of a Soyweiser commercial, or was it rescuing the models from the mountain lair of the evil overlord who happens to look like your ex? Struggling to remember, you grope around the nearby table for your commlink.

9:07AM, 23 Missed Contacts, the display reads. Someone must want to talk to you badly. It must be an emergency. Swiftly unlocking the device, your heart sinks a little as you see two calls from unknown commcodes and twenty from none other than Sid Gambetti. Sid's icon is grinning, his face animated with a disturbing leer, complete with raised eyebrows. "Comm me back, I have someone who wants to talk to you about a job," his messages repeats.

With a sigh and quick shake of your head, you tap the reply button. Sid answers quickly, almost as if waiting for your return call. "Good God, it's about time you got back to me. You'd think you were allergic to money or something. Anyway, I got this ... guy ... down here who wants to get some people together for a job, and he asked me to get the best. He wants to meet you in person here at the Vault as soon as you can. I told him you and your team would be by pronto. Do me a solid and don't let ol' Sid turn out to be the jackass."

Once the runners agree to go to the Vault and arrive:

The Vault at mid-morning is vastly different than during the evening. The place is largely dead, save for the small line of people near the Horizon wellness clinic. A worker wanders the main room, picking up various bits of trash and wiping down the seats from the previous

night's fight, while another scrubs the fighting ring, trying to remove what looks to be bloodstains. Cheesy pop music from thirty years ago streams on the house speakers. Sid sits at the bar, thumbing through an AR newsfeed. As he sees you, he sighs in what could be relief and says excitedly, "Glad you guys made it on time, I got a lot on my plate today. Your guy is in room three, over there by the clinic."

A few people waiting on the clinic shuffle out of your way as you enter the side room. Inside is a small, cluttered office, decorated with posters and flyers of famous fights and pop stars, none of whom have ever visited this place. Behind the desk, with his feet kicked up, is what appears to be a humanoid lizard wearing a studded denim vest decorated with pins and patches and a T-shirt resembling the Union Jack. As you enter, he sits up straight and motions everyone inside.

"Most of y' know me, but some of y' don't. Name's Simon," he states in a thick Cockney accent. "'ope ya don't mind me usin' Ol' Sid 'ere as a middleman. Can't be too careful these days."

Simon takes a quick look past you to make sure the door is shut. "I brought y'ere cause we're in a heap of o' the ol' Barney Rubble, and no one seems t'wanna to do ought about it. If y'been payin' attention, the bugs've made a comeback, but the corporations and UCAS government seem t'be ignorin' it. What I want is t'get chuffin' proof, and shove it in their bib and braces; make 'em do somethin' bout it. That's where you come in: get me in 'em tunnels so we can grok what the frag's goin' on. I've a lead on an entrance under the Wrigley Dome, of all places. I guess th'bugs've been usin' it t'get in and out of the CZ. Get me in and get me out, and you'll get paid. How does nine thousand each sound for a quick in and out?"

(Translation: "Most of you know me, but some of you don't. Name's Simon. Hope you don't mind me using the bloke out there as a middleman. Can't be too careful these days. I brought you here because we're in a heap of trouble and no one seems to want to do anything about it. If you've been paying attention, the bugs have made a comeback, but the corporations and UCAS government seem to be ignoring it. What I want is to get the proof and shove it in their faces; make them do something about it. That's where you come in: get me down into those tunnels so we can see what's going on. I have a lead on an entrance under the Wrigley Dome, of all places. Apparently, the bugs have been using it to get in and out of the Containment Zone. Get me in, and get me out, and you'll get paid. How does nine thousand nuyen each sound for a quick in and out?")

Behind The Scenes

Simon sets up a meet with the team through Sid because he does not want it known that corporate interests are involved in this reconnaissance mission. He knows there are those in the CZ who work with the bugs and funnel them information. To that end, he used Sid as an intermediary as his operations are generally beneath the notice of any of the higher profile employers. If asked why he went to the trouble of using Sid, he simply tells the team, "Lots of people in the Zone work for the bugs. Him? I know he just wants to make some quid, and I know he's no bug."

Ultimately, Simon is frustrated at the lack of response from several of the corporate presences in Chicago and has received authorization from his superiors to push the matter forward. So far, only Aztechnology has committed to fighting the insect spirit problem. Other major corporate interests in the area—Mitsuhama, Renraku, and Horizon—have turned a blind eye. They've used their considerable resources to mask the re-emerging issues from the public and their employees. Interestingly, NeoNET and Ares, the corporations that may have the most interest in Chicago and the Containment Zone, are absent in dealing with these issues as well, as both struggle with internal issues demanding their attention elsewhere. The UCAS government has only recently rescinded Adverse Possession and declared the old CZ habitable. Now they're staring at an enormous scandal with these same Chicago troubles starting up again. Preferring to let the corporations take the fall for the new rise of the insect spirits, the UCAS is citing corporate greed and over-aggressive land grab and reclamation policies.

Simon is willing to negotiate the price with the runners but blows off their need for more money, and he ignores any flimsy excuses. He knows they will likely attempt to raise the payout, and he prepared for this inevitable conclusion by having a larger budget than he lets on. An opposed Negotiation + Charisma [Social] Test versus Simon's Negotiation (8) + Charisma (6) [8] rais-